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Self in Relation to the Concept of God in Risale-i Nur

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Omer Kuru

University of Durham, Durham
March 2015

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Abstract

This thesis presents a critical analysis of the self in relation to the concept of God in the writings and discourse of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi. Nursi lived between 1876 and 1960 and was not only a religious scholar but also an activist in Turkey. A particular importance of this study is that Nursi's ideas about the self in relation to the concept of God have been discussed together with mainstream Western and Islamic thought.

For Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi, a true understanding of the concept of self was essential if the true potential of an individual was to be fulfilled. The dynamic and ever-changing structure of the self can be understood by *anā*, which is a subjective tool acting as a unit of measure. In other words it is just an image (*anā*) on the mirror (*nafs*), which reflects and shows the Divine Names and Attributes. However, if *anā* and *nafs* are not guided by Divine Revelation and the *Sunnah*, they can easily claim to be the source and owner of what is reflected on the mirror.

Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi has a completely different understanding of the universe and the concept of self from that of many Western philosophers and thinkers. For him, it is important to grasp the reality of things, which may ultimately lead to a better understanding of the Divine (*m'arifah*). Moreover, grasping the reality of things is only possible if one can obtain a standpoint from which to reach out to the meaning of things in a domain not limited to man's benefit only. According to Nursi this is possible through a proper understanding of concepts such as *nafs* and *anā*.

Acknowledgements

I owe gratitude to many people who have made this dissertation possible. My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Dr Colin P. Turner. I have been amazingly fortunate to have had a supervisor who has assisted me through his intellectual mind and comprehensive approaches. My thesis outline, which has been shaped through his strong contribution, has illuminated my dissertation like a map. His insightful guidance and patience have been greater than I could possibly thank him for.

I must also thank to my wife, whose never-failing encouragement did not allow me to lose my concentration. In particular, the *tawakkul* (trust in Allah) that she showed me by words and actions has greatly impressed me and practically helped me to surmount many crisis situations through these difficult years, and to finish this dissertation. I am deeply thankful also to Abdullah Aymaz for encouraging me in this research and for supporting me through his precious inspirations.

The friendly atmosphere of the School of Government and International Affairs in Durham University has made it an enjoyable to place in which to study. This thesis would not have been possible without the help and friendship I have received over the past three and a half years from too many people to mention. My special thanks go to Prof. Dr Emma Murphy for her help and encouragement. In particular too, thanks must go to Dr Hasan Horkuc and Mrs Barbara Farnworth.

I owe my deepest debt of gratitude to my dear friends, Dr Omer Faruk Calkan, Dusmamat Karimov, Dr Hakan Gok, Dr Faruk Ozalp and Dr Belgin Ozalp. I cannot put my thanks into words to express my gratitude to my parents, Celal Kuru and Yildiz Kuru, for the untiring moral support, love and encouragement they have shown me throughout my studies.

A Note on Transliteration

Saïd Nursi's writings were originally written in Ottoman Turkish. Ottoman Turkish is used here to mean the Turkish language as found in written records for the area controlled by the Ottoman Empire (c.1300–1919) and in use in Turkey from 1919 until the adoption of the Roman alphabet (officially introduced in 1928). Ottoman Turkish covers Turkish written in the Arabic alphabet.

As a matter of fact, Nursi uses, in most cases, Arabic and Persian sentences as they were used in Ottoman Turkish without translation. For example, Persian words such as *asâ-yi Mûsâ* (staff of Moses) and *âzâ-yi Ibrahim* (part of Abraham) were used in their original form and without translation.

However, scripts of Turkish version of the *Risale-i Nur* were romanised in accordance with modern Turkish usage. Some limitations were seen in conversation. In particular, the orthography of the Ottoman Turkish original reveals a conflict with modern Turkish. Therefore, all Arabic and Persian words were italicised and transliterated in accordance with Library of Congress Romanisation regulations for non-Roman scripts. Transliterated Persian and Arabic words comply with rules the found in these two tables: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/arabic.pdf>, and <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/persian.pdf>

Originally, some words were used in Persian form, such as *Nafs-i lawwāmah*. Later, these words were changed into Arabic and written as *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* in accordance with Library of Congress regulations. Some book titles written in Nursi's early period were also rewritten in transliterated format according to Ottoman Turkish, such as "*Muḥākamāt*".

The Arabic-to-English transliteration list employed in this thesis follows Library of

Congress Romanisation regulations for non-Roman scripts.¹

<i>Alone</i>	<i>Romanisation</i>
ا	a
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	‘a
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
و	w

¹ <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/arabic.pdf>

هـ، ة	h
ي	y

Vowels and Diphthongs

اَ	a	اِ	ā (see Rule 5)	اِو	ī
اُ	u	اِو	á (see Rule 6(a))	اِو	aw
اِ	i	اِو	ū	اِو	ay

Declaration

I hereby declare that no portion of the work that appears in this study has been used in support of an application of another degree in qualification to this or any other university or institutions of learning.

Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

To my wife

Introduction

Man has always been curious about the self and its secrets. Many scholars from different parts of the world and from different backgrounds have offered explanations of the subject. Philosophers, scientists and theologians have written extensively on self-knowledge and have also tried to unravel the dynamics of an individual's connection with spiritual beings or, ultimately, with God. This connection appears to be a critical path in understanding the secrets of the self. The questions and problems associated with the self and the understanding of oneself became more obvious from the nineteenth century on. On this subject, Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi's concept of *anā* in many ways sheds light on our path, as it presents the tools each individual requires in order to take a stand against these challenges.

This study aims to bring some tangible insights to questions about the secrets of the self. To achieve this, theories developed by both Islamic and Western thinkers are discussed and compared, the focus being on the writings of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi. Also, one important term in the Qur'ān, *nafs* (self), is studied through a semantic and a typological analysis. As a result of these analyses, finally, some verses – namely, core verses in terms of the aims of the study – are selected, and *tafsīrs* of these verses are included in the arguments.

One other aim of this study is to develop a roadmap for anyone who wishes to explore the puzzle-like structure of the human being. Up until now, studies have been developed in two separate frameworks, that is, in Western and Islamic literatures, which have their own terminologies. Therefore, it is difficult to discuss these together. Before moving on with the discussions, it is important to clarify the extent to which terms developed both in the Western and the Islamic literatures overlap with each other. In addition, it is also important to discuss the concept of self in both literatures in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this major concept. To achieve this goal, this thesis follows a chronological course in developing arguments. In a sense, the thesis tries to follow in the footsteps of many thinkers from the West and the East, and also from diverse backgrounds, in a methodical manner.

In the main introduction, the development of Western philosophical thought with a focus on the self is reviewed, from the pre-Socratic era up until the twentieth century and modern-day thinkers like Paul Tillich (d. 1965) and Martin Buber (d. 1965). The ideas of cornerstone

philosophers and theologians such as Socrates (d. 399 BC), Plato (d. 347 BC), Aristotle (d. 322 BC), Descartes (d. 1650), Spinoza (d. 1677), Freud (d. 1939), Jung (d. 1961), Buber and Tillich are summarised, with a focus on their interpretation of and contributions to arguments about the self, self-acknowledgement, and the relation of oneself to God. One important reason for selecting these scholars from different traditions and time periods is the contributions they have made to the topic.

Ancient Philosophers: Sophism, the Presocratic Era, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

Sophism: Pre-Socratic-era sophism can be considered the first tradition in the history of philosophy to engage in discovering the secrets of the divine and of the self. The motivations of the sophists were practical and economic rather than psychological, moral and divine. All in all, they were not particularly interested in finding out the reality of the self. Sophist teachings were focused more on the best ways of living. Protagoras famously said, “Man is the measure of all things.” Stace, in his work entitled *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*, argues that by ‘man’ Protagoras did not mean mankind at large, but the individual man, and that by ‘measure of all things’ he meant the standard of truth of all things.¹ So the school of sophism departed from the path of further exploring the secrets of the self. Instead, its pathway of thought ultimately led to scepticism and subjectivism.²

PreSocratic era: The concept of soul in the Pre-Socratic era was akin to a breath-soul: it was mainly composed of air (or other elements) and had the function of rendering the body.³ One of the most interesting Pre-Socratic theories about the soul was that developed by Pythagoras. In the teachings of Pythagoras, purifying the soul represents a means of establishing the best for oneself in the afterlife, and even of gaining quasi-divine status. Pythagoras’ theories also expand into the realm of science, as he seeks understanding of the order that is in the universe in order to make the soul orderly. Thus his theories are related to the soul on the one hand and to the universe on the other. Pythagoreanism acknowledges a living thing as a composite

¹ W. T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 113.

² Kamala. Roy, *The Concept of Self*. (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966), 2.

³ Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1994).

being composed of soul and body, with soul being more important owing to its potential in ethical, metaphysical and religious thought.⁴

Socrates may have been the first, and one of the most important, philosophers to bring the focus back to soul in relation to self and back to these concepts in relation to the universe and the well-being of individuals. He also influenced many who followed, such as Aristotle and Plato. For Socrates, soul is the essence and the real self of a man. He further explores the essentiality of soul in relation to the materialistic universe around it. For him, materialism is a form of alienation from the truth and the true world. A life of joy and truth depends on a man's knowing himself as a soul-in-a-body and as a being-in-the world. Such a man "will see through the illusions of pleasure and pain that pervade the various shadow realms".⁵ Socrates' ideas about soul, self-discipline and awareness are comparable to those of mainstream Islamic and Jewish scholars, which will be discussed in the following sections and chapters.

Plato: According to Plato, soul has three principles, namely reason, desire and passion. Plato also claims that the third principle, passion, comes to the assistance of reason against desire, but never conversely.⁶ To further elaborate on the terminology that Plato used, it is useful to understand Plato's concept of self-mastery. This may be thought in line with Socrates' roadmap for attaining a joyful life: "To be a master of oneself is to have the higher part of the soul rule over the lower, which also means reason over desire."⁷ It might also be appropriate to conclude that passion is only valid and existent in the pursuit to master oneself. Plato defines desire as insatiable by nature and as an element that needs to be mastered to avoid self-destruction. It is possible to see that Plato's way of thinking led to the development of new concepts such as consciousness and unconsciousness in the centuries to follow. Also, he was one of the first to bring the mental dimension (reason) into the very centre of the discussion.

⁴ Ibid., 114–15.

⁵ Nalin Ranasinghe, *The Soul of Socrates* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 103.

⁶ Roy, *The Concept of Self*, 4.

⁷ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 115.

Aristotle developed a new approach for identifying the divisions of the soul. In his *De Anima*, Aristotle asserts that there are three levels in a living being. The lowest is the nutritive, the second appetitive, and the highest rational and cognitive. These ways of functioning are respectively termed by Aristotle the plant soul, the animal soul and the human soul.⁸ His explanations and discussions concerning the way the human body functions and how it relates to the soul are crude and unscientific if analysed by the tools of modern science. However, the importance of Aristotle's work is the way in which he defines body and soul in relation to one another. In a sense, Aristotle, in his quest to identify soul, follows in the footsteps of his predecessor Plato. Aristotle has answers to questions such as how the body functions and what the impact of soul is. He uses the term 'pneuma' to explain bodily functions such as movement. He also defines the heart as the location where rational and cognitive being is. The works of Aristotle can be considered an attempt to establish a functioning and comprehensive link between the body and the soul. The soul is not an isolated entity, but is closely related and linked to the body and also expresses itself with and through the body.

The theories developed by the early Greek philosophers had a remarkable impact on later philosophers. The fundamentals set by the classical era philosophers about the notion of soul and its relation to the universe have not changed much. The self was regarded as an immaterial, non-bodily entity, spiritual in nature; but on the other hand, it also cannot be identified with experiences or combinations of experiences. Descartes followed the ideological pattern of the ancient Greek philosophers.

Seventeenth Century Philosophers: Descartes and Spinoza

Descartes was the originator of the dualism between soul and body. In his account, body is the material substance, which follows the laws of physics, and soul is the immaterial substance, which does not follow the laws of physics and also leads the body.⁹ One other important point in the Cartesian framework is the existence of three kinds of substances,

⁸ Ronald M. Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 580.

⁹ Richard A. Watson, René Descartes', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 2011, 28 September (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/158787/Rene-Descartes>.

namely God, souls and matter. It should be noted here that according to Descartes the created substances (souls (mind) and matter (body)) are both dependent on God. However, Descartes still speaks of these two notions (soul and matter) as substances which are restricted by their dependence on God.¹⁰ Thus according to Descartes a true understanding of the substances (soul and matter) is not completely irrelevant to the concept of God. Such a pattern of thinking will be seen in more detail in the philosophy of Paul Tillich and Martin Buber. Also, it should be noted here that many Muslim scholars developed a similar understanding of the subject.

Spinoza objects to Descartes' notion of substance, as he argues that there cannot be more than one substance with the same nature because essence necessarily involves existence. According to Spinoza, everything that exists is in God. His explanation of individuation or individual substances is: "Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, or modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way."¹¹

Psychoanalysis: Freud and Jung

For almost all researchers and theorists working in the field of psychoanalysis, the main aim has been understanding the conscious and its functions. It is in a sense key to unravelling the secrets of the self. In the second half of the nineteenth century, psychoanalysis, Freud and Jung, brought another dimension to the quest of man about the secrets of the self. This time, the key notions were the conscious, *id*, *ego* and *superego* and their functions and interconnections. Jung detached himself from the materialistic and reductionist approach of Freud and many others at the time and developed theories about 'psyche', focusing on the spiritual side of man. These two hugely important names in the history of psychoanalysis are studied in order to summarise the developments that took place in their time.

Freud developed a systematic structure for defining the human psyche. His structure consists of three terms, *id*, *ego* and *superego*. From that time up until now, almost every study in this

¹⁰ Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 229.

field has been affected by this systematic approach or structure. Before Freud's theory, all relevant studies in the field were based on the relation between the conscious and the unconscious. Freud's new theory is also based on the same concepts, but with some differences. Freud came up with supportive terms to clarify the topic. For him, there are four terms which illuminate the subject, namely consciousness, repression, unconsciousness and pre-consciousness. Freud does not really say anything new about consciousness. For him, consciousness and unconsciousness are the very fundamentals of psychoanalysis and are both divisions of mental life. In his works, there is no room for spirituality as a human faculty.

Not having a clear distinction between conscious and unconscious brought the predecessors of Freud to a halt. Freud developed a new structure, where he argues for the terms together with the *ego* and the *id*. "The entity which starts out from the system perception and begins being preconscious the '*ego*', and by following Groddeck (d. 1934) on calling the other part of the mind, into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were unconscious, the '*id*'." ¹² In other words, the *ego* is a system of perceptions and therefore closely related to consciousness and pre-consciousness, and the *id* is the source of all drives and instincts, which is related to unconsciousness. According to Freud, the *ego* and the *id* combine in the way a rider and a horse combine. The rider controls and guides the horse, which has the power and the drive. ¹³

According to Freud, the driver of the *ego* is perception, and it represents reason and sanity, whereas for the *id* the driver is instinct and represents passions. In this structure, the *id* can be defined as a childlike portion of the psyche, which reaches its goals and disregards all consequences. Freud argues that at the very beginning of life there is only the *id*. At that stage, a human being only possesses primal urges and is only subject to the principle of pleasure. At a later stage, to meet the demands of reality and the environment, part of the *id* splits off to form the *ego*.

¹² Groddeck Georg, *The book of the it*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1976), 33.

¹³ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, *The International Psycho-Analytical Library* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), 15.

According to Freud's theory, both the *ego* and the *superego* are offshoots of the *id*. The *superego* represents the higher nature of the human being, which commends prohibitions and encapsulates the ideals that form the personality. *Ego* acts as the balance, which considers the demands of the *id* and morality and so acts for what the final decision is.

For Jung, the human psyche is a structure already unified with body and spirit and does not need to struggle to be unified; however, an individual needs to work on personal development and should try to insert new dimensions so as to protect the unified psyche throughout his or her lifetime. In this process the absolute aim for the psyche is to reach *individuation*. To achieve this, one should increase the awareness of one's origin, which is dependent upon the archetypal psyche. Jung believed that the individuation of psyche is not only a product of personal experience but is also dependent on external factors such as religion, culture and myths.

According to Edinger (d. 1998), "It was Jung's further discovery that the archetypal psyche has a structuring or ordering principle which unifies the various archetypal contents. This is the central archetype or archetype of wholeness which Jung has termed the self."¹⁴ Jung's archetypal psyche has two centres, the self and the *ego*, and their relationship, which is called the *ego*–self axis, is vitally important. The self is the supreme psychic authority and the centre of the unconscious and conscious, while the *ego* is the subordinate and centre of the conscious. The *ego* represents subjective identity while the self represents objective identity. Therefore, self can simply be described as an inner deity. This means that the self helps us to understand the creative point where God and man meet.

This relationship offers some ideas and reflects man's relation to his creator as depicted in religious myths. According to Jung, the changing relation between *ego* and self includes some meanings about psychological development as well. The whole life of a man can be roughly divided into two parts. The first part represents *ego*–self separation, while the second

¹⁴ EF Edinger and CG Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology, *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche* (Penguin Books, 1973), 3.

is their reunion. The phenomenology of the self is realised in the second part, which includes the individuation process.¹⁵

Edinger suggests that

if we speak rationally, we must inevitably make a distinction between *ego* and self which contradicts our definition of self. The fact is the conception of the self is a paradox. It is simultaneously the centre and the circumference of the circle of totality. Considering *ego* and self as two separate entities is merely a necessary rational device for discussing these things.¹⁶

On the other hand, for the first half of life, there are two states of being – inflation and alienation. Starting from the third state, the *ego*–self axis reaches consciousness, and this state is known as individuation.

The first state, one of the alternations in the first half of life, is inflation. It approaches under the perspective of accompanying the identification of the *ego* with the self. Edinger defines inflation as “a state in which something small (the *ego*) has arrogated to itself the qualities of something larger (the self) and hence is blown up beyond the limits of its proper size”.¹⁷

When we are born, no *ego* or consciousness exists in earliest infancy. So we know that the self is born but that the *ego* is made. The development of the *ego* causes inflation, so it also causes alienation, which is the second state of the alternation in the first half of life.

Alienation damages the *ego*–self axis. We generally interpret alienation negatively but Jung has another perspective on this situation. He accepts alienation as a kind of unhealing psychic wound which is created in the process of learning. If the integrity and stability of the *ego* are to be preserved, a living connection with the self should be preserved. The self as the centre and totality of the psyche gives the *ego* its strength and stability. During the state of alienation, the *ego* is disidentified from the self (which is desirable). Disconnection of *ego* from self, on the other hand, is undesirable.

¹⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷ Ibid., 7.

Discussing the approach of modern existentialism to alienation, Edlinger writes:

Modern existentialism is symptomatic of the collective alienated state. Many current novels and plays depict lost, meaningless lives. The modern artist seems forced to depict again and again, to bring home to all of us, the experience of meaninglessness. However this need not be considered a totally negative phenomenon. Alienation is not a dead end. Hopefully it can lead to a greater awareness of the heights and depths of life.¹⁸

Similarly, another famous existentialist philosopher, Kierkegaard (d. 1855), reflects on alienation in his works. According to Kierkegaard,

so much is said about wasted lives – but only that man’s life is wasted who lived on, so deceived by the joys of life or by its sorrow that he never became eternally and decisively conscious of himself as spirit ... or (what is the same thing) never became aware and in the deepest sense received an impression of the fact that there is a God, and that he, he himself ... exist before this God.¹⁹

Just as the experience of active inflation is a necessary accompaniment of *ego* development, so is the experience of alienation. It is a necessary prelude to awareness of the self.

There exists a whole philosophical system based on the state of *ego*–self identity. The system sees everything in the world as deriving from and relating to the individual *ego*. According to Jung, individuation is a process rather than a goal. The whole set of relations of an individual can contribute to the process. One of the main dynamics of this process is the consciousness. It is both a product of self itself and an instrument to unfold the secrets of it.²⁰

According to Jung, one of modern man’s urgent needs is to discover the reality and value of the inner subjective world of the psyche.²¹ This can be discovered only through symbols, but

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling; and, the Sickness Unto Death* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954), p. 159.

²⁰ Edinger and Psychology, *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche*, 80.

²¹ Ibid., 109.

unfortunately modern man has neither the time nor the desire to do so. The use of symbols will be discussed in more detail in discussing the theology of Paul Tillich.

In the context of this study, the teachings of two existentialist philosophers or theologians, Martin Buber and Paul Tillich, will be discussed. Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, which is a dialogical approach to man's relation with God, and Paul Tillich's ultimate concern with the conception of God in the human understanding, will be explained. These two thinkers were selected for this study for several reasons. First and most important is the period in which they lived. They were both, like Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi, born around the 1880s and died around the 1960s. So our choice gives us the opportunity to explore the ideas of leading Christian and Jewish thinkers in conjunction with the ideas of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi.

One other reason for selecting these two thinkers was their existential orientation. Existentialism at that time was, and it still is, one of the most popular philosophical theories about man's nature, his interpretation of himself and nature.

In its most general understanding, existentialism may be defined as a philosophical theory which realises the requirement of new categories to grasp human existence. This approach gives primacy to experience over understanding. This experience is an element which, in a sense, governs the scientific and moral inquiry about what makes us ourselves. Existentialism states that an individual has full responsibility for creating the meaning of his or her own life, which brings the idea of personal choice and responsibility. The very fundamental question in theological existentialism is man's relation to God. This relation is the key to understanding the essence of our personal choices, responsibilities, and selves. In this study, the self in relation to the concept of God will be discussed.

The Existentialist Outlook of Martin Buber and Paul Tillich

Atheistic existentialism in Europe after the Second World War was a philosophy of crisis. At that time, the frightening reality of death and suffering was something in Europe which every individual experienced to a degree. After such turbulent times, individuals were being drawn away from spirituality and religion. Determinism and materialism were the mindsets of individuals rediscovering the meaning, existence and essence of the self. All forms of religion and spirituality were being abandoned during any philosophical or sociological pursuit.

In such times, both Martin Buber and Paul Tillich were able to grasp the requirements and the psychology of modern man, especially the dilemma between the spiritual and secular. D. F. Polish explains Buber's existentialist outlook by saying "it does not ask questions about the ultimate nature of being or about that which we cannot know from our own experience ... Buber focuses on individuals and how they live their lives."²²

Just like Martin Buber, Tillich also tried to develop his theology to satisfy modern man. While trying to achieve this challenging task he realises the limitations of human mind and experience. According to Tillich, "the situation to which theology must respond is the totality of man's creative self-interpretation in a special period".²³ In mentioning "man's creative self-interpretation" Tillich describes the very fundamental relation or instinct of man: his relation with himself, the wish to understand the secrets of the self, its dynamics, motives and exclusivity. Such a theology, that would respond to this very fundamental phenomenon, is surely a very helpful one, especially in our own times.

Martin Buber realises the difference between two worlds – the world of *It* and the world of *Thou*. He does not choose one over the other, but lays out the differences between them. In his own words, "without It man cannot live. However, he who lives with It alone is not a man."²⁴ The world of *It* can be identified through time and space, whereas the world of *Thou* is not set in the context of either of these.²⁵ Bearing this in mind, it may be said that the *I-It* relation is a form of relation through which the world is reduced to objects or, in other words, knowable things. In the words of Smith in his Translator's Preface, this would be in the interests of a scientist. This relation or form of understanding is also inevitable and inescapable, but as Buber argues, transforming this subject-to-object relation into a subject-to-subject relation and engaging in an *I-Thou* relation provides an opportunity to realise the wholeness of being. The possibility of transforming the *I-It* relation into an *I-Thou* relation

²² Daniel F. Polish, *Talking About God: Exploring the Meaning of Religious Life with Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich and Heschel* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2007), p. 61.

²³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1978), p. 4.

²⁴ Martin Buber and Ronald Gregor Smith, *I and Thou* (2nd edn; Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), p. 52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

also means that there is a potential in every *I-It* relation to change form and show the unity or wholeness of being.

This discussion takes another dimension when Buber writes, “How powerful is the unbroken world of *It*, and how delicate are the appearances of the *Thou*.”²⁶ This may be considered an insight into Buber’s idea about how this unity works: appearances of *Thou* in a world of *It*. According to Buber, this kind of relation can help us to *glimpse eternity*, instead of the nothingness of the grave.

Through the primary words (*I-It* and *I-Thou*), Buber argues the two poles of humanity, ‘*Person*’ and ‘*Individuality*’. These two poles can be defined by the *I* of the two primary words *I-It* and *I-Thou*. The *I* of the primary word *I-It* represents individuality as it is conscious of itself as subject which experiences and uses. The *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* represents person as it is conscious of itself as subjectivity. The main difference is the choice between differentiation and engaging in a relation. “The one is the spiritual form of detachment, the other the spiritual form of natural solidarity of connexion.”²⁷ In Buber’s understanding, man becomes more personal and looks on his *Self*, rather than being concerned with its *My* by strengthening the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* in the twofold *I*.

In Buber’s theology/philosophy, a psychological welfare can be established by finding God in everyday objects. According to Buber, the eternal *Thou* is the God where all extended lines of relations meet. This also means that, in every particular *Thou* in every *I-Thou* relation, the eternal *Thou* is addressed or can be found through the realisation of the inborn *Thou*. Buber also argues that the inborn *Thou*, which is realised in every relation, can be consummated in none but only in direct relation with the eternal *Thou*. The concept of the inborn *Thou* in this sense is the longing for the idea of God or eternity of humankind, which again is only satisfied with the *glimpse of eternity*, or being consummated in eternal *Thou*.²⁸ By arguing for

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁷ Buber and Smith, *I and Thou.*, p. 85.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

the appearance of the eternal *Thou* in every particular *Thou*, Buber expresses the unity of being in which God can be found.

Buber writes that the eternal *Thou* cannot be defined by material or finite things, and cannot be experienced or thought. However, a form of relation can be established with the eternal *Thou*. Buber extends his ideas and suggests some insights into how this relation is established with God. In his account, God enters into direct relation with us as the absolute Person, the Person who cannot be limited and gives unity to being.²⁹

It is important here to further discuss Buber's concept of absolute Person. For Buber, defining the concept of God as a principle or an idea was incorrect. As a result, he stresses that he talks only of what God is in his relation to a man. He speaks of God in a dialogical, relational manner vis-à-vis human beings and the universe. In his own words, what he meant by God in this concept was "who – whatever else he may be – enters into a direct relation with us men in creative, revealing and redeeming acts, and thus makes it possible for us to enter into a direct relation with him".³⁰ Bearing in mind the impossibility of declaring what God's essential being is, Buber tries to show the nature of our relation, mutuality and dialogue with God. In Buber's view, a similar mutuality or relation is only possible (it may be on a different level) between persons.³¹ It is on this ground that he finds it both permitted and necessary to say that God is also a Person.

A similar approach can be seen in the writings of Feuerbach (d. 1872). Feuerbach writes:

Religion at least Christian, is the relation of man to himself, or more correctly to his own nature; but a relation to it, viewed as a nature apart from his own. The divine being is nothing else than the human being, or, rather, the human nature purified, freed from the limits of individual man, made objective. All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of human nature.³²

²⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 168.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ludwig Feuerbach and George Eliot, *The Essence of Christianity* (Great Books in Philosophy.; Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989), p. 14.

Although Feuerbach uses a similar terminology to that of Buber, unlike him Feuerbach sees religion as the disunion of man from himself. He presents his concept of God as the antithesis of man. “God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect ...”³³ Again the terminology is similar, but the conclusions are completely different.

One other point of comparison between these two thinkers is the attributes of God. Buber realises God’s infinitely many attributes and, just like Spinoza, divides them into three groups rather than two. The first two groups relate to spiritual being and to natural being. The third relates to personal being, which would be the *stem* of all men’s being as spirit and being as nature.³⁴ Feuerbach has a similar understanding, with a completely different standpoint. According to Feuerbach, “God is nothing else than the projected personality of man”.³⁵

It is important to stress here that these two completely different approaches both realise the help received from the concept of God or God’s attributes in trying to understand the person or personality, or vice versa. This will be discussed further in the course of this study.

It is important to gain a better understanding of Buber’s suggestions concerning this issue, especially in the context of this study. The concept of attribute of personal being is novel and striking.

Buber may have only focused on the relation between person and absolute Person, but he inevitably explored the nature of each side in this relation. It is easy to agree with Buber when he suggests that there should be a common or similar ground if two notions are in dialogue, but using the same analogy while discussing the relation of an individual and God, or as Buber chooses to say a person and God, is too much of a reduction. Buber realises this, of course, and corrects the terminology he uses by upgrading his suggestion “*Person*” to “*absolute Person*”. This approach may be acceptable if it is critiqued from an existentialist point of view.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁴ Buber and Smith, *I and Thou*, p. 169.

³⁵ Feuerbach and Eliot, *The Essence of Christianity.*, p. 226.

If such an approach is accepted, it is unnecessary to discuss whether the projected image of God possesses any deficiencies or not, because Buber already agrees that the subjectivity and finitude of the person are limiting factors in understanding the essence of God. In other words, Buber's existentialist approach only discusses the person's or the individual's standpoint, essence and reality rather than giving equal weight to both sides. This is, of course, only natural. His conclusions give a better understanding than the terminology he developed.

Buber challenges many concepts and develops a universal relation from which all other relations would develop in his book *I and Thou*. D. F. Polish comments on Buber's work as follows: "the notion that our own reality is shaped by relations in which we participate is the foundation of Buber's worldview. To him, it is the definitive feature of human experience."³⁶ Buber's dialogue philosophy can shed some light on different disciplines, from theology to sociology and psychology, and also will help us in exploring some different or similar ideas in the context of this study.

Paul Tillich was a theologian who was aware of the impact of the new set of references brought by modern times, especially scientific and technical. This may be one of the reasons why his theology/philosophy was so popular, stimulating and different. He developed his theology to satisfy the individual living in modern times. Although he speaks of Christian theology, his description is valid and useful for people from different faiths. He writes: "theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received."³⁷ If a set of references is imposed on a different set, without maintaining the connections with its domain, then the transitory is elevated to a level of eternal validity. This may be described as religious orthodoxy or fundamentalism.

³⁶ Polish, *Talking About God: Exploring the Meaning of Religious Life with Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich and Heschel.*, p. 66.

³⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1.

Aliye Cinar writes that, according to Paul Tillich, the main problem for theologians was trying to reconcile the God of the Book with the new findings of science.³⁸ Realising the new set of references, he was able to suggest tangible solutions to the problems, rather than adapting one notion to the other. His analysis of religion and religious life in his time is still convincing. According to Tillich, modern man “feels that the concrete religions fail to express their profound concern adequately”.³⁹ In his analysis he focuses on the *dimension of depth*, which has been lost in religion. This loss in the minds and appreciation of man is a consequence of the new set of references in our understanding of the world. In his own words:

The loss of the dimension is caused by the relation of man to his world and to himself in our period, the period in which nature is being subjected scientifically and technically to the control of man. In this period, life in the dimension of depth is replaced by life in the horizontal dimension.⁴⁰

The development in our industrialised society is not vertical but horizontal, and Tillich thinks that the boundary of this development is not definable. The individual in his horizontal development transforms everything into a tool, with the inevitable conclusion that he becomes a tool himself, or an object among objects. “But he asks, a tool for what, there is no answer.”⁴¹

Of course, Tillich has some answers to the question of how to regain the dimension of depth. Realisation of this lost dimension is his answer: “by this realization ... he [man] is not only separated but also reunited.”⁴²

In order to regain this lost dimension in religion and truly interpret the message in today’s society, one of the key concepts that Tillich explores is the *symbols of faith*. The symbols or metaphors are also the only tools we have for glimpsing the ultimate reality or being-itself.

³⁸ Aliye Çinar, *Varoluşçu Teoloji: Paul Tillich’te Din ve Sembol* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2007), 17.

³⁹ Paul Tillich and F. Forrester Church, *The Essential Tillich : An Anthology of the Writings of Paul Tillich* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

Thus: “every assertion about being-itself is either metaphorical or symbolic.”⁴³ According to Tillich, “characteristic of a symbol is that it opens up levels of reality which otherwise are closed for us”. When one considers the symbolic nature of art, Tillich writes, “a picture or a poem reveal elements of reality which cannot be approached scientifically”.⁴⁴

Paul Tillich appreciates the impossibility of discussing what is not in the realm of our senses, or rational, in its terms. However, although man is finite in his experiences and feelings, there is an *element of infinity in man*, or a *passion for the infinite*. Tillich sees faith as a human potential, because “man is able to understand in an immediate personal and central act the meaning of the ultimate, the unconditional, the absolute, the infinite”.⁴⁵ In his understanding, symbols are all we have in our inadequate finitude.

It is a fact that symbols, just as Tillich writes, can reveal elements of reality which otherwise would be closed to us, but symbols on their own cannot be enough to give us an understanding of the concept of God. Another problem may be the difficulties associated with the interpretation of symbols for every individual. Stating the importance of symbols is a reality, but this does not really help in the context.

It may be, as a result of Tillich’s existential orientation, that he develops the situations or questions, and from there moves back to the situation of the **human being** in the face of, or against, that situation. For example, on the fundamental question of theology about God, Tillich believes that such a question can only be possible with an awareness of God being present; this awareness precedes the question, because the answer is already implied in the question, and this awareness is from **God’s** essential being (fulfilled potential–infinite) rather than his actual being (actual–finite).⁴⁶ There comes the concept of potential infinity being present in actual finitude. This potential infinity or the awareness of infinity to which man belongs is the main driving force towards faith. In Tillich’s theology/philosophy, this is an unconditional concern, which is the concern about the unconditional. It is important here to

⁴³ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 179.

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

clarify what Tillich means by “concern”: “The word ‘concern’ points to two sides of a relationship, relation between the one who is concerned and his concern.”⁴⁷

Tillich does not think of God as a being, which exists in time and space, because such a pathway of thinking constrains God within a finite frame. However, all beings are finite, and if God is the Creator of all beings, God cannot logically be finite since a finite being cannot be the sustainer of an infinite variety of finite things. Thus God is considered as being beyond being, above finitude and limitation, the power or essence of *being itself*. Tillich stated that since things in existence are corrupt and therefore ambiguous, no finite thing can be (by itself) infinite. All that is possible is for the finite to be a vehicle for revealing the infinite, but the two should never be confused.

Tillich argues that God is the *ultimate concern* and that this *ultimate concern must transcend every preliminary finite and concrete concern*. In other words, this concern must declare supremacy over every other concern. Tillich explains what he calls the ‘*inescapable inner tension in the idea of God*’ as follows:

It (ultimate concern) must transcend the whole realm of finitude in order to be the answer to the question implied in finitude. However, in transcending the finite the religious concern loses the concreteness of a being-to-being relationship. It tends to become not only absolute but also abstract, provoking reactions from the concrete element. This is the inescapable inner tension in the idea of God.⁴⁸

Just like Martin Buber, Tillich also writes that every being can participate in the ground of being or being-itself. This is the way, for Tillich, that God can be known, but, as discussed above, this can only be described symbolically.

Here it is important to state that Paul Tillich was heavily criticised for **underplaying** the importance of practices in religious life in his theology/philosophy. From a similar point of view, it may be fair to say that he developed some of his ideas, but did not explore them to a level where they evolved from theories to actual practices and applicable notions. Martin

⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 211.

Buber's dialogical philosophy is more useful in terms of applicability, as it gives some personal insights into how the relational with the ultimate could transform man's understanding. Of course, Tillich's theology is valuable as it introduces religion and religious life to the domain of those who feel detached from any form of spirituality. As was stated above, Tillich's work is important in the context of this study as it formulates or systematically discusses a number of concepts.

One of the concepts that Paul Tillich argues is the "inescapable inner tension in the idea of God".⁴⁹ Strangely, Tillich sees this "inescapable inner tension in the idea of God"⁵⁰ as a starting point for an examination of the history of religion. Instead of developing his ideas further, Tillich moves away from a very critical and crucial point. If there is such a tension in an idea that man is ultimately concerned about, and if this tension is inescapable, as Tillich writes, then man should be equipped to deal with this tension. Again, as Tillich suggests, "the psychology of personality" is "highly dynamic and requires a dynamic theory of faith as the most personal of all personal acts".⁵¹ In Tillich's understanding, this dynamic theory of faith is an act of total personality, which binds the unconscious element in personal structure to the conscious and centred act, namely freedom and faith. Similarly, this is another point at which Tillich becomes controversial since he speaks of a dynamic theory of faith without exploring what makes it dynamic and applicable. By introducing Freud's *ego* and *superego* into his argument he moves further away from introducing a dynamic theory, but concludes with a description of the term 'psychology of faith'. Tillich recognises man's ability to decide for or against reason, and "this is the power of his self, the centre of self-relatedness in which all elements of his being are united".⁵² This power or centre of self-relatedness is the ground where faith is based. Without explaining the fundamentals and essentiality of the self, Tillich jumps to a conclusion, once again missing the links.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 4.

⁵² Ibid., 7.

Most strikingly, Tillich tries to justify the Trinitarian structure in Christian monotheism through the ‘inescapable inner tension in the idea of God’. This time he calls this tension the ‘need for a balance between the concrete and the absolute’. According to Tillich,

the concreteness of man’s ultimate concern drives him toward polytheistic structures; the reaction of the absolute element against these drives him toward monotheistic structures; and the need for a balance between the concrete and the absolute drives him toward Trinitarian structure.⁵³

This degree of reductionism should be heavily criticised in Tillich’s theory, as it conflicts with itself. If the concreteness of the ultimate concern is driving man towards a polytheistic structure, then what is the element that is adjusting the balance between the concreteness and the absoluteness to a Trinitarian structure rather than to something else? Tillich rightly writes, “Trinitarian monotheism is not a matter of the number three.”⁵⁴ However, he again concludes with the statement, “Trinitarian monotheism is concrete monotheism”.⁵⁵ If, as Tillich argues, Trinitarian structure is a qualitative rather than a quantitative characteristic of God, and if God is the ground of being, being-itself, then the attributes should be infinite rather than three. This realisation of God’s attributes in every creation, in every possible, potential and actual, is the understanding of Islamic scholars. A similar approach can also be seen in Martin Buber’s theology/philosophy. It is fair to suggest that Tillich jumps to a false conclusion with the correct set of reasons. The main reason for this may be the influence of his Christian background, or his wish to justify his mindset.

Method of Analysis

After a summary of intellectual thought in the West and ancient philosophy, Chapter 1 focuses on the topic in the Qur’ān. Two different Qur’ān translations, one into English and the other into Turkish, were used in order to analyse and highlight possible differences in translations: *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’ān* by Abdullah Yūsuf Alī (d. 1953) (English translation) and *Kur’an-ı Hakīm’in Açıklamalı Meali* by Suat Yıldırım (1941–) (Turkish translation). The *Sunnah* (tradition) was also considered as a complementary source during

⁵³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 221.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

the course of the study, as the Prophet Muhammad is the first and foremost interpreter of the Qur'ān.

In Chapter 1, the Arabic word *nafs*, which corresponds to the meaning 'self', is reviewed. The word *nafs* is mostly translated into English as soul and self, but it is not a complementary match. For example, soul does not express the meaning of the *nafs* precisely but can be used as an equivalent. The meanings of these English words are close, but in the context of this study it is more appropriate to retain the original word, *nafs*. To overcome all these difficulties relating to the translation of words and concepts, typological and semantic analysis was carried out. Thus, three methods are applied in Chapter 1. The typology of the *nafs* verses summarises how many verses with the word there are in the Qur'ān, in how many different forms the word has been used, and how many different meanings are attributed to the word. This method – typological analysis – provides a detailed study of the topic in the Qur'ān and also enables the other method to focus on a limited number of selected verses and further elaborate on the topic.

Semantic analysis is also employed; it aims to elucidate the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān in detail by using the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān. For the semantic analysis, the method of Toshihiko Izutsu (d. 1993) has been followed.

Semantic analysis will help us to understand the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān in detail. Two important books by Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*⁵⁶ and *God and man in the Koran*,⁵⁷ are used as the main sources for the methodology of this chapter.

According to Izutsu, semantics, which is an analytical study of the terms in a language, is a tool influencing individuals' conceptions.⁵⁸ It is relevant to any individual who uses terms and words from any language. In his work *Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, Izutsu uses the analogy of a child trying to learn his or her mother tongue to argue his semantic

⁵⁶ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts on the Quran* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966).

⁵⁷ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (New York: Books for Libraries, 1980).

⁵⁸ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts on the Quran*, 11.

methods. A child would simply try to find out all defining attributes for each term to gain skills in his or her mother tongue.⁵⁹

Izutsu also draws attention to the three main ethical concepts in the Qur'ān. Divine Ethics, which focuses on describing God's ethical nature through the divine names and attributes of God, does not lie within the scope of Izutsu's work.⁶⁰ The second group is the basic ethical relation of man to God. Izutsu further describes this with concepts such as *Islām*, *īmān* and *taqwā* (fear).⁶¹ The third group is called Human Ethics and is more concerned with the ethical attitude of man towards the community in which he lives. This is covered mainly by Islamic jurisprudence.⁶² The first group is related to God Himself; however, the third is interested in the relation between man and man or society, whereas the second group of ethics is specifically focused on the relationship between God and man.

As highlighted above, the first and the third group of concepts, Divine Ethics and Human Ethics (ethics of man towards community), is studied by theologians and sociologists and lies outside the scope of Izutsu's work. The main focus of Izutsu's work is on the second group of concepts, which is the basic ethical relation of man to God. However, he explains very well the basic relations between these three terms in detail.⁶³ This means that these three groups of ethics are also closely related to each other.

In his semantic analysis method, Izutsu introduces the notion of 'descriptive' and 'evaluative' words. Descriptive words remain the same and explain the primary level of ethical discourse, whereas evaluative words can change and describe the secondary level. On this topic, Izutsu writes:

in the essentially nonreligious context of *Jāhilīyah*, 'humility' and 'self-surrender' were considered something disgraceful, a manifestation of weak and ignoble character, whilst 'haughtiness' and 'refusal to obey' were, in the eyes of pre-Islamic Arabs, marks of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 18.

⁶³ Ibid., 19.

noble nature. With the advent of Islam, the balance was completely overturned. Now, in the purely monotheistic context of Islam, ‘humility’ in the presence of God and total ‘self-surrender’ to Him became the highest virtues, and ‘haughtiness’ and ‘refusal to obey’ the marks of irreligiousness. In other words, the term denoting these personal properties completely changed their value. Whilst the descriptive layer of their meaning remained the same, their evaluative force changed from negative to positive or from positive to negative.⁶⁴

As is well-known, there are a variety of ways to know the meaning of a foreign word. Giving equivalent words is the simplest and also the most common way, but not a very reliable way. For example, the Arabic word *kāfir* is mainly translated as ‘misbeliever’, or the word *zālim* is translated as ‘evil-doer’. It is clear that it is not adequate simply to give the equivalent words, because the word *zālim* is not exactly ‘evil-doer’ and *kāfir* is not exactly ‘misbeliever’.⁶⁵ Izutsu writes that such a method frequently misleads rather than illuminating the concepts.⁶⁶

According to Izutsu, giving an equivalent meaning is quite helpful for the reader or hearer; but,

if you wish to grasp the semantic category of the word itself, we must inquire what sort of man, what type of character, what kind of acts are actually designated by this name in Old Arabic—in specific case, in the Qur’ān. Even a single example, provided that it is well-selected and relevant, may prove extremely illuminating.⁶⁷

Izutsu suggests that Qur’ānic words or notions should be explained by the Qur’ān itself, because there are a huge number of similar examples of the use of a single word. Gathering all examples systematically, comparing and checking them against one another, should provide the original meanings of those words or concepts. This true meaning might not be a single word, but a word-thing.⁶⁸

As an example, *kāfir* is translated as ‘misbeliever’ (or ‘disbeliever’ or ‘unbeliever’), but even the outer structures of the given equivalent words are essentially different. The Arabic word

⁶⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

kāfir has an independent unit of structure, which cannot be further analysed into component elements. However, the English words consist of two parts: an element implying a negative (mis-, dis-, un-,) and another element representing what may be called the material side of the meaning.⁶⁹ The material part, ‘believer’, suggests that the semantic category of the English equivalents of *kāfir* is concerned with the concept of belief only. However, the word *kāfir* is used in the period of pre-Islamic literature as well. Thus it cannot be considered with the concept of belief only. Izutsu further writes that the word *kāfir* has a much more comprehensive meaning than the given equivalent words in English (misbeliever, disbeliever or unbeliever). The original opposite of *kāfir* in Arabic is *shākir*, which means ‘thankful’, so English words such as ingratitude or ungratefulness should also be considered in this context as a translation of *kāfir*.⁷⁰

Another important argument about the use of equivalent words for translation is the effect of the particular cultures and regions on the meanings of the words. There are huge numbers of words, in every language, which are untranslatable.⁷¹ The more a word is expressive of a deep-rooted ethnic feature of a given culture, the harder it becomes to transpose it properly into another language.⁷²

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF IZUTSU’S SEMANTIC ANALYSIS METHOD

Izutsu suggests a method of semantic analysis that consists of seven pillars, namely: (a) contextual definition; (b) value of synonyms; (c) elucidation by contrast; (d) clarification by its negative form; (e) clusters of words; (f) parallelism; and (g) secular aspects of the term.⁷³

(a) *Contextual definition*. In the Qur’ān, some concepts are defined by verses in detail and Izutsu calls this ‘contextual definition’.⁷⁴ For example, a verse in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* defines the term *birr* (righteousness), saying:

⁶⁹ Ibid., 25–26.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 27.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 37–41.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 37.

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in *Allah* and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing. (2: 177)⁷⁵

(b) *Value of synonyms.* In the Qur'ān, some contexts and terms are sometimes explained by the synonym for the particular word. This helps in understanding the wider context of the word. This can be simply tested by replacing the word X with its synonym Y and checking whether the context of the sentence is wider or narrower.⁷⁶ Examples of this category can be seen in 7: 92–93/94–95.

(c) *Elucidation by contrast.* In some cases, the semantic structure of a given term is elucidated by its contrast, such as with the difference between *khayr* and *ḥasanah*. It is considered that *khayr* is generally used in opposition to *sharr*, whereas *ḥasanah* is opposed to *sayyi'ah*. Another example is that sometimes two different words might stand in opposition to a third term, such as both *kāfir* and *fāsiq* being opposites of *mu'min*.⁷⁷

(d) *Clarification by its negative form.* The case in which the semantic structure of an obscure word X is further described in terms of its negative for not-X is called clarification by its negative form. For example, *istikbara* is one of the attributes of a *kāfir*, and the opposing term *mu'min* can be explained by the negative form of *istikbara*.⁷⁸

(e) *Clusters of words.* Izutsu explains that in every language there are semantic clusters of words with peculiar relationships in between, such as 'wind' and 'to blow' in English. Therefore, every passage or term contributing to a field of meaning should be considered semantically. Izutsu further explains:

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 38–39.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 39.

in the Qur'ān the verb *iftara* ('to invent', 'to forge') most frequently takes as its grammatical 'object' the noun *kadhib* (a 'lie'), thus forming a well-nigh inseparable group. To join this group comes the word *zālim*. In fact the expression 'Who does more wrong, or who is more *unjust* (*aẓlam*) than he who forges (*iftara*) against God a lie (*kadhib*)?' is one of the set phrases of our Scripture. This makes it clear that the three words *iftara-kadhib-zālim* form in the Qur'ān a peculiar group or combination, a semantic field in the sense just explained.⁷⁹

(f) *Parallelism*. Very often, the rhetorical device of parallelism reveals the existence of a semantic relationship between words. In verses 29: 47 and 49,

And none denies Our signs save the *kāfir*

And none denies Our signs save the *zālim*,

the words *kāfir* and *zālim* are semantic equals owing to parallelism in the verses.⁸⁰

(g) *Secular aspects of the term*. The key ethical terms in the Qur'ān are not only used in the context of deep religious importance but also in secular meanings. Secular usage of the word can further clarify the concept. Izutsu gives the example of verse 26: 19, where Pharaoh says to Moses:

And thou didst a deed of thine which thou didst, and thou art an ungrateful [*kāfirīn*]!

the word *kāfirīn* in the verse refers to ingratitude and ungrateful actions.⁸¹

Tafsīr (exegesis) of eight verses, in addition to typology and semantic analysis, is the complementary method of the first chapter.⁸² These verses are considered as the core verses of the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān. *Tafsīr* (exegesis) is an important part of this study, as it helps to clarify the relation between soul and self and also to realise the distinctions between them in the Qur'ān. In discussing that section, several commentators on the Qur'ān who

⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Please see p.39

belong to three different periods of Islamic history – classical, medieval and modern – were chosen. From each period, two or three *tafsirs* were selected, from Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī (d. 923), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), Abū 'Abdullah al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273), Isma'il ibn 'Umar abū'l-Fidā' Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), Muhammed Hamdi Yazır (d. 1942), Syed Abū 'l- 'Alā Mawdūdī (d. 1972), Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) or Muhammad 'Ali As-Sabuni (1930–).

After attempting to elucidate this topic in the Qur'ān, Chapter 2 focuses on the works of two Sufi masters in the history of Islam, Al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) and Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240). Al-Ghazzālī is one of the most important figures in Islamic history, who contributed to the development of Sufism and Islamic philosophy in a period when the fundamentals of Islamic thought were heavily influenced and sometimes violated by the thought of Greek philosophy. In the first section of Chapter 3, Ghazzālī's ideas about the notion of *nafs* are discussed, with a focus on the relationship between man and God.

Ibn 'Arabī contributed mainly to the tradition of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being). He is one of the most important Sufi scholars, who wrote extensively on Unity of Being and influenced scholars not only in the Islamic world but throughout the world. He focused mainly on *marifah* (knowledge) on the path to perfection.

All these enormously important figures in the history of Islam, including Bediüzzaman Saīd Nursi (d. 1960), consider the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* to be the main sources for Islamic thought, hence the deliberate decision to dedicate a separate chapter to analysis of the topic in the Qur'ān.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the life of Saīd Nursi and the development of the idea of the *nafs* and *anā* in his discourse are reviewed in relation to previous discussions. Understanding the general outlook of the era in which Nursi lived is vitally important for gaining a better understanding of his works and writings. He lived in very turbulent times between the 1850s and the 1950s. In that era, the new Turkish republic was founded while the Ottoman Empire collapsed. In addition, Western philosophical ideas and positive sciences exerted a huge influence on the intellectual course of Muslims. Saīd Nursi emphasises the importance of having certain belief in such turbulent times. He thinks that this is the only way of keeping an

individual from alienation. One important distinguishing characteristic of Saïd Nursi is that he was not only a theologian, a scholar, but also an exemplar.

According to Nursi, the interpretation of the universe is an important issue in elucidating the concept of *nafs*. Nursi does not give a detailed description of *nafs* or any other internal faculties such as *qalb* and *'aql* in his writings. Instead he prefers to give tangible examples and concepts so that each individual can derive the conclusions best fitted for him- or herself. For example, in *Ayetiül Kübrâ Risalesi*,⁸³ the topic is explored through the experiences of a traveller. Nursi invites readers to travel alongside the explorer. *Ayet-ul Kubra Risalesi* is a fine example with which to realise the method of Nursi.

According to Nursi, *nafs* is a hugely comprehensive concept; the relation between man and God, man and the universe is realised by its tools. Nursi uses the mirror metaphor to explain the function of *nafs* and man's comprehensiveness in this way: he relates man to the Names and Attributes of God. He places *nafs* at the centre of man's ability to grasp the true understanding of God and the Universe.

Nursi's method of purification of the *nafs* is grounded in four notions, namely impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection. According to Nursi, these four notions are grounded in the interpretation of certain belief, which is defined as "the true affirmation of Divine unity",⁸⁴ and the true worship, in the light of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. The purification method is different from those of other Sufi traditions. Nursi's method stands on certain belief and true worship. Nursi discusses these in detail through the projections of the Qur'ân. *Nafs* transforms into perfect man through certain belief and true worship. This purification process is closely related to the concept of *anâ*, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. These notions are actually not new to those who study Sufism, but one important point is that Bediüzzaman systematically discusses the topic and develops a method for the purification of *nafs* based on these notions.

⁸³ See 'Seventh Ray', in *ibid.*, 123–198.

⁸⁴ See 'The Twenty-Second Word', in Said Nursi, *The Words*, trans. Vahide Şükran (Istanbul: Sozler, 2005), 299–300.

As was highlighted above, Chapter 5 discusses the concept of *anā* in the writings of Bediüzzaman Saīd Nursi. According to Nursi, *anā* is a key to understanding the real meanings of things in the universe and the Divine Knowledge. Nursi compares the *anā* to a riddle which should be understood in a correct way – in its indicative meaning rather than its self-referential meaning. He adds that if the nature of *anā* is known, both talismans will be disclosed like riddles. In this analogy, Nursi relates the understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes to obtaining the reality of *anā*.

According to Nursi, infinity cannot be understood through finite things. Man can imagine a fictive line through *anā* in every name and attribute of God. Nursi compares the function of *anā* to a thermometer or a barometer. They show the temperature and pressure, but they are not temperature and pressure in reality. Just like these appliances, *anā* helps man to understand the Divine Names and Attributes, but in reality it can never represent even a small glimpse of them.

Chapter 1

THE CONCEPT OF *NAFS* IN THE QUR'ĀN

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān, its dimensions, and its connections with human knowledge of God. There are 293 occurrences of the word, in single and plural forms, in 265 verses. *Nafs* is one of the most important concepts in the Qur'ān in terms of understanding the divine message and the relation between man and God. The word is used in multiple meanings, and having a comprehensive understanding of these various meanings is a central concern of this study.

Before the Qur'ān, *nafs* was used with the meaning of 'self' in respect of human beings. With the Revelation, it came to apply to gods, God, humans, and jinn as well. *Nafs* is also used in the Qur'ān for a set of different aspects of the self, for which the usual translation in English is 'soul'. The word 'soul' does not express the meaning of the Arabic word *nafs* precisely, but can be used as a rough equivalent only in some cases. To put it differently, *nafs* refers to several inner and outer faculties of man, for which the words 'self' and 'soul' are rough approximations.

In this chapter, a preliminary account of the meaning of *nafs* is given in relation to the usages in *Sūrah al-Shams*, and to the three relevant concepts defined by the Qur'ān, namely *nafs al-ammārah*,¹ *nafs al-lawwāmah*² and *nafs al-muṭmainnah*.³ The semantic discussion of the term and the explanation of selected verses in different Qur'ān commentaries are complementary, and together contribute to our understanding of the concept.

In sum, the concept of *nafs* should be understood well if one seeks to further investigate the relation between man and God. To achieve this goal, several analytical methods are

¹ A.Y. Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (Dar Al-Qiblah for Islamic Literature, 1934) (12: 53).

² *Ibid.* (75: 02).

³ *Ibid.* (89: 27).

employed, including typology and semantics. Furthermore, several commentaries on the Qur'ān, and other references such as dictionaries, are used.

1.2. THE METHOD OF ANALYSIS AND ITS APPLICATION

The method of Izutsu has been chosen for the semantic analysis. Two important books by Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*⁴ and *God and Man in the Koran*,⁵ will be used as the main sources for the methodology of this chapter. The Qur'ān employs the word *nafs* with more than one meaning, and through a typology analysis these different meanings will be outlined first. This analysis will ask how many times the word has been used, in how many verses, and other such questions. Semantic analysis will be complementary to the typology analysis in providing an understanding of the concept in the Qur'ān.

According to Izutsu, semantics, which is an analytical study of the terms in a language, is a tool influencing individuals' conceptualisations.⁶ Also, it is relevant to any individual who uses terms and words from any language. In his work *Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, Izutsu argues for his semantic methods by using the analogy of a child trying to learn his/her mother tongue: a child would try to find out all the defining attributes for each term in order to gain skills in his/her mother tongue.⁷

Izutsu evaluates his subjects or concepts through his seven pillars of semantic analysis method, namely: (a) contextual definition; (b) value of synonyms; (c) elucidation by contrast; (d) clarification by its negative form; (e) clusters of words; (f) parallelism; and (g) secular aspects of the term.⁸

⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal ; Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

⁵ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an : Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Kuala Lumpur: Ayer, 1987).

⁶ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 37–41.

1.2.1. Literature Used

While studying the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān, two different translations of the Qur'ān, one English and the other Turkish, were used in order to analyse and highlight possible differences in translations. These translations are *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān* by Abdullah Yūsuf Ali (English translation);⁹ and *Kur'an-ı Hakîm'in Açıklamalı Meali* [*Illustrated Translation of the Qur'ān*] by Suat Yıldırım (Turkish translation).¹⁰ Prophetic tradition has also been used as a complementary source during the course of the study, as the Prophet Muhammad is the first and foremost interpreter of the Qur'ān.

As mentioned above, during analysis of the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān, critical verses have also been examined through the exegeses of several commentators on the Qur'ān. These exegeses cover three main periods of Islamic history: classical, medieval and modern. For each period, two or more exegeses were selected. However, the main focus of the chapter is to elucidate the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān via a number of cross-references. The authors and works considered are:

Classical:

- 1–Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī (838/923), *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*.
- 2–Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149/1209), *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*.

Medieval:

- 3–Abū 'Abdullah al-Qurṭubī (1214/1273), *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*.
- 4–Isma'il ibn 'Umar abū'l-Fidā' Ibn Kathīr (1301/1373), *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*.

Modern:

- 5–Muhammad Hamdi Yazır (1878/1942), *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*.
- 6–Syed Abū 'l-'Alā Mawdūdī (1903/1979), *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*.
- 7–Sayyid Quṭb (1906/1966), *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*.

⁹ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*.

¹⁰ Suat Yıldırım, *Kuran-Hakim ve Açıklamalı Meali* (Istanbul: Define Yayinlari, 1998).

8–Muḥammad 'Alī aṣ- Ṣābūnī (1930/...), *Ṣafwat at-tafāsīr*.

1.3. LEXICAL MEANING OF *NAFS* IN THE QUR'ĀN

The trilateral root *n-f-s* appears 295 times in the Qur'ān, in four derived forms: (1) once as the form V verb *tanaffasa*; (2) once as the form VI verb *yatanāfasi*; (3) once as the form VI active participle *mutanāfīsūn*; and (4) 292 times as the noun form, which is used in 265 Qur'ānic verses.¹¹ It can be said that almost one in twenty of all verses in the Qur'ān are about *nafs*. It is clear that *nafs* is one of the fundamental concepts in the totality of the message of the Qur'ān.

Before considering the meanings of *nafs* in the Qur'ān, it is important to understand what the meaning of the word is. The lexical meaning of the root *n-f-s*, according to most authoritative lexicographers of Arabic, refers to: blood, life; breath, to breathe; (of soul, dawn or daylight) to break out, mind, the self, the psyche, discerning faculty, person, essence; the evil eye, to give the evil eye; to slacken, to release; precious, treasure, to treasure, to yearn for, to vie, to complete; to envy, to covet, to be sparing, to be niggardly.¹²

The word *nafs* was used prior to the revelation of the Qur'ān. *Nafs* in early Arabic poetry is used reflexively to refer to the self or person only.¹³ But the Qur'ān uses the term *nafs* with more than one meaning, and with the Qur'ān the word *nafs* has gained other meanings. Many Muslim scholars who have explained the concept of *nafs* in Qur'ān semantically.

According to Ibn al-Jawzī, *nafs* can be classified into eight accounts in the Qur'ān:

1. The word *nafs* refers to Prophet Adam, as in the Qur'ān: 4: 1: “who created you from a single person [*nafsin wāḥidatin*]”.

¹¹ Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd Al-Baqi, *Al-Mu`jam Al-Mufahras Li-Alfaz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 1988).

¹² Elsaid M. Badawi, Muhammad Abdel Haleem, and Hartwig Altenmüller, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 954.

¹³ EE Calverley, 'Doctrines of the Soul (Nafs and Rou) in Islam', *The Muslim World*, 33/4 (1943).

2. Al-Jawzī, interestingly, interprets the word *nafs* as mother of believers, i.e. Aisha, as in the Qur’ān: 24: 12: “Why did not the believing men and the believing women, when you heard it, think well of their own people [*bi anfusuhim*], and say: ‘This is an evident falsehood?’”¹⁴
3. A plural form, *anfus*, refers to community or society (*jamā’ah*) as it is mentioned in the Qur’ān 3: 164: “... He sent among them a messenger from among themselves [*anfusuhim*].”
4. The word *nafs* may also mean the one himself (*al-ahl*) as in the Qur’ān 2: 44: “Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practise it) yourselves [*anfusahum*], and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?”
5. The word *nafs* can also refer to any individual among Muslims, as in the Qur’ān 24: 61: “It is no fault in the blind nor in one born lame, nor in one afflicted with illness, nor in yourselves [*anfusuhim*], that ye should eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, or your mothers ... or in the house of a sincere friend of yours: there is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately. But if ye enter houses, salute each other – a greeting of blessing and purity as from Allah.”
6. The word *nafs* can also be interpreted as the life of an individual human being, as in the Qur’ān 5: 45: “And We prescribed for them therein: The life for the life [*al-nafsa bi al-nafsi*], and the eye for the eye.”
7. The word *nafs* refers to ‘someone’ (*al-Ba’dū*) as in the Qur’ān: “After this it is ye, the same people, who slay among yourselves [*anfusahum*]”.
8. The word *nafs* also refers to self itself, as in the Qur’ān 4: 66: “If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives [*anfusakum*].”¹⁵

This present study can be compared with Calverley’s classification,¹⁶ which is the only example of the elaboration of the concept of *nafs* in the Qur’ān in Western literature.

¹⁴ It is worth noting here that such an interpretation is rarely seen in the tradition of Qur’ānic exegesis.

¹⁵ See for detailed discussion: Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat Al-‘Ayun Wa Al-Nawāzīr Fī ‘ilm Al-Wujūh Wa Al-Nazāir* (Baghdād: Mu’assasat al-risālah, 1974), 595–596.

¹⁶ This revision of the article NAFS in the four-volume Encyclopaedia of Islam (Vol. III, pp. 827–30)

Calverley's typology gives a useful idea of the concept. However, it is not sufficient to grasp the concept in detail. The aim of this study is to dig deeper and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the concept.

As was mentioned above, the word *nafs* is used in 265 Qur'ānic verses 298 times, and the singular form of *nafs* is used 140 times; however, its plural form *anfus* is used 153 times, and *nufūs* is used twice, in two verses only (Qur'ān 17: 25, 81: 7).¹⁷

According to Calverley, *nafs* in the Qur'ān can be classified into two main categories, with further subcategories. These main categories are 'self' and 'soul'. The heading 'self' is divided into four subcategories, namely, self or person, *Allah*, gods, and both man and jinn. The heading 'soul' is divided into three subcategories: *al-ammārah*, *al-lawwāmah* and *al-muṭmainnah*.¹⁸ A schematic interpretation of Calverley's classification can be seen in Figure 1.

was prepared at the request of the late Professor Wensinck for the projected one-volume edition. E. E. C.

¹⁷ Badawi, Abdel Haleem, and Altenm, Iler, *Arabic–English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, 954.

¹⁸ EE Calverley, 'Doctrines of the Soul (Nafs and Rou) in Islam', *The Muslim World* 33, no. 4 (1943): 254–264.

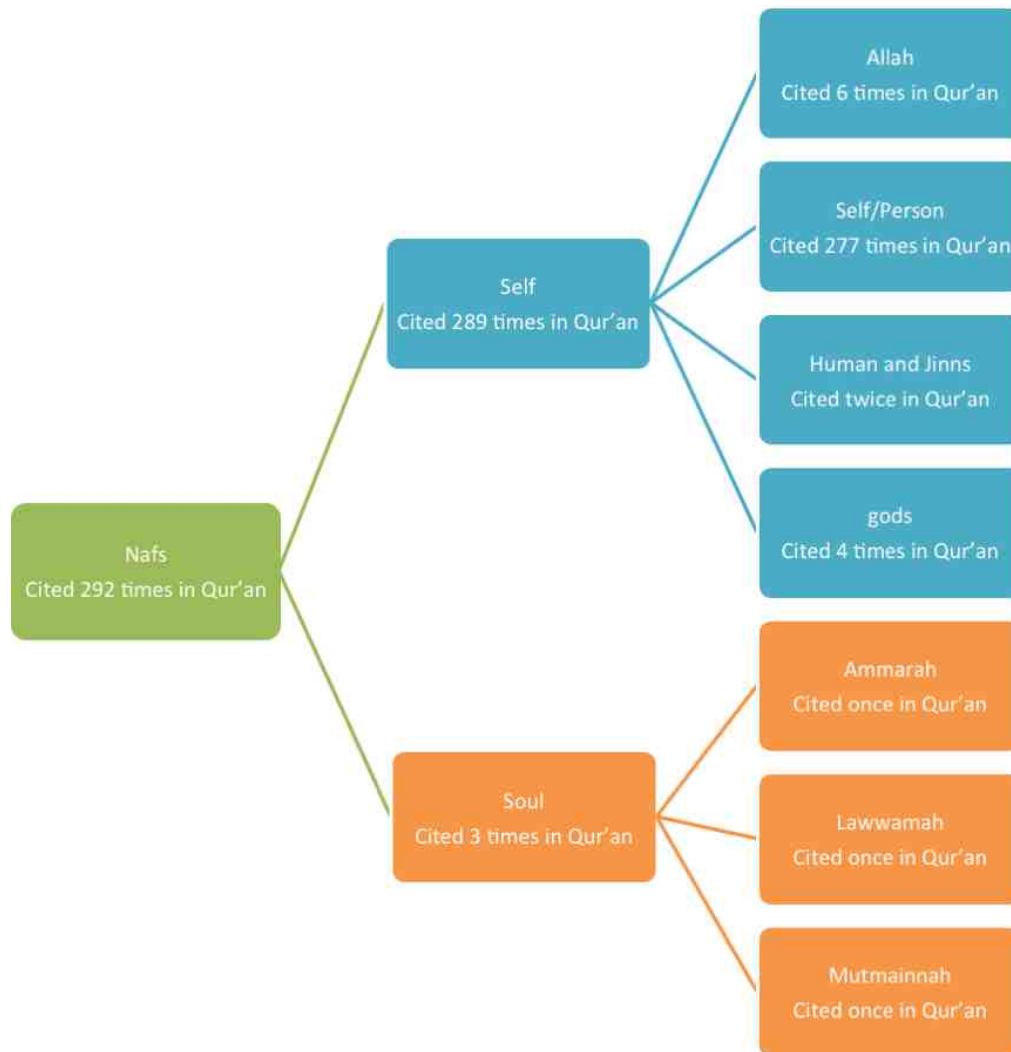


Figure 1: Calverley's interpretation of *nafs* in the Qur'ān

The method developed in the scope of this study is different from that of Calverly. The main difference is in the category 'soul'. Calverly thought of soul and self as main categories; however, in this study soul is considered a subcategory of the self/person meaning of *nafs*. The main argument for this difference is the recognition of the three compartments of *nafs* (*ammārah*, *lawwāmah* and *mutmainnah*) as dynamic stages of self/person.

A diagram representing the typology developed during the course of the study can be seen in Figure 2. All 265 verses listed in accordance with the classification in Figure 2 can be found in Appendix 1.

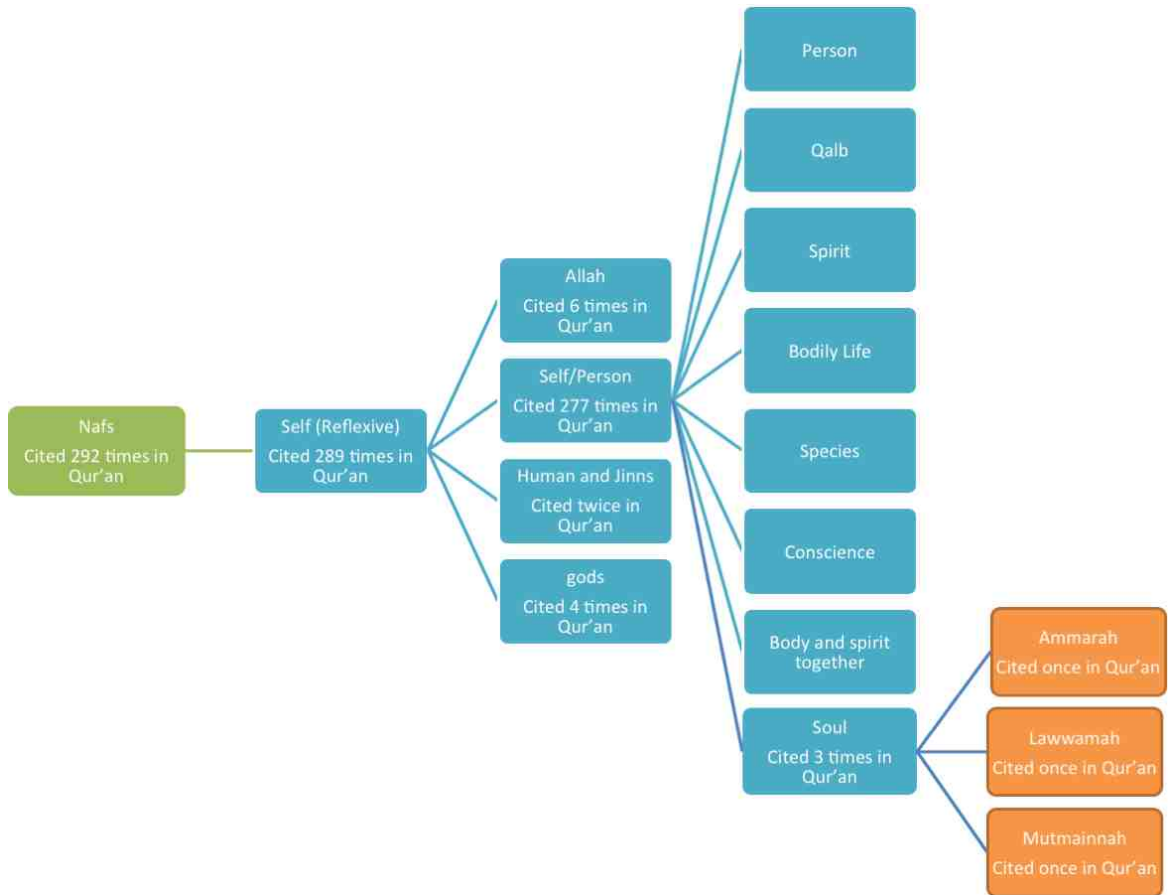


Figure 2: Typology of *nafs* in the Qur'ān (indicating how many times each meaning is cited)

1.4. INNER STRUCTURE OF *NAFS* IN THE QUR'ĀN

Understanding the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān is vitally important for understanding the major concepts of the Divine Revelation, such as *ubudiyyah*. The Qur'ān refers to the concept of worshipping (*'ubūdiyyah*) as the main purpose of the creation of man (and jinn).¹ One of the first exegetes, Ibn Jarir Tabari, explains that 'worshipping God' could also be understood as achieving the Divine Knowledge (*ma'rifah*). Thus, it can be said that this dynamic relationship between man and God is based on the concept of worshipping God (*'ubūdiyyah*). In this relation, *nafs* represents the human side and man can attain the Divine Knowledge by *nafs* through its compartments and tools.

1.4.1. *Nafs* and its Nature in the Qur'ān

Arguably, the first ten verses of the *Sūrah al-Shams* are a convenient place to start the discussion about the concept of the *nafs* in the Qur'ān. Nursi has written a separate treaty for the part of the *Sūrah al-Shams* in the *Eleventh Word*, which discusses the three major concepts, namely the universe, man and prescribed prayers (*ṣalah*) and their relations to each other. These relations might be considered the origin of the Divine purpose of creation. Nursi's ideas on the commentary on the surah are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The Qur'ān states in *Sūrah al-Shams*:

By the Sun and his [glorious] splendour; By the Moon as she follows him; By the Day as it shows up [the Sun's] glory; By the Night as it conceals it; By the Firmament and its [wonderful] structure; By the Earth and its [wide] expanse: By the Soul (*nafs*), and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; - Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it! ²

Some suggest that the word *nafs* in these verses refers to self or person, implying the totality of man. *Nafs* has an inclination to both evil (*fujūr*) and good (*taqwā*).³ Almost all Qur'ān commentators agree that the word *nafs* indicates every single person in the universe. Elmalili

¹ See: Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (51: 56).

² *Ibid.* (91: 7–10).

³ *Ibid.* (91: 7–10).

claims that the word indicates mankind's capacity to understand the Creator.⁴ However, Raḍī emphasises that the word *nafs* points to the Prophet Muhammad specifically. For this reason, he believes that the Prophet Muhammad is the only human being who has all the manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes at the utmost level (*martaba-i 'aẓam*). Thus, he is the perfect mirror of the Divine Names and Attributes. That is why he is the most comprehensive mirror to represent the whole universe in his *nafs*.⁵ On the other hand, Qurtubi claims that the word *nafs* indicates the Prophet Adam, as he is the first man on Earth.⁶

Elmalılı further claims that “the proportion and order given to it (*wamā sawwāhā*)” also points to the composite nature of *nafs*. It consists of different components or spheres, such as the plant, animal and human soul, as well as the totality of these three compartments. Aristotle's approach in his *De Anima* is similar to that of Elmalılı. Aristotle asserts that there are three levels in life: nutritive, appetitive, and rational/cognitive. These levels are respectively labelled by Aristotle *plant soul*, *animal soul* and *human soul*.⁷

Mucahid writes that “the proportion and order given to it” refers to the creation of man in his perfect physical form.⁸ Another commentator, Raḍī, also writes that if *nafs* refers to the anatomy of man, then it means that the creation of the bodily organs is in perfect balance.⁹ In *Şafwat al-tafāsīr*, Şabuni writes that God created or proportioned the *nafs* with its abilities to reach perfection.¹⁰ These inner and outer abilities are in perfect harmony in relation to each other, to the universe and to the creation.¹¹ Raḍī also writes that it might be considered the potentiality of man to manage himself and to understand the true meaning of the creation.¹²

⁴ Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* (Istanbul: Şura Yayınları, 1993), http://www.kuranikerim.com/t_elmalili_index.htm.

⁵ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr*, vol. 31 (Beirut: Dār ul-İhyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999), 176.

⁶ Muḥammad ibn Ahmad Qurtubi, *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* (London: Dar al-Taḳwa, 2003).

⁷ Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima*.

⁸ Qurtubi, *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*.

⁹ Fakhr al-Din Muḥammad ibn Umar Razi, *Tafsir Al-Kabir* (Ankara: Akçag, 1988).

¹⁰ Muḥammad Sabuni, *Safwat at-Tafasir* (Beirut: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, 1981).

¹¹ Syed Abul Ala Maudoodi, *Tafhim Al-Quran*, vol. 6 (Kuwayt: Dar al-Qalam, 1978), 376.

¹² Razi, *Tafsir Al-Kabir*.

This means being equipped with abilities such as hearing, seeing, imagining, etc.¹³ According to Mawdudi, all these functions and tools of *nafs* – including mental powers, namely thinking, imagination, reasoning, etc. – are best specimens of creation that can obtain Divine Knowledge.¹⁴

Elmalılı considers this verse along with the verse “When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him”.¹⁵ Elmalılı maintains that the act of

“proportion and order given to it” and “fashioned” in these two verses can be explained together to understand that God proportioned men’s body in such a way that its *rūh* (spirit) can be blown into it. “and the proportion and order given to it” indicates that *nafs* is both physically and spiritually capable of perfection owing to the breathed spirit.¹⁶

Ibn Kathir emphasises the true nature of the human being – *al-fiṭrah*. Allah created man in his true nature – *al-fiṭrah*, which has the potential to know Him.¹⁷

According to Elmalılı, evil (*fujūr*) is defined as doing wrong and going astray; however, good (*taqwā*) is explained as only the opposite of evil. It means doing the right things and saving one’s *nafs* (oneself) from *fujūr*. Hence, “inspiring *nafs* to its wrong and its right” might be considered as teaching it what wrong and right are. Then, man can choose either of them through his free will. In other words, God shows man the actions of evil (*fujūr*) as wrong and the actions of good (*taqwā*) as right. God does not mislead man. Izutsu points out that *zulm* exists only through the choices of man.¹⁸

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Maudoodi, Taffhim Al-Quran, 6: 376.

¹⁵ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (15: 29).

¹⁶ Yazir, Hak Dini Kur’an Dili.

¹⁷ Ismail Ibn Umar Ibn Kathir, 'Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azim', <<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/11842655.html>>, accessed 16 August 2010.

¹⁸ Izutsu, Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān, 166.

Mawdudi writes that, terminologically, *ilhām* means God’s inspiration to man. “And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right” is considered by Mawdudi in two perspectives: first, that God created tendencies to both good and evil in man; second, that God endowed man’s unconscious mind with the concept of moral good and evil. Thus, man is conscious of these notions by nature and also can distinguish between them. Qutb emphasises the same point and considers this quality a hidden talent. He thinks of *ilhām* as a kind of *hidāya* (guidance).¹⁹ Ṣabuni thinks that God taught *nafs* the criteria for distinguishing between right and wrong in their ultimate forms, namely *taqwā* and *fujūr*.²⁰ This is also stated in the Qur’ān in the verses “And shown him the two highways” (90: 10) and “And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (Eschew Evil)”.²¹ Ibn Kathir writes that God clarified good and evil for man and guided man to what has been ordained for him.²²

Qutb considers the word enlightenment (*ilhām*) along with the verse “We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)” (Qur’ān 76: 3). According to Qutb, man can realise his true potential by this true quality, *ilhām*, and receive divine messages and guidance from the Qur’ān.²³

Ṣabuni considers *ilhām* together with *‘aql*. God equipped *nafs* with some other attributes so that man should be able to grasp and understand the reflections of the Divine Names.²⁴ On the path to eternal success, *nafs* obeys God through doing good deeds and refraining from sin.²⁵ Ṣabuni further writes that if man does not use these faculties and does not save his *‘aql* from the darkness of the material world, he cannot find joy in his life in this world or his life hereafter.²⁶

¹⁹ Please see Sūrah al-Shams in: Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran* (Kairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1973), 3915, <http://books.google.com/books?id=Bn9WAAAAMAAJ>.

²⁰ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Sabuni, *Safwat at-Tafasir*.

²¹ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (75: 2).

²² See Sūrah al-Shams in: Ismail ibn Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘azim* (al-Qahirah: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyah, 1978).

²³ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran*, 3915.

²⁴ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Sabuni, *Safwat at-Tafasir*.

²⁵ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran*, 3915.

²⁶ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Sabuni, *Safwat at-Tafasir*.

Raḍī explains the verse “And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right” as God giving man free will after informing him thoroughly as to what is wrong and what is right. This is also indicated by another verse, “And shown him the two highways” (90: 10). This approach might be considered similar to that of the school of Mu’tazila. However, Mu’tazila scholars consider that the verse “Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it” means that man has free choice and creates his own actions. *Raḍī* criticises the idea of the Mu’tazila since, in such an understanding, it is assumed that every single thing in the universe is separate and has its own self-determining faith, which is not compatible with the Divine Determination and Divine Power in the understanding of Ahl-i Sunnah.²⁷

There are two assurances after the inspiration of *fujūr* and *taqwā*. “Truly he succeeds that purifies it” indicates that man, who purifies his *nafs* from sins and also disciplines his *nafs* in accordance with the Divine guidance, enjoys life in this world and the hereafter. The Qur’ān heralds the *nafs* with Paradise:

Enter thou, then, among My devotees! Yea, enter thou My Heaven!²⁸

Two of Izutsu’s principles of semantic analysis – the value of synonyms and elucidation by contrast²⁹ – give us a better understanding of *fujūr* and *taqwā*. The notion of *fujūr* can be paired with the notion of *ẓālim*. Likewise, *taqwā* can be paired with *muttaqī*. *Ẓālim* is one who transgresses the bounds of God and *muttaqī* is one who realises and obeys the Divine Law. *Ẓālim* commits *fujūr*, whereas *muttaqī* performs *taqwā* (27: 44) (2: 54).

The verse “And he fails that corrupts (*dassāhā*) it!” explains the second assurance. He who corrupts his *nafs* by committing sins and deceiving himself does not realise the purpose of the creation and fails to have joy in this world and in the hereafter. Elmalılı explains this verse with:

²⁷ See Sūrah al-Shams in: al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr*.

²⁸ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (89: 30).

²⁹ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*, 38–39.

He will say: “Ah! Would that I had sent forth (good deeds) for (this) my (Future) Life!”³⁰

Elmalılı believes that “purifying the *nafs*” can be considered to be disciplining the *nafs* or carefully following the instructions defined by God. He also writes that purification can be understood in three different meanings: (1) purifying the *nafs* from deviant, evil things, etc.; (2) endeavouring to equip the *nafs* with the virtues of God; and (3) the confirmation of the purification.³¹ However, the *nafs* cannot purify itself. The Qur’ān says, “Therefore justify not yourselves: He knows best who it is that guards against evil.”³² Only God can purify. In other words, man’s efforts and free will are only prayers to God asking for such purification. God purifies man, as in the Qur’ān: “O ye who believe! If ye will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you.”³³

Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır concludes his thoughts about the purification of the *nafs* with a *ḥadīth* from *Muslim*:

The Messenger of Allah used to stop whenever he recited this *ayah* (By *nafs*, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right). Then he would say, “O Allah! Give my *nafs* its good. You are its Guardian and Master, and the best to purify it.”³⁴

According to Elmalılı, the corruption – *dassāha* – in the verse “And he fails that corrupts it!” is the opposite of purification and can be understood as leading someone astray from the right path. *Dassāhā* can be defined as corruption of the *nafs* or the transforming of man’s virtues into evil.³⁵

According to Qurtubi, “he who purifies” points to the man who is obedient to God, but it is God who purifies man’s *nafs* and blesses him with eternal peace.³⁶ Quṭb considers it a talent

³⁰ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (89: 24).

³¹ Yazır, Hak Dini Kur’an Dili.

³² Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (53: 52).

³³ Ibid. (47: 7).

³⁴ See: Yazır, Hak Dini Kur’an Dili. See for quoted hadith: Ibn Al-Hajjaj Muslim, Sahih Muslim, trans. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1980), Zikr, 2722.

³⁵ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Yazır, Hak Dini Kur’an Dili.

³⁶ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Qurtubi, Tafsir Al-Qurtubi.

that entails responsibilities with respect to its potential.³⁷ Mawdudi considers purification to be a mission for man, and he highlights the concept in the verse “But those will prosper who purify themselves” (87: 14).³⁸ Şabuni further writes that this *nafs* will be saved from the calamities of life in both worlds.³⁹ He who does not follow the guidance will fail by way of concealing the *nafs* with *dassāhā*.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he who obeys the evil commands of the *nafs* and disobeys God leaves the circle of the ‘*aql*’ and joins the company of foolish people.⁴¹ Mawdudi again writes that *dassāhā* in this verse means to suppress and conceal. He who suppresses the tendency in his *nafs* towards good, instead of developing and cultivating it, seduces it into evil, and makes *fujūr*.⁴²

1.4.2. *Nafs* as self

The usage of the word *nafs* as *self* can be studied in four main categories:

1. *Allah*: 6 *nafs* verses refer to *Allah*:

And *Allah* warns you against Himself;⁴³
 And I have chosen you for Myself;⁴⁴
 I do not know what is in Yours;⁴⁵
 Say: “To *Allah*.” He has prescribed mercy for Himself;⁴⁶
 Say: “*Salamun ‘Alaykum*” (peace be on you); your Lord has written mercy for Himself.⁴⁷

2. Gods: Only in four verses do *Nafs* refer to gods:

Or have they gods who can guard them from Us? They have no power to help ‘themselves’, nor can they be protected from Us;⁴⁸
 and possess neither harm nor benefit for ‘themselves’;⁴⁹

³⁷ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Qutb, Fi Zilal Al-Quran, 3915.

³⁸ Maudoodi, Tafhim Al-Quran, 6: 378.

³⁹ See Sūrah al-Shams in: Sabuni, Safwat at-Tafasir.

⁴⁰ Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`azim.

⁴¹ Qutb, Fi Zilal Al-Quran.

⁴² Maudoodi, Tafhim Al-Quran, 6: 379.

⁴³ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (3: 28–30).

⁴⁴ Ibid. (6: 54).

⁴⁵ Ibid. (5: 116).

⁴⁶ Ibid. (6: 12).

⁴⁷ Ibid. (41: 188).

⁴⁸ Ibid. (21: 43).

No help can they give them, nor can they help ‘themselves’;⁵⁰

And those whom you call upon besides Him (Allah) cannot help you nor can they help ‘themselves’.⁵¹

3. Both human and *jinn*s: *Nafs* in one verse refers (twice) to both human and jinn:

They will say: “We bear witness against ‘ourselves’. And they will bear witness against ‘themselves’ that they were disbelievers.”⁵²

4. Man (Self): 251 verses refer to ‘self’ in various meanings. It is worth mentioning here that these subcategories of the meaning of ‘self’, which are listed below, are extracted by reference to translations by Yusuf Ali and Suat Yildirim. Therefore, detailed metadata for used references are not given in each section.

a. *Nafs* as person: Majority of the verses in this category use the term *nafs* in the meaning of person or people. Some examples are:

Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive ‘themselves’, and realise (it) not!;⁵³

Nor does ‘anyone’ know in what land he is to die;⁵⁴

And (remember) when you killed a ‘man’;⁵⁵

our women and your women, ‘ourselves’ and ‘yourselves’;⁵⁶ etc.

b. *Nafs* as *qalb*: More than ten verses use *nafs* as *qalb*.

The Qur’ān advises men to make their intentions known if they want to marry divorced women in Qur’ān 2: 235: “Allah knows that ye cherish them in ‘your hearts’.” Another example of meaning of *nafs* as *qalb* can be seen in Qur’ān 4: 63: “Those men, Allah knows what is in ‘their hearts’; so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls.” The Qur’ān employs the word *nafs* or its plural form in the meaning of *qalb* in more than ten verses.

c. *Nafs* as the spirit of man: In a few verses, *nafs* refers to the spirit of man.

⁴⁹ Ibid. (25: 3).

⁵⁰ Ibid. (7: 192).

⁵¹ Ibid. (7: 197).

⁵² Ibid. (6: 130).

⁵³ Ibid. (2: 9).

⁵⁴ Ibid. (31: 34).

⁵⁵ Ibid. (2: 72).

⁵⁶ Ibid. (3: 61).

The Qur'ān says that at the time of death man's spirit will be detached from his body. "If thou couldst but see how the wicked (do fare) in the flood of confusion at death! The angels stretch forth their hands (saying), 'Yield up your souls' ..."⁵⁷

d. *Nafs* as bodily life: In several verses, *nafs* refers to bodily life.

In the following verses the Qur'ān reminds believers that they will be tested in 'their lives' and possessions by Allah:

Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in 'your personal selves' ...⁵⁸

Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the Faith, with their property and 'their persons', in the cause of Allah ...⁵⁹

e. *Nafs* as Species: In a few verses, *nafs* refers to species, such as humankind.

The word *nafs* refers to humankind as a species while explaining the creation of Eve, wife of the Prophet Adam:

And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of 'your own nature' ...;⁶⁰

And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among 'yourselves', that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.⁶¹

f. *Nafs* as conscience: In a few verses, the term *nafs* refers to the conscience.

The first verse below explains the condition of three Companions who were left behind. They struggled, as they knew that they did not have a credible excuse for being late in attending to the call of the Prophet Mohammad. Their conscience never let them rest until they fled to God. The second verse highlights the condition of an individual who intentionally hides the truth and lies:

(He turned in mercy also) to the three who were left behind; (they felt guilty) to such a degree that the earth seemed constrained to them, for all its spaciousness, and 'their

⁵⁷ Ibid. (6: 93).

⁵⁸ Ibid. (3: 186).

⁵⁹ Ibid. (8: 72).

⁶⁰ Ibid. (16: 72).

⁶¹ Ibid. (30: 21).

(very) souls' seemed straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah (and no refuge) but to Himself ...⁶²

Behold! how they lie against 'their own souls'! But the (lie) which they invented will leave them in the lurch.⁶³

- g. *Nafs* as spirit and body together, or the totality of man, which includes spirit and bodily senses. One verse uses the term *nafs* as body and spirit together: "When the 'souls' are sorted out (being joined, like with like)."⁶⁴

h. *Nafs* as soul

Nafs as human soul is also divided into further three subcategories:

al-nafs al-ammārah: the evil-commanding *nafs*;⁶⁵

al-nafs al-lawwāmah: the self-accusing *nafs*;⁶⁶

al-nafs al-muṭmainnah: the tranquil soul.⁶⁷

As can be seen in the typology above (Figure 2), *nafs* is used in the meaning of soul in three verses of the Qur'ān. According to these verses, *nafs* is a dynamic spiritual substance, and also consists of three compartments: *al-Nafs al-ammārah* (the evil-commanding *nafs*), *al-Nafs al-lawwāmah* (self-accusing *nafs*), and *al-Nafs al-muṭmainnah* (the tranquil soul). For this reason, the concept of *nafs* (soul) is discussed under those three subjects in the Qur'ān. In the next section, the dynamic nature of *nafs* as it is explained in the Qur'ān will be discussed in detail.

⁶² Ibid. (9: 118).

⁶³ Ibid. (6: 24).

⁶⁴ Ibid. (81: 7).

⁶⁵ Ibid. (12: 53).

⁶⁶ Ibid. (75: 2).

⁶⁷ Ibid. (89: 27).

1.4.3 Dynamic structure or Dimensions of *nafs* in Qur'ān

As discussed above, *nafs* has inclinations to both good and evil. Man should go through a continuous struggle to purify his *nafs* in order to gain the value inherent in his creation. It should be noted that man is always present in all these three spheres. It is a very common misconception that man has a spiritual journey to make from the first sphere, *al-ammārah*, to the second, *al-lawwāmah*, and then to the third, *al-muṭmainnah*, as he purifies his *nafs*. In fact, there is always a balance between the three spheres.

Concepts of plant, animal and human souls can help us in understanding how this balance is achieved. For example, *al-nafs al-ammārah* is best represented and nourished by plant and/or animal souls. All bodily temptations and needs such as eating, sleeping, etc. are rooted in the plant and animal souls. Similarly, *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* may be associated with the human soul, which represents 'aql and virtues. With the introduction of virtues, man can achieve a balance between good and evil. Carnal desires will be tamed and guided to achieve the ultimate purpose of their existence. Man will sleep and eat to survive and to be healthy, but his desires should not take over so that they make him eat as much as he likes. *Al-nafs al-ammārah* would not consider the benefits or virtues of modesty; instead, it would always ask for more and never be satisfied or fulfilled. Unless it is balanced by *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*, it will lead man into a vicious circle of self-destruction and dissatisfaction. Once a balance is achieved, however, the concept of *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* comes into the equation to ensure that the balance is maintained and is stable. Such a station can only be achieved by employing both *al-nafs al-ammārah* and *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* in accordance with the purpose behind their creation and through the guidance of God. This is explained in *Sūrah al-Shams*: “By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it.” In the following, all these spheres will be discussed in detail so as to achieve a better understanding of the concepts.

1.4.3.1. Concept of *al-Nafs al-Ammārah* (Evil-commanding soul)

Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul (*nafs-al ammārah*) is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (12: 53)

As discussed above, animal and plant souls desire bodily pleasures, whereas the human soul tames the carnal desires by *'aql* and virtues. This verse about *al-nafs al-ammārah* refers to the plant and animal soul of human beings rather than the human soul.

Qutb interprets the verse as follows: “I do not want to absolve my *nafs* and show it as innocent unless there is protection by Divine Mercy; all *nafs* have inclination to evil things.”⁶⁸ Elmalılı writes that, if this inclination is not regulated, it tends to capture and control all other faculties. Once all the faculties are controlled by the plant and animal soul, such as desires and inclinations to evil, man cannot fulfil his true potential. Furthermore, *nafs al-ammārah* will only be occupied with worldly and transitory pleasures, at the expense of eternal salvation.⁶⁹ God has created man in the perfect form for understanding the true meaning of the creation. But fulfilling this potential is only possible by regulating the inner faculties and capabilities in accordance with the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. This concept is discussed in detail in the writings of Bediüzzaman Saīd Nursi and discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

Razi writes that the *nafs* is unique and has compartments and attributes. At times, one of the components dominates and leads the *nafs*. If the *nafs* inclines towards spiritual worlds and good deeds, then *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* leads or dominates. But if it inclines towards lust, anger, and so on, the leading component becomes *al-nafs al-ammārah*. *Nafs* mostly stays in the *ammārah* sphere, and only rarely in the sphere of *muṭmainnah*. Because *nafs* is mostly led or dominated by *al-nafs al-ammārah* rather than *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*, it is called ‘commander of evil’. *Razi* also explains “unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy” as meaning that diverting the *nafs* from evil is only possible through Divine Mercy.⁷⁰ Otherwise, if the *nafs* is not guided, it will certainly go astray.⁷¹

⁶⁸ See Sūrah Yūsūf in: Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran*. (12: 53).

⁶⁹ See Sūrah Yūsūf in: Yazir, *Hak Dini Kur’an Dili*. (12: 53).

⁷⁰ *al-Rāzī*, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr*. (12: 53).

⁷¹ *Ibid*.

Şabuni considers the Prophet Joseph's approach to his *nafs* in this verse to be showing his humility: he wanted to cultivate his *nafs* with respect to its purification and to save it from pride.⁷²

1.4.3.2. Concept of *al-Nafs al-lawwāmah* (self-accusing soul)

And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*): (Eschew Evil).⁷³

It might be said that *to blame* is a key word in explaining the term *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*. Ibn Arabi (d. 543/1148) considers *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* in relation to the Divine knowledge (*ma'rifah*). (His unique Divine knowledge theory will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.) According to Ibn Arabi, *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* blames itself constantly and asks itself how it made mistakes despite knowing that every *nafs* will receive in full the fruits of its Deeds.⁷⁴

Ibn Kathir, in reference to this verse, mentions the explanations from various Islamic scholars. For example, Hasan al-Basri said about this verse: “Verily, by Allah, we think that every believer blames himself. He writes (questioning himself), what did I intend by my statement? What did I intend by my eating? What did I intend in what I said to myself?”⁷⁵ Like Elmalılı, Razi also writes that every single man, not only sinful men but also obedient ones, will blame his *nafs* in the hereafter. Hasan Basri writes that “you see the believer blaming his *nafs*; however, the uneducated is seen to be happy with his current position”.⁷⁶ Ibn Kathir writes, “On the other hand, the sinner proceeds ahead and he does not blame himself.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, Sa'id bin Jubayr said, concerning the same verse, “He criticizes himself in good and bad.” A similar interpretation by Mujahid has also been reported: “He is sorry for what he missed (of good deeds) and he blames himself for it”.⁷⁸

⁷² Sabuni, *Safwat at-Tafasir*. (12: 53).

⁷³ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (75: 2).

⁷⁴ I. Arabi, *Tefsir El Qor'an El Karim*, 1981. (75: 2).

⁷⁵ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`azim*. (75: 2).

⁷⁶ al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir*. (75: 2).

⁷⁷ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`azim*. (75: 2).

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

Mawdudi's explanation is one of the most striking, especially for modern psychology. He writes that *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* feels repentant at doing wrong, thinking wrong and willing wrong, and reproaches man for all these.⁷⁹ This notion might be related to conscience in the terminology of modern psychology.

Mawdudi explains that Allah has sworn an oath on the resurrection (*al-qiyaamah*) and the self-reproaching soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*), to stress the truth that God will resurrect man after death. On that day man will be called upon to account for his deeds and will see the good or evil outcomes.⁸⁰

Mawdudi draws attention to the relation between conscience (*wijdān*) and the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*. They are not the same; however, they have similar functions. For example, they both act as critics in assessing one's actions. They continuously remind one that there is a life hereafter and that man will be paid in full in terms of the outcome of his deeds.

According to Mawdudi, all individuals have a conscience (*wijdān*) with which to judge their own actions according to the Divine laws. The conscience is the calibrating factor in this relation. Mawdudi writes that this is "a differentiator that man is not merely an animal but a moral being" demanding justice for both good and evil. Furthermore, Mawdudi states that such an *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* might be considered a proof of the existence of a life hereafter. Hence, man hopes to be rewarded for good deeds, while avoiding evil and punishment. This natural tendency might be considered as micro-scale judicial court in the nature of man (*fiṭrah*). As a result, this existence of the micro-scale judicial court also might be considered a small sample of the Divine Court in the life hereafter:

Therefore, unless one comes to believe in the absurd idea that a rational being like man has stumbled into an irrational system of the universe and a moral being like man has

⁷⁹ Maudoodi, *Tafhim Al-Quran*, 6: 140.

⁸⁰ See 'Sūrah Yūsūf' in: Maudoodi, *Tafhim Al-Quran*. 6: 140.

happened to be born in a world which basically has nothing to do with morality, he cannot deny the life hereafter.⁸¹

Elmalılı brings another dimension to the concept of *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*. He writes that, in the Sufi understanding, there are seven stages of the *nafs*:

1. *al-Nafs al-ammārah*,
2. *al-Nafs al-lawwāmah*
3. *al-Nafs al-muṭmainnah*
4. *al-Nafs al-mulhimah*
5. *al-Nafs al-marḍiyah*,
6. *al-Nafs al-rāḍiyah*,
7. *al-Nafs al-ṣāfiyahwa kāmila*.

Elmalılı writes that training the *nafs* is possible through a spiritual journey to each level. *Al-nafs al-lawwāmah* performs a trigger role for all levels, to take the *nafs* one level up, since one blames oneself for evil deeds at the level of *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*. However, man goes on blaming himself for missing opportunities to reach a higher level of the *nafs* at all levels after the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*. It is stated in the Qur’ān that the *mu’mins* will also blame their *nafs* on the Day of Judgement, since they could have had a better understanding of God and performed more good deeds. Elmalılı writes that the oath on the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* highlights the importance of such feelings on the Day of Resurrection.⁸²

1.4.3.3. Concept of *nafs al-muṭmainnah* (tranquil soul)

To the righteous soul (*al-Nafs al-muṭmainnah*) will be said: “O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, well-pleased (with thyself) (*rāḍiya*), and well-pleasing (*marḍiyah*) unto Him!⁸³

⁸¹ Maudoodi, Tafhīm Al-Quran, 6: 141.

⁸² Yazir, Hak Dini Kur’an Dili. (75: 2).

⁸³ Arabi, Tefsir El Qor’ān El Karim. (89: 28).

Mawdudi writes that *muṭmainnah* is a compartment of the soul, which feels full satisfaction at following the right path and abandoning evil inclinations, without the least doubt about it. Such a *nafs* acknowledges the absolute truth, and whatever creed and command he receives from God and His Messenger. This very state has been described in another verse in the Qur’ān:

Those whom Allah (in His plan) willeth to guide, – He openeth their breast to Islam ...
(6: 125)⁸⁴

Elmalılı writes that this mentioning of the hereafter to the *nafs* (“O (thou) soul (*nafs*), in (complete) rest and satisfaction!”) is a kind of motivation for believers (*mu’min*) to improve their spiritual status. On the Day of Judgement, unbelievers will realise the reality and will say, “I wish I had done something good to save my eternal life.” However, people who understood the reality and submitted to God at the level of ultimate belief with sincerity during their worldly life will be called with the verse “O (thou) soul (*nafs*), in (complete) rest and satisfaction!”⁸⁵

Razi emphasises the importance of the term ‘tranquillity’ (*iṭmi’nān*) in these verses. He writes that it means to be persistent in following the path defined by the Divine Message. Razi discusses the term *iṭmi’nān* in connection with another verse in the Qur’ān, which says: “When Abraham said: ‘Show me, Lord, how You will raise the dead’, He replied: ‘Have you no faith?’ He said, ‘Yes, but just to reassure my heart (*iṭmi’nān*)’” (Qur’ān 2: 260). The answer of the Prophet Abraham may give an idea about the word *iṭmi’nān*. It means that the prophet has faith, but that it needs to be perfected by a little trial; then he has full satisfaction, in other words, tranquillity (*iṭmi’nān*).

Razi explains that the highest level of belief (faith) is *iṭmi’nān* (tranquillity). The word *iṭmi’nān* is also explained as remembrance of God in the verse “Those who believe, and

⁸⁴ Maudoodi, Tafhīm Al-Quran, 6: 351.

⁸⁵ Yazir, Hak Dini Kur’an Dili. (89: 28).

whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction (*iṭmi'nān*)".⁸⁶

According to Qutb, the *nafs* described in the verse has trust in God, His Message and His Fate (*qadar*). Such a *nafs* never goes astray under any conditions, and also never feels hesitation or despair, and is summoned in the hereafter thus: "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction!"⁸⁷

1.5. RELATIONAL MEANINGS OF THE *NAFS* IN QUR'ĀN: CONNECTED CONCEPTS

Nafs is one of the most comprehensive notions in the Qur'ān, where it occurs 295 times, mostly in plural form.⁸⁸ It can be said that almost one in twenty of all the verses in the Qur'ān are concerned with the *nafs*. Therefore, it must be considered an important reference point in understanding Divine Knowledge, the wisdom of the creation of the universe, man, and his relation to God. Izutsu's semantic analysis method can be considered as a unique approach towards understanding the concept of *nafs*.

To enable me to conduct the semantic analysis, the first step was to collate and group all the relevant verses. Five groups were identified for these verses according to their relevance to the concept of *nafs* in the context of this study. The titles of these groups are: *nafs*, *ẓulm-u nafs*, *hawā-yi nafs*, *nafsi waḥida* and *dalalat-un nafs*. Then, all these groups were further analysed by employing the dynamics of semantic analysis as discussed in the main introduction. The outcome of the exercise is summarised in Table 1.

⁸⁶ al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr* (89: 28).

⁸⁷ Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran* (89: 28).

⁸⁸ Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al- Baqī, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li-Alfāz Al-Qur'an Al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 1988).

Table 1: Summary of the semantic analysis of *nafs* and related terms

	Conceptual Definition (verses)	Value of Synonyms	Elucidation by Contrast	Clarification by Negative Form	Cluster of Words	Parallelism	Secular Meaning (verses)
<i>Nafs</i>	91: 7–10						
<i>zulm-u nafs</i>	4: 13–14 4: 111	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fujur • Doing evil • Wronging his soul • Earning sin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taqwā 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muttaqá 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kufr • Mu'min • Zālimūn 		26: 19
<i>Hawā-i nafs</i>	53: 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ḍalāl • Jahl • Shahwah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hudá 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Ilm • Knowledge • Signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal appetites • Evil inclinations • Kāfir (kufr) 		
<i>Nafs-i waḥida</i>	4: 1 6: 98 7: 189 31: 28 39: 5–6						

<i>Dalalat-</i>	1: 6–7				12: 8
<i>un nafs</i>	4: 113	• Ihtidá	• Belief	• Kufr	12: 30

Three of these five groups extracted from the Qur'ān, *ẓulm-u nafs*, *hawā-yi nafs* and *dalalat-un nafs*, can be associated with *al-nafs al-ammārah*. As was discussed above, if plant and animal souls are not properly employed, *al-nafs al-ammārah* becomes the dominant sphere and takes man into a vicious circle of dissatisfaction. Such situations are referred to in the Qur'ān by *ẓulm-u nafs*, *hawā-yi nafs* and *dalalat-un nafs*. Most of the verses in which forms of the word *nafs* are employed have such negative meanings.

1.5.1. *Ẓulm-u nafs*

It must be underlined that the root of any word has extreme importance for understanding the true message of the Qur'ān. The word *ẓulm*, or a variety of different forms which are derived from the same root (*ẓ-l-m*), occur very often in the Qur'ān, forms such as *ẓālim*, *māẓlūm*, etc. It must also be noted that *ẓulm* is one of the most important concepts in the Qur'ān and is seen on almost every single page.

Ẓ-l-m means to do wrong; or act wrongfully, unjustly, injuriously, or tyrannically.¹ The primary meaning of the word *ẓulm* is defined as “putting in a wrong place or misplacing”.² Although there might be slight differences, Lane writes that there is general agreement about the definition of the word *ẓulm* among many authoritative lexicographers.³ Some examples from different lexicologists may help to promote an understanding of the general characteristics of the word. One writes: “it is by exceeding or falling short, or deviating from the proper time and place.” Another defines it as “acting however one may please in the disposal of the property of another: and the transgressing of the proper limit (much or little)”. According to some, it primarily signifies *naks* (*n-k-s*), the making to suffer loss, or detriment, etc.⁴ Izutsu describes the word in the sphere of ethics as “to act in such a way as to transgress

¹ Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Derived from the Best and the Most Copious Eastern Sources, vol. 2011 (London; Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1863), 1920, <http://www.tyndalearchive.com/TABS/Lane/index.htm>.

² Badawi, Abdel Haleem, and Altenmüller, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, 585.

³ Lane and Lane-Poole, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Derived from the Best and the Most Copious Eastern Sources, 2011: 1920.

⁴ *Ibid.*

the proper limit and encroach upon the right of injustice in the sense of going beyond one's own bounds and doing what one has no right to".⁵

Following brief explanation of the word *ẓulm*, *ẓulm-u nafs* or its nature might be further analysed. The term *ẓulm-u nafs* is clearly indicated in the Qur'ān in a verse which says, "If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul (*nafs*) ..."⁶ In this verse, 'doing evil' (*ẓulm*) and 'wronging his own soul' (*ẓulm-u nafs*) are both used with the same meaning. In the following verse the Qur'ān says, "And if anyone earns sin, He earns it against His own soul: for *Allah* is full of knowledge and wisdom."⁷ This verse further clarifies the term *ẓulm -u nafs* as 'earning sin'.

On the other hand, as explained above, *ẓulm* is mentioned in two different categories in the Qur'ān; one from 'man to God', and the second from 'man to man'. Before further discussing the two categories of *ẓulm*, it should be noted that, according to the Qur'ān, God never does wrong or *ẓulm* to people (or *nafs*). In several verses, the following is mentioned:

Verily *Allah* will not deal unjustly with man in aught: It is man that wrongs his own soul (*nafs*).⁸

The Qur'ān says that God will give full recompense to man in the life hereafter according to his deeds. This can never fall into the category of doing wrong or *ẓulm*. The following verses represent examples of how God will treat people in the life hereafter:

One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.⁹

But how (will they fare) when we gather them together against a day about which there is no doubt, and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without (favour or) injustice?¹⁰

⁵ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, 165.

⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (4: 110).

⁷ *Ibid.* (4: 111).

⁸ *Ibid.* (10: 44).

⁹ *Ibid.* (16: 111).

That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned; no injustice will there be that Day, for Allah is swift in taking account.¹¹

And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.¹²

The first category of *ẓulm-u nafs* is from ‘man to God’ and can be defined as *ẓulm* which “consists in man’s transgressing the limits of human conduct imposed by God Himself”.¹³

The second category of *ẓulm* is ‘man to man’ and can be defined as “going beyond the bounds of proper conduct in social life”.¹⁴

According to Izutsu, it is quite difficult, perhaps impossible, to distinguish the two categories from each other in the case of *ẓulm* because God uses both categories as complementary halves. For example, the action of theft is used in two different verses in the Qur’ān, one as *ẓulm* to man and the other as *ẓulm* to God.¹⁵

According to Nursi, there are four pillars of the Divine Message, namely, the Divine Oneness, the Prophecy, the resurrection, and the rules for social justice. Social justice includes matter and spiritual things and can also be called ‘the bounds of God’.¹⁶ Considered with respect to the ultimate purpose of life, these boundaries help man to realise the reality of creation. However, transgressing the bounds of God will prevent this realisation. So God calls these kinds of act *ẓulm-u nafs*:

When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their (*’iddat*), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to

¹⁰ Ibid. (3: 25).

¹¹ Ibid. (40: 17).

¹² Ibid. (2: 281).

¹³ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*, 166.

¹⁴ Ibid., 167.

¹⁵ Ibid., 166.

¹⁶ Said Nursi, *Kaynakli, İndeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdag Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri.*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1995), 1159.

injure them (or) to take undue advantage; if any one does that, he wrongs his own soul ...¹⁷

The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve (in a year) – so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are sacred: that is the straight usage. So wrong not yourselves therein ...¹⁸

Another verse in the Qur’ān undertakes a classification of people, and describes who the *ẓālimūn* are:

Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our Servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah’s leave, foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace.¹⁹

It is obvious that one who transgresses the bounds of God is *ẓālim* (a wrong-doer or evil-doer):

Those are limits set by Allah: those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever) and that will be the supreme achievement. But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment.²⁰

At this point, it should be remembered that *nafs* has a relation with *fujūr* and *taqwā*, as declared in *Sūrat al-shams*. Considering the particular verse, *ẓālim* can be paired with *fujūr* and *muttaqī*, likewise, with *taqwā*. *Ẓālim* is one who transgresses the bounds of God and *muttaqī* is one who recognises and obeys the Divine Laws. In other words, *fujūr* is committed by the *ẓālim* and *taqwā* is performed by the *muttaqī*. The Qur’ān provides examples in the following verses:

She was asked to enter the lofty Palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs. He said: “This is but a palace

¹⁷ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (2: 231).

¹⁸ Ibid. (2: 36).

¹⁹ Ibid. (35: 32).

²⁰ Ibid. (4: 13–14).

paved smooth with slabs of glass.” She said: “O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul: I do (now) submit (in Islam), with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds.”²¹

And remember Moses said to his people: “O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrong-doers); that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker.” Then He turned towards you (in forgiveness): For He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.²²

The ultimate point of *ẓulm-u nafs* is being a *kāfir*; however, *mu'mins* can also share in this category. In other words, it is possible that *mu'mins* or believers can also make *ẓulm* to their *nafs* (can do wrong to themselves). The Qur'ān says:

(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrong-doing to their own souls.” Then would they offer submission (with the pretence), “We did no evil (knowingly).” (The angels will reply), “Nay, but verily Allah knoweth all that ye did; “o enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein. Thus evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant.”²³

And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins,— and who can forgive sins except Allah?— and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.²⁴

As discussed above, the two terms *kufr* and *ẓulm* may be paired and interconnected. *Kufr* is mostly translated as ‘rejecting God’, and is mainly considered a religious concept. The Qur'ān, in the dialog between Moses and Pharaoh, uses the word in the secular meaning (ingratitude) as well (26: 19). Therefore, *kufr* can be paired with ingratitude, which is also paired and defined as *ẓulm-u nafs* in different Surahs of the Qur'ān:

And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you manna and quails, saying: “Eat of the good things We have provided for you”: (But they rebelled); to us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.²⁵

We divided them into twelve tribes or nations. We directed Moses by inspiration, when his (thirsty) people asked him for water: “Strike the rock with thy staff”: out of it there gushed forth twelve springs: Each group knew its own place for water. We gave them the

²¹ Ibid. (27: 44).

²² Ibid. (2: 54).

²³ Ibid. (16: 28–29).

²⁴ Ibid. (3: 135).

²⁵ Ibid. (2: 57).

shade of clouds, and sent down to them manna and quails (saying): “Eat of the good things We have provided for you”: (but they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.²⁶

On the other hand, if *ẓulm-u nafs* can be paired with ingratitude, gratitude may be explained as the opposite of *ẓulm-u nafs* clarification by its negative form.

Another kind of *ẓulm* to *nafs* is, not expending one’s material and/or spiritual possessions for the sake of God. The Qur’ān describes this situation in various verses, among which are:

What they spend in the life of this (material) world May be likened to a wind which brings a nipping frost: It strikes and destroys the harvest of men who have wronged their own souls: it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong themselves.²⁷

Say: “O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.”²⁸

1.5.2. *Hawá-i nafs*

The Qur’ān mentions *hawá* (*ahwā’* in plural form) as the principal and immediate cause of *ḍalāl* for the *nafs*. The *nafs* which follows his *hawá* will stray from the right path. And those who follow the *nafs* and pursue their *hawá* will inevitably be misled from the true path defined by God. The Qur’ān describes the following *hawā* as worshipping idols and ignoring the Divine Guidance:

These are nothing but names which ye have devised, – ye and your fathers, –for which Allah has sent down no authority (whatever). They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls (*nafs*) desire! – Even though there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord!²⁹

The word *hawá* may be considered as being the natural inclination of the human soul towards evil and animal appetites. In the Qur’ānic text it is described as an invariable evil inclination

²⁶ Ibid. (7: 167).

²⁷ Ibid. (3: 117).

²⁸ Ibid. (39: 53).

²⁹ Ibid. (53: 23).

to mislead man from the true path. Also, the Qur'ān uses *hawá* as the opposite of *'ilm*, knowledge and the revealed knowledge of the Truth.

In another verse, *hawá* is represented as worldly pleasures, and the *nafs* which transgresses and prefers such pleasures to the life hereafter will be punished. On the other hand, the same verse states that the *nafs* which purifies itself and stays away from its *hawá* will go to paradise:

Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds, And had preferred the life of this world, The Abode will be Hell-Fire; And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul (*nafs*) from lower desires, Their abode will be the Garden.³⁰

In the Qur'ān, *hawá* and *hudá* are used as two contradictory terms which can be paired with *kāfir* and *mu'min*. With this insight, it may be possible to generalise that *kāfir* is a person who follows his *hawá* and, likewise, *mu'min* is a person who follows *hudá* at all times. The Qur'ān says:

Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. Wert thou to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither protector nor defender against Allah. (13; 37)

In order to further analyse the word *hawá*, more pairs can be extracted from the Qur'ān. *Hawá* can be paired with *jahl* and *hudá* can be paired with *'ilm*. Also, it is important to realise that *jahl* and *'ilm* are contradictory terms. The Qur'ān indicates that *hawá* stands on nothing other than *jahl*, and *hudá* stands on *'ilm*, signs and proofs. In verse 2: 87, the Qur'ān states:

We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers; We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you a messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? – Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!³¹

³⁰ Ibid. (79: 37–41).

³¹ Ibid. (2: 87).

As is explained above, there is a correlation between *hawá* and *ḍalālah* for the *nafs*. In the following verses, the Qur'ān says that worshipping those other than Allah and not following the Prophet and his message is straying from the guidance or the right path:

Say: “I am forbidden to worship those – others than Allah – whom ye call upon.” Say: “I will not follow your vain desires: If I did, I would stray from the path, and be not of the company of those who receive guidance.”³²

O Apostle! Proclaim the (Message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled His Mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith.³³

But when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed unto them, those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, say: “Bring us a reading other than this, or change this.” Say: “It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it: I follow naught but what is revealed unto me: if I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the penalty of a Great Day (to come).”³⁴

The Qur'ān says that for *mu'mins* who do not follow their *hawā* there are bounties in the life hereafter:

Not the slightest sound will they hear of Hell: what their souls desired, in that will they dwell.³⁵

As highlighted above, Izutsu's semantic analysis method was used in this study. However, it should be noted that his methods might possess some shortcomings in his methods (e.g. regarding the value of synonyms). Izutsu considers that some words in the Qur'ān may be synonyms for others. Some say that the Qur'ān never employs one word on behalf of another word; all the words are specific, and if the place of a word were changed the Divine message would be violated. Bearing such criticism in mind, Izutsu's method can still be very useful. Hence, it has been employed in this study. One example of the value of synonyms might be *shahwah* (covetousness) as a synonym of *hawá*. The Qur'ān says:

³² Ibid. (6: 56).

³³ Ibid. (5: 70).

³⁴ Ibid. (10: 15).

³⁵ Ibid. (21: 102).

So fear Allah as much as ye can; listen and obey and spend in charity for the benefit of your own soul and those saved from the covetousness of their own souls,— they are the ones that achieve prosperity.³⁶

Where the Qur'ān is concerned it has to be acknowledged that employing one word as a synonym for another is generally inapplicable as means of elucidating the ultimate meaning of specific individual words. Such a use of synonyms may, however, still prove illuminating as regards detailed examination of any specific concept.

1.5.3. *Nafs-i waḥidah*

In the Qur'ān, several verses indicate that the human being is created from a single *nafs* (person). In the following verses, the relation of *nafs* to *taqwá* is also highlighted together with the notion of creation:

O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; – reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.³⁷

It is He Who hath produced you from a single person: here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure: We detail Our signs for people who understand.³⁸

Another distinctive point about the *nafs-i waḥidah* verses is that in them Allah draws attention to His Divine Power. He writes that, as He created man from a single person, for Him the creation or resurrection of one man is not any different from the creation or resurrection of all mankind. Likewise, for Allah the creation of a single cell is not any different from the creation of all the universes. The Qur'ān highlights these truths in various verses:

And your creation or your resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul: for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things)³⁹

It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love). When they are united, she bears a light burden and

³⁶ Ibid. (64: 16).

³⁷ Ibid. (4: 1).

³⁸ Ibid. (6: 98).

³⁹ Ibid. (31: 28).

carries it about (unnoticed). When she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah their Lord (saying): “If Thou givest us a goodly child, we vow we shall (ever) be grateful.”⁴⁰

He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions): He makes the Night overlap the Day, and the Day overlap the Night: He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law): Each one follows a course for a time appointed. Is not He the Exalted in Power – He Who forgives again and again?⁴¹

He created you (all) from a single person: then created, of like nature, his mate; and he sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs: He makes you, in the wombs of your mothers, in stages, one after another, in three veils of darkness. such is Allah, your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs (all) dominion. There is no god but He: then how are ye turned away (from your true Centre)?⁴²

It is possible to make a contextual definition of *nafs-i waḥidah* through the verses in the Qur’ān, but further analysis of the term with the semantic approach has not been undertaken in this study.

1.5.4. *Ḍalālat al-nafs* (going astray)

There are two options for the *nafs* in this world, being a *mu’min*, or being a *kāfir*. The Qur’ān explains these options in relation to belief and *kufr*. Going astray is one of the most important concepts, and is the opposite of *ihtidā*. *Ihtidā* is explained as ‘to believe’ and to be rightly guided or to accept the guidance (of God) so *īmān* can rise on *ihtidā*. On the other hand, *kufr* stands on *ḍalālah* (nominal form of the verb *ḍalla*), which means ‘going astray from the right path’. The verb *ḍalla* is used at various levels of discourse; two main, different, usages of the verb are common. The first is ‘to lose one’s way while travelling in the desert’. The second is the usage of the verb in a metaphorical sense. The major difference between those two usages relates to their use in either religious or non-religious/secular meanings.

⁴⁰ Ibid. (7: 189).

⁴¹ Ibid. (39: 5).

⁴² Ibid. (39: 6).

An example of the secular meaning of the word is given in the *Sūrat al-Yūsuf*, as the excessive compassion shown by the Prophet Jacob towards one of his children, Joseph. Other children interpret his excessive compassion towards Joseph as *ḍalālah*:⁴³

They said: “Truly Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we: But we are a goodly body! Really our father is obviously wandering (in his mind!)”⁴⁴

In this verse, wandering refers to *ḍalālah*.

The second example is also given in *Sūrat al-Yūsuf*. The aberrant passion of the Egyptian Governor’s wife for Joseph is criticised as the Governor going astray (*ḍalālah*) by other women:⁴⁵

Ladies said in the City: “The wife of the (great) 'Azīz is seeking to seduce her slave from his (true) self: Truly hath he inspired her with violent love: we see she is evidently going astray.”⁴⁶

Those two examples make clear that the word *ḍalālah* indicates an excessive feeling, which is against the normal moral sense. However, the basic meaning in this case, ‘going astray from the right path’, represents the word *ḍalāl* being employed in the religious context. There are several examples of the religious usage of the word in the Qur’ān, such as in verse (3: 69), where it is expressed as an action of the People of the Book:

It is the wish of a section of the People of the Book to lead you astray. But they shall lead astray (not you), but themselves, and they do not perceive!⁴⁷

But for the Grace of Allah to thee and his Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray. But (in fact) they will only lead their own souls (their *nafs*) astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least. For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou knewest not (before): And great is the Grace of Allah unto thee.⁴⁸

⁴³ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*, 134.

⁴⁴ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (12: 8).

⁴⁵ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*, 134.

⁴⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (12: 30).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (3: 69).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* (4: 113).

At this point, *ḍalālah* (straying) may be paired with *kufr* (unbelief or disbelief) and *hudá* (guidance) with *īmān* (belief). There are more than enough examples in the Qur'ān to show that straying (*ḍalālah*) is another name for *kufr*. On the other hand, the same is applicable to *īmān* and *hudá*. Therefore, *ihtidá* and *īmān* and *ḍalla* and *kufr* are the basic conceptual opposites of each other. In the next example, from the very beginning of the Qur'ān in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, these four terms are all mentioned together:

Show (*ihdinā*) us the straight way, the way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace (*mu'mins*), those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray (*ḍālliin*) (nom. The verb *ḍalla*)⁴⁹

It is important to highlight here that the People of the Book do not realise their (wrong) position, and consider the situation of the believers to be *ḍalāl*. *Kāfir* consider that *mu'min* are astray and are on the wrong path and so they are called prophets, liars, etc.

1.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated the concept of *nafs* in the Qur'ān. A combination of different methods and references has enriched the study. The classical approach to any concept in the Qur'ān was to investigate it mainly through the exegesis and hadith collections; however, in this current study, modern methods have also been employed, such as typology and semantic analysis. Typology has displayed the term *nafs* in the Qur'ān as a schematic map providing a comprehensive outlook on the term. In addition, the semantic analysis method has provided further discussions, and extra information, on the branches of the *nafs* and their relationship with each other.

Typology has provided a comprehensive perspective on one of the most frequently used notions, the *nafs*. It is a subject which has several different meanings and which has massive scope as applied to the Qur'ān. Its different meanings are also employed in different contexts. Typology has not only provided greater depth to the discussions, but has also helped in framing the arguments. New findings, mainly about the concept of *nafs* in relation to the

⁴⁹ Ibid. (1: 6–7).

concept of Divine Knowledge (*ma'rifah*), might not have been produced without such an analysis.

In the overall framework of this study, the semantic analysis and the exegesis can be considered complementary methods. Discussions on the definition of *nafs* in the Qur'ān in this chapter are good examples of this. Both methods have assisted in illuminating the concept in detail.

With the Qur'ān, *nafs* has gained additional meanings to the self-meaning, namely God, gods, humans, and jinn. In this study, *nafs* and self are considered equivalent words in respect of the totality of man and all the inward and outward faculties of human beings.

In this chapter, a preliminary account of the meaning of *nafs* has been given in relation to its usages in *Sūrat al-Shams* and to the three relevant concepts defined by the Qur'ān, namely *al-nafs al-ammārah*, *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* and *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*. The semantic discussions of the term and the explanations of selected verses from different Qur'ān commentaries are complementary, and together contribute to our understanding of the concept.

The word *nafs* in *Sūrat al-Shams* might be considered the central point of the discussion. Some commentators state that the *nafs* implies the totality of man. There are two possible paths for the *nafs* and its tools, either for evil (*fujūr*) or for good (*taqwā*). There are also two referents of the specific meanings of the word *nafs*, the Prophet Adam and the Prophet Muhammad. Some say that the *nafs* refers to the Prophet Muhammad because he is the only human being who has all the manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes at the utmost level (*al-martabah al-'āzam*). On the other hand, some say that it refers to the Prophet Adam, since he was the first man among humankind.

The first descriptive characteristic of the definition of the *nafs* is expressed by “the proportion and order given to it”, *wama sawwāha*; some think that this indicates the composite structure of the *nafs*, which comprises the different components or spheres, namely plant, animal and human soul. These components were respectively labelled for the first time by Aristotle, as emphasised in the main introduction. On the other hand, some argue that this section of the

verse refers to the physical perfection of bodily organs. Others, however, claim that the section refers to the inward and outward abilities of *nafs* which have the potential to be perfected. They are perfectly harmonised in relation not only to each other but to the universe and the entire creation.

The abilities mentioned above can be directed either in a positive or negative way. The Qur'ān labels the positive way *taqwā* and the negative *fujūr*. 'The inspiration to the *nafs*', in the following verse, has been discussed by some *mufasssirun* in terms of teaching *nafs* what wrong and right are.

The negative employment of the *nafs*, the notion of *fujūr*, is related to the concept of *zulm-u nafs*, which is mainly translated as 'doing wrong and going astray'. Understanding *zulm-u nafs* is a complementary part of understanding the concept of *nafs*. *Zulm-u nafs* has been discussed through the use of Arabic dictionaries, and several Qur'ānic verses which illuminate in detail what is wrong and what is right for the *nafs*. Most lexicographers define *zulm-u nafs* as a transgression of the proper limits or boundaries. In other words, it is the improper employment of the inward and outward faculties of the *nafs*, which are certainly not relevant to the Divine Guidance and Wisdom. There is another specific term in the Qur'ān which expresses the ultimate point of the *zulm-u nafs*, *hawa*. It can be defined as the source of the invariable evil inclination to mislead man from the true path. *Fujūr*, *zulm-u nafs*, *hawá* and *dalālah* create a cluster displaying the *nafs*'s misconception. The Qur'ān calls this *al-Nafs al-ammārah*. The Qur'ān says: "all *nafs* have inclination to evil things." If this inclination to evil *fujūr* is not regulated, it tends to capture and control all other faculties. This means that the bodily aspect of the self builds its own hegemony on the other inward and outward subtle faculties. This is the real obstacle on the path to fulfilling one's true potential.

On the other hand, *taqwā*, which is employment of the inward and outward faculties to obtain Divine knowledge, leads man to the path of purification. The Qur'ān calls completion of the purification process *al-Nafs al-muṭmainnah*.

Most *mufasssirūn* (commentators) think that the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* blames man himself constantly in relation to his good or bad actions to achieve better. Mawdudi considers the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* in relation to the feeling of repentance. This concept has also been

discussed by other commentators in relation to the concept of *wijdān* (conscience). Even though they are not the same they have similar functions, so they might be considered as a calibrating factor for human beings in their striving to achieve a better understanding of the Divine Concept. Mawdudi further asserts that the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* can be considered proof of the existence of a life hereafter. The existence of this micro-scale court in human nature (*fiṭrah*) can be considered a little sample of the Divine Court. Elmalılı also emphasises another dimension of the *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*; he writes that training the *nafs* is possible through a spiritual journey. The *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* plays a critical role in this journey, and it acts as a trigger for all levels, from *al-nafs al-ammārah* to *al-Nafs al-ṣāfiyahwa kāmila*.

The *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* is mainly considered to be the tranquillity or satisfaction of the *nafs*. Some assert that this tranquillity or satisfaction will be realised or granted in the hereafter, and some that it is also valid in this life. The *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* is also discussed in relation to the concept of Divine knowledge in the Qur’ān. The Prophet Abraham prays to God for a demonstration of small-scale resurrection to assure his heart. His being witness to such a demonstration via his outward faculties is expressed by the word *iṭmi’nān*.

In conclusion, investigating the concept of *nafs* in the Qur’ān has provided clear definitions and classifications, to be elaborated in the following chapters. There, the concept of *nafs* will be investigated further in the writings of great scholars such as Al-Ghazzālī and Ibn ‘Arabī in order to illuminate it in relation to the concept of God.

Chapter 2

THE *NAFS* IN SUFISM

The concept of *nafs* was discussed in detail in Chapter 1, with a focus on its meaning in the Qur'ān. The meaning of the word *nafs* was investigated through Arabic dictionaries, Qur'ānic exegesis and in the Qur'ān itself via a semantic analysis. In this chapter, *nafs* in Sufi literature is investigated. For the most part, the *nafs* is translated as the immediate equivalent word of the word 'self' in the Sufi tradition. There are a variety of meanings, which are homonyms ranging from soul and spirit to appetite and desire. There are also reflexive uses of the word, such as *nafsī*, denoting 'myself', and *bi-nafsihi*, 'by himself'.¹

In this study, the *nafs* is examined with regard to the Divine knowledge and the relationship between man and God. The psycho-philosophical terminology may be helpful in fostering understanding of different aspects of the concept. The *nafs* is considered to be the equivalent of *psyche* (or *anima*).²

THE CONCEPT OF *NAFS* IN SUFISM

In this chapter, the works of two Sufi masters, Ghazzālī and Ibn 'Arabī, will be discussed. One reason for selecting these scholars in this study is the huge contribution that have made to the topic. Ghazzālī contributed to the development of Sufism and Islamic philosophy³ in an era when the ideas of Greek philosophy chiefly influenced, and sometimes violated, the fundamentals of Islamic thought. His works are especially important for this study as he represents 'aql in balance with qalb. Ibn 'Arabī is the founder of the tradition of *wahdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being), and it was he who contributed most to the tradition. However, he never used the term '*wahdat al-wujūd*' in his works, focusing mainly on Divine Knowledge on the path to perfection.

¹ David Dean Shulman and Guy G Stroumsa, *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10086977>.

² Polansky, Aristotle's *De Anima*.

³ Martin Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān One Book, Many Meanings* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 6, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10167797>.

2.1. WORKS OF IBN 'ARABĪ

Ibn 'Arabī (or Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad ibn al-'Arabī at-Tā'ī al-Hātimī), also called Muhyiddīn, the Revivifier of the Faith, is one of the most important Sufī scholars. He was born in 1165 CE in Andalusian Spain and died in Damascus in 1240 CE. There are two important biographies of Ibn 'Arabī: *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, by Claude Addas,⁴ and *The Unlimited Mercifier* by Stephen Hirtenstein.⁵

Ibn 'Arabī began to undertake retreats, and spent considerable time experiencing mystical insights at a very early age.⁶ Chittick writes that his initial spiritual opening or wayfaring (*sulūk*) took place when he was aged twenty. He experienced his first opening as a result of a divine attraction (*jadhbah*).⁷

Within the Sufi tradition Ibn 'Arabī is called the Sheikh al-Akbar (Greatest Master) and is seen as the ultimate exemplar of esoteric Knowledge. He was, among many other things, the author of approximately three hundred books, some of them pamphlet-length, others comprising several volumes.⁸ His writings belong to a variety of different subjects and fields of knowledge, such that they combine poetry, exegesis, speculative theology, jurisprudence and mythology.⁹ He wrote extensively on Unity of Being, and influenced scholars not only in the Islamic world but throughout the globe. His major works are *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*¹⁰ and *Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*,¹¹ which combines the functions of spiritual encyclopaedia and intimate

⁴ Claude Addas, Peter Kingsley, and Islamic Texts Society, *Quest for the red sulphur: the life of Ibn 'Arabī* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

⁵ Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier the Life and Thought of Ibn Arabi* (Oxford; Ashland, Or.: Anqa; White Cloud Press, 1999).

⁶ Ibn al-'Arabī, Angela Jaffray, and Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, *The universal tree and the four birds Treatise on unification (al-Ittiḥād al-kawnī)* (Oxford: Anqa, 2006), 9.

⁷ William C Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 383.

⁸ Ibn al-'Arabī, Jaffray, and Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, *The universal tree and the four birds Treatise on unification (al-Ittiḥād al-kawnī)*, 2.

⁹ Suha Taji-Farouki, Beshara and Ibn 'Arabi a Movement of Sufi Spirituality in the Modern World (Oxford, UK: Anqa, 2007), 15, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=434528>.

¹⁰ Bosnevi Abdullah et al., *Ismail Hakki Bursevi's Translation Of, and Commentary on Fusus Al-Hikam by Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi* (Oxford: Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, 1986).

¹¹ Muhi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi, 'Utman Yahya, and Ibrahim Madkur, *Al Futuhat Al Makkiyya [The Meccan Openings]* (Al Qahira: Al Hay'a al Misriyya, 1972).

autobiography. Ibn ‘Arabī shows how man, in perfection, is the complete image of reality and how those who truly know their essential self know God.¹² His writing style is curious. It seems that spontaneous writing from inspiration, added to his discursive method, has brought about a kind of ambiguity. Symbolic images and paradoxes play an important role in this.¹³

Although he never used the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being), Ibn ‘Arabī is considered the founder of the tradition. Qunawī, who is Ibn ‘Arabī’s spiritual heir, transmitted and publicised his ideas.¹⁴ The central point of the theory is neither *wujūd* nor *waḥdat al-wujūd*, but the achievement of human perfection.¹⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī’s idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd*¹⁶ is ultimately and intimately focused on the unity of God (*tawḥīd*), which is the bedrock of Islam.¹⁷ In the very centre of his discourse there is discussion about the position of things before God and their relation to the knowledge of God. Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is a key concept in Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings and philosophy and key to an understanding of his notion of existence.¹⁸ There are complex and dynamic relationships between God, man and the cosmos. These relationships pivot on the underlying oneness and common origin of all aspects of the universe. The idea of Unity of Being will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In this study, the writings of Qunawī (d. 1273) will also be considered. These can be considered as a series of systematic discussions of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works. For this reason, consistency and point-by-point reasoning can be followed in his writings. By contrast, the

¹² See detailed works of Ibn Arabi: Muḥyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi, 'The Writings of Ibn ‘Arabi', <<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/works.html>>, accessed 23 August 2011.

¹³ D Perley, ‘Vagueness: An Additional Nuance in the Interpretation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Mystical Language’, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. 22, no. 4 (2005): 57–83.

¹⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 279.

¹⁵ William C. Chittick, ‘The Central Point’, p. 32.

¹⁶ See ‘Rumi and waḥdat al-wujūd’ by William C. Chittick in: Amin Banani et al., *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 70–111.

¹⁷ Taji-Farouki, Beshara and Ibn ‘Arabi a Movement of Sufi Spirituality in the Modern World, 15.

¹⁸ ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn et al., *The Spiritual Writings of Amir ‘Abd Al-Kader* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 16.

writings of Ibn ‘Arabī seem like sudden inspirations in which horizontal and logical continuity may not be apparent.¹⁹

Jāmī (d. 1492) is another important figure for this study as regards an understanding of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī. Jāmī’s discussions on *al-insān al-kāmil* (the perfect man) should be viewed as a mirror displaying Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding of *nafs* and man’s position before God. Moreover, there is no doubt that Jāmī himself saw this school as a unified and harmonious whole, with differences of opinion only on minor points.²⁰

2.1.1. Description of *Nafs* According to Ibn ‘Arabī

William Chittick is one of the most celebrated authorities on the works of Ibn ‘Arabī. Chittick writes that *nafs* may be considered as individual consciousness, and as such is closely equivalent to I-ness (ego *anāniyah*).²¹ He writes that *nafs*

usually refers to the animating principle of the body, the intermediary between the bodily constitution and the spirit, or to the immortal aspect of man's being which can be perfected through the spiritual life.²²

According to Ibn ‘Arabī there are two *nafs*, namely *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul) and *al-nafs al-kullī* (universal soul). *Al-nafs al-kullī* is the *nafs* in the universe. The relation of this *nafs* with the universe is similar to the relation of *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* with the body. *Al-nafs al-kullī* does not fall within the scope of this study; the main discussion will be about *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*.

Ibn ‘Arabī writes that the starting point of the spiritual journey is the realisation of *nafs*, which he calls the *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul).²³ Ibn ‘Arabī further writes that it does

¹⁹ Frithjof Schuon et al., *Logic and transcendence: a new translation with selected letters* (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2009), 149–150; see also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Persia and the Destiny of Islamic Philosophy*, 1971, 31–42.

²⁰ William C Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, *Studia Islamica*, no. 49 (1979): 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Ismail Hakki, *Lubbu’l-Lubb [The Kernel of the Kernel]* (Istanbul: Bahar Yayinlari, 2000), 35.

not have a separate body or *rūh* and cannot be separated into pieces. Even though it has no specific location in the body, it is always in the centre of the body and its influence can be observed throughout the whole body.²⁴ *Al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul) is permanent. It cannot be damaged physically and disintegrated or be spread into pieces.²⁵ According to Ibn ‘Arabī, it is *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul)

which holds in the man's hand, which looks in his eye, which speaks in his tongue, which walks in his foot, which hears in his ear, and in short is present and in control in all his feelings.²⁶

Ibn ‘Arabī writes that the illuminated scholar can know the reality of *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul) himself through knowledge of *al-‘ālam al-ḥaḍārāt al-khamsah* (five realms). These are:

1. *al-ghayb al-muṭlaq* (Absolute Unseen).
2. *al-‘ālam al-jabarūt* (the realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Attributes and Names).
3. *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* (the world of dominion).
4. *al-shuhūd al-muṭlaq* (the Corporeal or Visible realm).
5. *al-insān al-kāmil* (Perfect Man).²⁷

The meaning of *al-ghayb al-muṭlaq* (Absolute Unseen) is indicated by a Qur’ānic verse: “With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He ...”²⁸ In this location (*maqām*) there are no Names and Attributes, but Him. The next verse points to the Absolute Unseen: “God stands not in need of any of His creatures (*ganiyyun ‘ala al-*

²⁴ Ibid., 33.

²⁵ Ismail Hakki Bursevi and al-Arabi Ibn, Ismail Hakki Bursevi’s Translation of Kernel of the Kernel by Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi (Sherborne: Beshara Publications, 1983), <http://www.besharapublications.org.uk/pages/kernel.html>.

²⁶ Hakki, Lubbu’l-Lubb [The Kernel of the Kernel], 34.

²⁷ Bursevi and Ibn, Ismail Hakki Bursevi’s Translation of Kernel of the Kernel by Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi; see also: Hakki, Lubbu’l-Lubb [The Kernel of the Kernel], 43.

²⁸ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (6: 59).

‘*ālamīn*’) (3: 97).²⁹ There are also several *ḥadīths* indicating the same meaning, such as: “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known so I created heaven and earth that I may be known.”³⁰

Al-‘ālam al-jabarūt is described as the world of the Divine Names and the reality of Prophet Muhammad by Ibn ‘Arabī.³¹ He also defines *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* as a secret world specific to *nafs* and *rūḥ*³² and *al-shuhūd al-muṭlaq* as the material world, which hosts the world as man sees it. It consists of minerals, plants and animals.³³

There is a connection between these four realms (*‘ālam*s). The first, *al-‘ālam al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*, is related to God (*Dhāt*) only. Ibn ‘Arabī employs a metaphor to explain the relation between the remaining three realms. His analogy is the three forms of water and their specific realms. The gas form of water (steam) represents *al-‘ālam al-jabarūt*, the liquid form *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* and the solid form (ice) *shuhūd al-muṭlaq*. Just like water changing from one form to another, these *‘alam*s also transform from *al-‘ālam al-jabarūt* to *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* to *shuhūd al-muṭlaq*.³⁴

2.1.1.1. Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*)

The fifth and the most significant realm (*‘alam*) covered by this study is the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). The man who bears the reflections and manifestations of other realms (*‘ālamūn*) can be called the Perfect Man. All these manifestations and reflections can be gathered in man’s self (*nafs*). Three major aspects of the Perfect Man are discussed by Jāmī in terms of the ontological prototype of creation. In the first aspect, the Perfect is considered as the locus of manifestation for the Name ‘Allah’. He is the goal of creation in the second aspect of the discussion. The third aspect is relevant to man being God’s vicegerent.³⁵ In this study, the first aspect will be examined rather than the other two. However, awareness of the

²⁹ Ibid. (3: 97).

³⁰ Hakki, *Lubbu’l-Lubb* [The Kernel of the Kernel], 47.

³¹ Ibid., 48–49.

³² Ibid., 49.

³³ Ibid., 50.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, 9.

other aspects will assist us to understand the relation between man and God in accordance with the Divine knowledge.

The Perfect Man has a spiritual ranking which gathers realms (*al-‘ālamūn*) together, and he also reflects the Divine Names and Attributes in his utmost potential. Such a man becomes an index of the universe in respect of both material and spiritual realms (*al-‘ālamūn*). This means that man can journey in the visible and the invisible realms to achieve a better understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes (*al-asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt*).³⁶ God in His Absolute Essence cannot be known, but we can know Him by His revealed Names and His Attributes, in the Qur’ān. They are commonly known as the ninety-nine Names of God.³⁷ The Qur’ān is the primary source for the knowledge of God, and the *ḥadīth* may be considered the complementary part. The universe is considered a cosmic text enabling us to attain knowledge of the Names and Attributes. In fact, according to Ibn ‘Arabī the whole of the universe, including man, is nothing other than the theophany of God's Names.³⁸ This means that true understanding of the Perfect Man is also concerned with the true approach to the concept of the Divine Names and Attributes. The Perfect Man is introduced as the locus of theophany (*mazhar, majlā*) according to Ibn ‘Arabī's school of thought.³⁹ Only such a man can be the addressee of the *ḥadīth* that states: “The heavens and the earth contain me not; yet, how strange! I am contained in the hearts of believers.”⁴⁰ Therefore, any heart only reflects all the Names and Attributes of God.⁴¹

Ibn ‘Arabī frequently employs the mirror metaphor in his works to explain the relation between man and God. The mirror, which reflects only the image of the viewer reflected in it, is no longer noticed at all. Vision (the viewing by a subject of an outside object) has become

³⁶ Hakki, *Lubbu’l-Lubb* [The Kernel of the Kernel], 52.

³⁷ See the Appendix.

³⁸ Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁰ Ismail ibn Muhammad Ajluni, *Kashf Al-Khafa*, vol. II (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1932), 165; see also: Abu Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: Bedir Yayinlari, 2002), 14.

⁴¹ Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, 145.

self-vision. At the beginning of his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Ring Settings of Wisdom),⁴² Ibn ‘Arabī employs the mirror image to remarkable effect as a symbol of the mystical perspective shift. This shift is reflected in his notion of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).⁴³

Ibn ‘Arabī also considers the perfect man as one of the most important aspects of the Divine purpose of creation. Moreover, he asserts that man is intended to be complementary to the Divine purpose of creation. The Qur’ān says that God “taught Adam the Names, all of them”.⁴⁴ These names might be considered to be the names of the created things, including the angels, according to the context of the verse. The names in the verse “Adam was taught all of God’s Names” refer to the reflections of the Divine Names. In fact, things reflect the Divine Names according to their capacity. This is why Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers consider that ‘Adam’ also refers to humankind.⁴⁵ Adam was the first comprehensive mirror or locus of theophany for the Names in this world. In other words, he was the first corporeal manifestation of the Divine Names to indicate the eternal reality of the Perfect Man. The first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is called ‘Adam’, and is focused on discussion of the concept of the Perfect Man.⁴⁶

Jāmī draws attentions to man’s creation by God’s two hands. A Qur’ānic verse indicates this, and refines the idea of man’s all-comprehensive nature as the locus of theophany for the Names: “... to him whom I have created with my two hands”.⁴⁷ Jāmī interprets the verse as meaning that everything other than man was created with only one hand. He points out that the phrase “Two Hands” refers to the division of God’s Attributes into two categories, the

⁴² The following translation and discussion is based upon ‘Afīfī’s edition of Muḥyiddīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam* [The Wisdom of the Prophets], ed. Abu al-‘Alā ‘Afīfī, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1946).

⁴³ Michael Sells, ‘Ibn “Arabi”’s Polished Mirror: Perspective Shift and Meaning Event’, *Studia Islamica* no. 67 (1988): 121.

⁴⁴ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (2: 31).

⁴⁵ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam* [The Wisdom of the Prophets], 86.

⁴⁶ Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, 11. For a comprehensive discussion about the concept of perfect man in Ibn Arabi’s thought see: Toshihiko Izutsu, *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism: Ibn ‘Arabī and Lao-Tzū, Chuang-Tzū* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1966); see also: Michael A Sells, ‘Ibn Arabi’s Garden among the Flames: A Reevaluation’, *HIST RELIGIONS* History of Religions 23, no. 4 (1984).

⁴⁷ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (38: 75).

Attributes of Beauty (*jamāl*) and those of Majesty (*jalāl*).⁴⁸ In other words, nothing in creation apart from man was created embracing all the Attributes.

2.1.2. The Relation between *Nafs* and Knowing God

Ibn ‘Arabī explains the *ḥadīth* “He who knows himself, knows his Lord”⁴⁹ as ‘I believe that my *nafs* (self) is other than God and also God is not my *nafs* (self)’. The term *nafs*, mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, is man’s essence or the reality of man. It does not indicate compartments of the *nafs* (self), namely *al-nafs al-ammārah* (evil-commanding soul), *al-lawwāmah* (self-accusing soul) or *al-muṭmainnah* (tranquil soul).⁵⁰

According to Ibn ‘Arabī, *nafs* and the things in the universe are all separate, but in the same category of beings (creatures). *Nafs* can know and understand himself through knowing the meaning of things in the universe. Such a *nafs* can ultimately link this knowledge to the Divine Names and Attributes of God.⁵¹

Ibn ‘Arabī considers the things as the face of the Divine Creator. The ‘face’ in this analogy can be explained as the reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes. *Nafs* (man) can read these reflections as sciences, and then he knows his *nafs* (himself) and the Divine Unity in the universe.⁵²

Since it is known that God Himself and His Divine Attributes are infinite or endless, so His manifestations should also be infinite. The Qur’ān also indicates this concept in the verse “... every day in [new] Splendour doth He [shine]!”⁵³ It means that the Divine Power is absolute and does not appear on the same thing twice since it continuously renews itself and changes.⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Arabī writes that man is not infinite with his *nafs* (self), but only with God. Man’s

⁴⁸ Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, 11.

⁴⁹ Ajluni, *Kashf Al-Khafa*, II: 2256.

⁵⁰ Muḥyiddīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Mirāt Al-‘Irfān* [Mirror of the Knowledge] (Istanbul: Kemer Neşriyat, 1984), 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵³ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (55: 29).

⁵⁴ Hakki, *Lubbu’l-Lubb* [The Kernel of the Kernel], 45.

attributes and essence should be considered as reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes. This helps man to understand what the reality of his *nafs* is.⁵⁵

According to Ibn ‘Arabī and Jī’lī, the things in the universe stand on three notions, which are God’s self (*Dhāt*), the Divine Names, and The Attributes. The realities of the things are these three ‘infinite notions’, which are reflected on the ‘finite things’ continuously.⁵⁶

In *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Ibn ‘Arabī focuses on the existence of God and His relation with the universe and also elaborates on the relationship between man and God.⁵⁷ According to Ibn ‘Arabī, obtaining Divine knowledge of God is only possible through the visible names and attributes of man and the universe. In other words, it is not possible to attain metaphysical knowledge without discussion of *al-‘ālam al-shahādah* through the manifestations contained in it. This interpretation of these relations might be considered in terms of a common language. Thus Sufis define the notion of *al-umūr al-‘amma*, in the main subject of the metaphysics of Ibn Sina, as ‘common attributes’ in order to expand the field of knowledge of the mind. This also provides an opportunity to talk about the abstract knowledge and provision in a tangible context.⁵⁸

2.1.2.1. The concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being)

The concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being) has been widely discussed throughout the history of Islam. The term first appeared in the late fifteenth century in the writings of ‘Abd al-Rahman Jāmī, which can be considered a summary of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of thought. ‘Abd al-Rahman Jāmī introduced the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a theory embracing the interpretation of the whole Universe with respect to both the temporal and the eternal aspects of existents. The idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* assumes that it is neither existent nor non-existent, such that

⁵⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁶ Ibrahim Medkur et al., *Ibn Arabi Anisina : Makaleler* (Istanbul: Insan, 2002), 45.

⁵⁷ Ekrem Demirli, *Islam Metafiziginde Tanrı ve İnsan: Ibn Ul-Arabi ve Vahdet-I Vucud Gelenegi* [God and Man in the Metaphysic of Islam: Ibn Al-Arabi and Institution of Unity of Existence], I (Cagaloglu, Istanbul: Kabcı Yayinevi, 2009), 86.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 104.

it is not the world, and yet it also is; it is other without being other, given that otherness implies at least two existents, whereas sameness implies matching ... resulting in a third notion qualified as form.⁵⁹

Sheikh Makki (d. 1520) was among the scholars who contributed to this discussion. He was assigned by the Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim Khan (d. 1520) to explore and defend the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī.⁶⁰ Sheikh Makki’s writings are used to contribute to this section of the study.

Sheikh Makki writes that according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being), God is the Eternal One and also the Absolute Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*). The motto of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* school is “There is no true existence except the Ultimate Truth (God)”. He is the essence and the Divine Creator of the universe. The existence of the reality of the universe is only like a shade compared to the Divine Existence. In other words, the existence of the universe resembles the reflections in a mirror compared to the real existence, which is, only, the existence of God, who includes everything and surrounds existence. He is the Apparent, which appears through the things in the universe.⁶¹

A *ḥadīth* says: “Indeed, God created Adam in His image.”⁶² Some scholars interpret this *ḥadīth* in such a way that they claim Adam had the reality of the Divine Names. Sheikh Makki interpreted this *ḥadīth* as ‘God created Adam in the Appearance of all the Divine Names and Attributes’, and he highlights the fact that man cannot have the reality of the Divine Names, but can only reflect them.⁶³

⁵⁹ Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, eds., *Muhyiddīn ibn ‘Arabī: a commemorative volume* (Shaftesbury, Dorset; Rockport, MA: Element, 1993), 25–26.

⁶⁰ Muhammad ibn Muzaffar al-Din Makki and Mirza-Zade Ahmed Neyli, *Ibn Arabi Mudafaasi* (Istanbul: Gelenek, 2004), 45.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶² Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā Wa Al-Ṣifāt*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Jiddah: Maktabah al-Suwādī, 1993), 61, *ḥadīth* number: 635.

⁶³ Makki and Neyli, *Ibn Arabi Mudafaasi*, 41.

The Qur'ān says “We show them our Signs in the [furthest] regions [of the earth], and in their own souls [*nafs*] ...”⁶⁴ in order to make man realise the Divine Manifestations in his own soul (*nafs*). Therefore, if man looks into his mortal and transient soul (*nafs*), he should realise the Attributes such as the Divine Knowledge, Divine Power, etc. This realisation should transform into the knowledge that God possesses those attributes.

Ibn ‘Arabī discusses the position of man before God using the example of several people in a dark room who try to recognise an elephant only by touching it. One of them touches the elephant’s foot, another its trunk, another its tail, etc. Because none of them is able to comprehend the totality of the elephant, each supposes that the elephant is limited to what he has already experienced or found. Their comments cannot have balance and proportionality concerning the reality of the elephant. Through such examples Ibn ‘Arabī highlights the relativistic understanding of reality. Prophets, who are informed by God with the Divine Message, and their close followers are exceptions to such fragmented knowledge.⁶⁵

Ibn ‘Arabī’s and his followers’ understanding of existence and knowledge is based on the theory of the Divine Names. Ibn ‘Arabī indicates the importance of the Divine Revelations for an understanding of the Divine Names of God, and also asserts that God has many more Names than He has informed man about. On the other hand, Ibn ‘Arabī also emphasises that some of these names are metaphorical.⁶⁶

To summarise, Ibn ‘Arabī writes that man cannot define God with the Names, because none of those names truly describes God, but they only point to Him. Man is taught by God through all the Divine Names in such a way that he can understand. But it should be noted that man can never understand what the quality of the true meaning of the Names (*māhiyat-al-nafs-al-amriya*) is. Man can find the reflections of the Divine Names in his *nafs*, and ultimately can experience true belief.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (41: 53).

⁶⁵ Demirli, *İslam Metafiziginde Tanrı ve İnsan: İbn Ul-Arabi ve Vahdet-I Vucud Gelenegi* [God and Man in the Metaphysics of Islam: Ibn Al-Arabi and Institution of Unity of Existence], 165.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

Qunawi, one of the foremost students of Ibn ‘Arabī, develops the idea of metaphorical names further. He questions the concept of God in man’s mind and writes: ‘believed God or God in belief’. He develops the theory of ‘the name of the name’, which indicates the relation between our understanding of the name and its real meaning in the Knowledge of God. Thus man, in the original form, never sees the realities of those metaphorical names, because they are understood through unique and personal experiences. Therefore, man knows the Divine Names only at his own level.⁶⁸

According to Ibn ‘Arabī, existence is categorised into two: ‘necessary being-one’, which is absolute (God), and ‘contingent being’, which is limited (man). In accordance with this classification, the two notions ‘impotence’ and ‘poverty’ have great importance for realisation of the Divine Power and the Divine Richness. Divine Names and Attributes are absolute and cannot be defined or captured. One way in which to understand the absolute notions to a certain extent is to realise and evaluate the reflection of these Names in man, for, if man makes an evaluation, he should realise his ‘impotence’ and ‘poverty’ in comparison to the Divine Names. Man should use such an analogy to realise not only the Divine Power and the Divine Richness, but also all the other Divine Names and Attributes. In time, this realisation should transform itself into absolute belief and submission to God.⁶⁹ Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi’s approach to the topic is similar and is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.⁷⁰

According to Ibn ‘Arabī, every single man (*nafs*) has the potential to be the ‘perfect man’. However, there are spiritual hurdles on the path to perfection. Purification of the *nafs* is closely related to dealing with these hurdles or obstacles. If man can overcome all the hurdles, then the potential knowledge, which is already hidden in man’s *nafs*, can transform man into the perfect man.⁷¹ Ghazzālī also makes a similar comment about achieving

⁶⁸ Ibid., 129.

⁶⁹ Makki and Neyli, *Ibn Arabi Mudafaasi*, 45.

⁷⁰ See p. 177.

⁷¹ Demirli, *Islam Metafiziginde Tanrı ve İnsan: Ibn Ul-Arabi ve Vahdet-I Vucud Gelenegi* [God and Man in the Metaphysic of Islam: Ibn Al-Arabi and Institution of Unity of Existence], 156.

perfection and writes that *nafs* can unravel the hidden knowledge through the Knowledge of God.

2.1.2.2. Spiritual Journey in accordance with Ibn ‘Arabī

Ibn ‘Arabī also uses the mirror metaphor to discuss man’s position before God. He explains the mirror metaphor at the beginning of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. According to this passage, God creates the universe as a mirror and man as the polish, but at the end of the purification process man can also see God as a mirror on the universe and on himself. Interpreting the *ḥadīth* “A believer [*al-mu’min*] is a mirror for a believer”, Ibn ‘Arabī writes that *al-mu’min* refers to God and resembles the fundamentals of his mirror metaphor. Thus the *ḥadīth* can be understood as ‘man is the mirror of God’ or ‘God is the mirror of man’. In this context, man can never know the reality of himself unless he knows God through the Divine Names and Attributes.⁷²

According to Ibn ‘Arabī, the notion *al-fanā’* is not considered as freeing man from bodily life, but rather as abandoning the idea of existence. At the end of the spiritual journey, the ultimate position is understanding the reality of the existence of God only, namely *al-baqā’*. At the beginning of the spiritual journey man has the idea of his existence, and says, ‘I exist.’ Through reaching the end of the journey and through undergoing the purification process, as a result of his training man says, ‘I exist by God.’ But at the end of the journey, man confirms that ‘God exists’ and confirms the idea that ‘man’s existence is only an indication of the reality of the existence of God’. The idea of existence, compared to the existence of the Absolute and Necessary-Being of God, is only an illusion for man. But this illusion, based on a relativistic approach, gives man an opportunity to understand the existence of God.⁷³ A simplified schema of the spiritual journey is shown in Figure 3.

⁷² Ibid., 165.

⁷³ Ibid., 283.

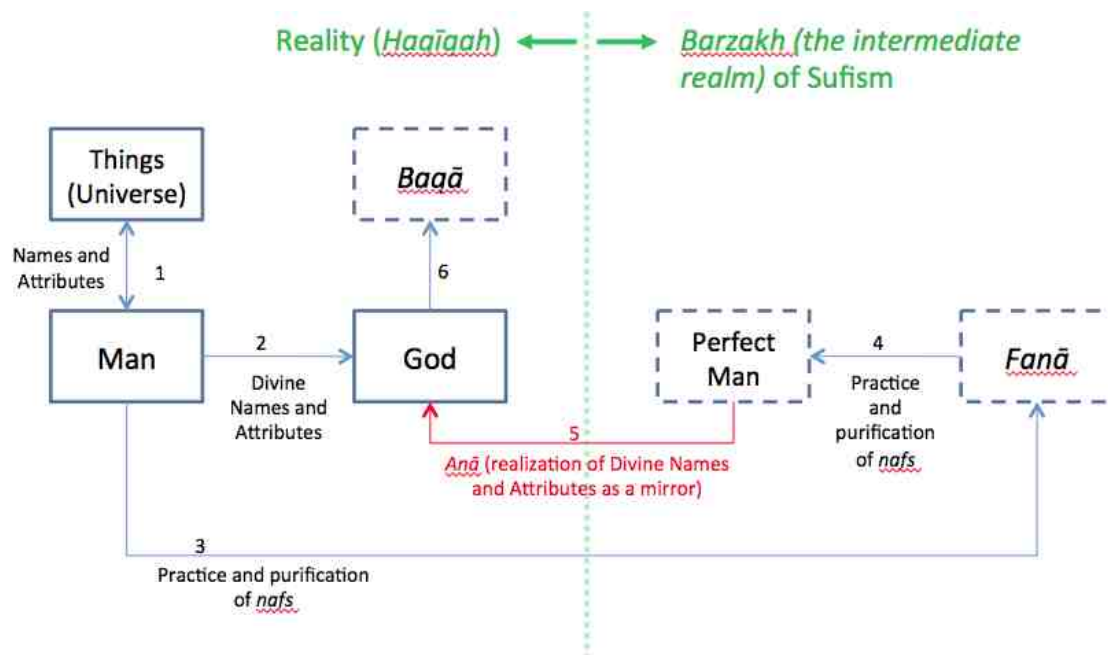


Figure 3: Simplified diagram of the spiritual journey according to classical Sufism (1)

In the path defined by the classical Sufi scholars and Ibn ‘Arabī as enabling man to achieve certain belief, man can only realise his mirror-like nature after abandoning the idea of existence (*al-fanā*). This ultimately leads to the development of traditions such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*.⁷⁴ In both traditions, the existence of matter and man is not realised, because it is evaluated from the *Barzakh* (the intermediate realm) of Sufism. Furthermore, both traditions try to understand the Domain of Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) from the *Barzakh*, and maintain “There is no existent but God” and downgrade the reality of beings to the level of imagination.⁷⁵

2.2. WORKS OF GHAZZĀLĪ

Ghazzālī, one of the most important figures in Islamic history, was born in the city of Tus in 1058 CE. His personal name is Muhammad, but he became well-known as Ghazzālī, *Ḥujjat al-islām* (Proof of Islam). He wrote on a variety of Islamic disciplines and influenced not only

⁷⁴ Basheer Nafī, ‘Tasawwuf and Reform in Pre-Modern Islamic Culture: In Search of Ibrāhīm Al-Kūrānī’, *Die Welt Des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002): 326.

⁷⁵ See ‘The Eighteenth Letter’ in Said Nursi, *The Letters*, trans. Sükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlür Nesriyat, 1994), 105–116.

intellectuals but also the rest of the society. There are several reasons why he was so influential in that period and over the centuries to follow, but two reasons stand out – his contributions both to Sufism and to Islamic philosophy. ‘Sufism’ in this context is used interchangeably with ‘mysticism’.⁷⁶ During that period there were numerous Sufi movements, and Ghazzālī clarified their understanding of *īmān* and Islam and directed those movements to the origin of *Sunnah*. One of his main works, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (Revival of Islamic Knowledge),⁷⁷ which was the first systematic study in this field, holds special significance as regards that mission. Ghazzālī also attracted the attention of the rest of society to Sufism by the same work. In his second great contribution, which treats Islamic philosophy, he challenged the integration of Greek philosophy into the Islamic world, which had caused great confusion not only in Islamic philosophy but also in society. His books, ‘The Incoherence of philosophers’ (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*)⁷⁸ and Aims of Philosophers (*Maqāṣid al-falāsifah*),⁷⁹ were specifically about philosophy, and they brought great enlightenment regarding the true understanding of Islamic philosophy in accordance with the *Sunnah*.

The main aim of this part of the study is, first, to elaborate on Ghazzālī’s ideas about the notion of *nafs*, and secondly, to examine the relationship between man and Allah, which is based on a true understanding of *nafs*.

In philosophy, ‘*aql* (intellect) is studied as one of the most important elements in man which can bring him closer to Allah. It has an active role in enabling man to understand the correlation between being an ideal man or perfect man and reflecting the Names and Attributes of Allah through behaviour and actions: in other words, the more one reflects and understands the Attributes of Allah, the closer one gets to being an ideal man/human. All these attributes that one can find in oneself and observe in one’s environment are limited

⁷⁶ Whittingham, Al-Ghazālī and the Qur’ān One Book, Many Meanings, 102.

⁷⁷ al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’ Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002.

⁷⁸ Abu Hāmid Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, Al-Gazali’s Tahafut Al-Falāsifah (Incoherence of the Philosophers) (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963).

⁷⁹ Abu Hāmid Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, *Felsefenin Temel İlkeleri* (Ankara: Vadi Yayinlari, 2001).

compared to the Attributes of Allah, which are infinite and absolute because Allah is infinite whereas man is not.

The Greek philosopher Plato was the first to mention the manifestations of attributes of Allah in man. He took this idea as the centre of his understanding of philosophy. Farabi was the first philosopher to adapt this idea from Greek philosophy to Islamic thought. Farabi writes: “the main purpose of philosophy is to bring man closer to Allah and to teach him how to imitate Allah.”⁸⁰ Even though no details are extant about Farabi’s ideas, Ghazzālī provided further explanations and devoted one of his works, *al-Maqṣad al-athnā fī sharḥ ma‘ānī asmā’ allāh al-ḥusnā*, to this issue.⁸¹

In the Islamic philosophy of Farabi (d. 950), Islamic terminology is not used.⁸² However, Ghazzālī chose to use Islamic terms to further elaborate on philosophical topics. In the fourth chapter of his book *al-Maqṣad al-athnā fī sharḥ ma‘ānī asmā’ allāh al-ḥusnā*,⁸³ Ghazzālī explains and underlines the importance of the *ḥadīth* “Be moulded by God-given ethics”⁸⁴ in enabling humankind to find true happiness and the path to the ideal man. According to Ghazzālī, this *ḥadīth* is key to understanding the attributes of God and reflecting on them.

In this chapter, an important notion in Ghazzālī’s works, *fanā’*, will be examined to elucidate the difference between the Names and Attributes of God and their reflections on man. The discussion of the concept of *fanā’* will lead us to an understanding of the Divine Knowledge, *ma’rifah*, in relation to the concept of *nafs*.

Major concepts in Sufism, namely *qalb* (heart), *‘aql* (human intellect), *nafs* (self) and *rūḥ* (spirit), are important for an understanding of the concept of *nafs*. As a prelude to

⁸⁰ Majid Fakhry, *Al-Farabi: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism ; His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 93.

⁸¹ Abu Hāmid Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God : Al-Maqṣad Al-Asna Fi Sharh Asma’ Allah Al-Husna* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2007).

⁸² Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 111–132.

⁸³ al-Ghazzālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God : Al-Maqṣad Al-Asna Fi Sharh Asma’ Allah Al-Husna*.

⁸⁴ Mansur Ali Nasif, *At-Taj Al-Jāmī Li-’L-Usul Fi Ahadit Ar-Rasul* (Beirut: Dar al-Hikma, 1975).

understanding Ghazzālī's approach to *nafs*, it is useful to trace developments in the understanding of this term. They will be explained and discussed with regard to their relationship with the concept of *nafs*.

2.2.1. Description of *Nafs* (self) According to Ghazzālī

There are two main, different meanings of *nafs* (self) for Ghazzālī, but they are interconnected. The first is evil-commanding soul and the second is the true self, which has a dynamic structure and is changed by challenging the evil-commanding soul (*nafs*).⁸⁵

2.2.1.1. The First Meaning of *Nafs* (the evil-commanding soul)

According to Ghazzālī, the first meaning of *nafs* is an authority such as gathers *ghaḍab* (anger) and *shahwah* (lust). It is also named as the plant and animal soul.⁸⁶ This *nafs* is essential for survival. However, man should challenge and balance it if he is to succeed on his path to the ideal man. Some Sufis emphasise that this *nafs* is a centre of evil in man. Ghazzālī summarises his ideas about the first meaning of *nafs* with a saying from the Prophet Muhammad: "Your greatest enemy is your *nafs*, which surrounds you between your shoulders."⁸⁷

2.2.1.2. The second meaning of *nafs*; self

The second meaning is the reality of man or self. The term here has the same meaning as the *qalb* (spiritual heart) and the *rūḥ* (spirit). This *nafs* is transmissive against the affections between body and *rūḥ*. It is known by different names, such as *al-nafs al-ammārah*, *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* and *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*.⁸⁸

Ghazzālī represents a cornerstone in the history of Islamic philosophy. The major difference that separates him from other Muslim philosophers is that he employs Qur'ānic terminology in his philosophical discussions rather than classic philosophical language. Ghazzālī

⁸⁵ al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā Al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 3: 3.

⁸⁶ Abu Hāmid Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, *Mishkatul Anwār*, 3rd ed., 2010, 46.

⁸⁷ al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā Al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 3: 11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

discusses one of the major concepts, *nafs*, through a classification of *nafs* in the Qur'ān. The classification is as follows:

1. *al-Nafs al-ammārah* (evil commanding soul).⁸⁹
2. *al-Nafs al-lawwāmah* (self-accusing soul).⁹⁰
3. *al-Nafs al-muṭmainnah* (tranquil soul).⁹¹

2.2.1.3.1. *Al-Nafs al-Ammārah* (The Evil-Commanding Soul)

This is the lowest degree of *nafs*, a man who is captured by evil.⁹² This compartment of self (*nafs*) is never subject to God's consent (*riḍā*). The two closest allies of this *nafs* are Satan (as an outside influence) and *hawá* (as a personal influence). They always try to lead man astray from the right path. The evil-commanding soul never considers the life hereafter, even for a very short period of time, so a man who is captured by this evil-commanding soul never realises the main purpose of his life.⁹³ Ghazzālī provides further explanations in his other works such as *Minhāj al-‘ābidīn*.⁹⁴

The *al-nafs al-ammārah* is occupied with bodily pleasures rather than with spiritual things. Such a man sees only one aspect of things in the universe. In reality things in the universe have two aspects: one looks to the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*), and the other to the invisible realm (*al-‘ālam al-malakūt*). As Ghazzālī writes, things are actually curtains between man and God.⁹⁵ He who is led by Satan and *hawá* will always be busy with the materialistic aspect of things. This *nafs* can never grasp the real meaning of *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* or the things, which are miraculous arts (works) of God.⁹⁶ Ghazzālī completes his clarifications with a verse from the Qur'ān: "Nor do I absolve my own self [of blame]: the

⁸⁹ Ali, The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary (12: 53).

⁹⁰ Ibid. (75: 2).

⁹¹ Ibid. (89: 27–28).

⁹² al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 3: xxvii.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Abu Hāmed Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, *Minhaj Ul Abidin*, trans. Göçenli Ali Bayram (Istanbul: Ozdemir Basimevi, 1980), 103–106.

⁹⁵ Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 256.

⁹⁶ Abu Hāmed Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, *Rawdat Al-Talibin* (Istanbul: Dehliz Yayinlari, 2009), 17.

[human] soul is certainly prone to evil” (12; 53).⁹⁷ Ghazzālī thinks that *al-nafs al-ammārah* and the first meaning of *nafs*, which was explained above, are the same.⁹⁸

2.2.1.3.2. *Al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah* (Self-accusing Soul)

Nafs which has not yet reached tranquillity is known as *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*. It still defends man’s anxiety for status and resists change. However, *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*, even though still committing sins and making mistakes, is not happy with its position before God. From another perspective it can be considered as an auto-control or self-criticism mechanism in man.⁹⁹ Ghazzālī again concludes this section with a verse which gives us the main character of this kind of *nafs*: “And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: [Eschew Evil].”¹⁰⁰

2.2.1.3.3. *Al-Nafs al-Muṭmainnah* (Tranquil Soul)

According to Ghazzālī, *nafs* which is in this level of tranquillity, rejecting cravings and staying under control of the will, is called *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*. It is God’s commands that lead it to this high station of tranquillity.¹⁰¹ Sure knowledge (‘ilm) is only accessible through *nafs-i nātiqa-i muṭmainnah* (the tranquil reasoning soul), which is related to the second aspect of the things, *malakūt* (the world of dominion).¹⁰² *Al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* (tranquil soul) is mentioned in *Surah al-Fajr*: “[To the righteous soul will be said:] ‘O [thou] soul, in [complete] rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, – well pleased [thyself], and well-pleasing unto Him!’”¹⁰³

The evil commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) is discreditable; however, self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) is acceptable because of its ability to understand the reality of man and the main purpose of his life in this world.¹⁰⁴ Following brief summaries of these three

⁹⁷ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (12: 53).

⁹⁸ Abu Hāmid Mohammad ibn Mohammad al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn* (Istanbul: Bedir Yayinlari, 2002), 11.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (75: 2).

¹⁰¹ al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 11.

¹⁰² Ghazzālī, *Yol, bilgi ve varlık* [Eyyühel’l-veled-ledünni ilim risalesi-miṣkatü’l-envar] (İstanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2010), 43.

¹⁰³ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (89: 27–28).

¹⁰⁴ al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 11.

categories of *nafs*, the major concepts of *'aql*, *qalb*, and *rūḥ* will be discussed in detail, and their relations to the *nafs* will be examined in accordance with the Divine Knowledge.

Ghazzālī calls the *nafs* by different names in different context, including *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul), spirit (*rūḥ*), self (*nafs*) and heart (*qalb*). There are only a few scholars in whom this knowledge is as deeply rooted as it is in Ghazzālī.¹⁰⁵ He is one of the rare scholars in the history of Islam who managed to build a systematic philosophy.

2.2.1.3. *'Aql* (human intellect) and its functions

All bodily and spiritual functions are expanded through *'aql* (human intellect). Al-Ghazzālī answers the questions of what *'aql* is and what its functions are in relation to the realisation of certain knowledge. In the remainder of this chapter, these questions will be answered according to al-Ghazzālī's epistemology.

According to al-Ghazzālī, *'aql* is also located in the *qalb* (spiritual heart)¹⁰⁶ like *nafs*. Al-Ghazzālī mentions two meanings of *'aql* in his works, and these are closely related. The first is the *'aql* which understands the reality of things, It is an attribute of knowledge only. The second is the *'aql* which understands 'the knowledge' and is more comprehensive than the reality of things. The ultimate limit of the potential of *'aql* is only conceived and reached by considering both meanings and potentials in the same account. In this case, *'aql* can reach and penetrate into the domain of the spiritual heart (*qalb*). Therefore, *'aql* can be called *qalb* and vice versa.

He who employs *'aql* in both meanings reaches the ultimate realisation of its true function. In other words, the *'aql* which has potential can extend to the same dimensions as the *qalb* since the *'aql* is included in the spiritual heart (*qalb*).¹⁰⁷ Ghazzālī asserts that the realised *'aql* has the same meaning as the *qalb* (spiritual heart) and vice versa. At the end of this section, the

¹⁰⁵ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism: Emerald Hills of the Heart*, vol. 1 (East Sussex: Gardners Books, 2009), 196.

¹⁰⁶ al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā Al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 12; see also al-Ghazzālī, *Minhaj Ul Abidin*, 128.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

ultimate relations according to Ghazzālī between *‘aql* and *qalb* and the four major elements, self (*nafs*), human intellect (*‘aql*), heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*rūh*), will be explained.

Ghazzālī also classifies the faculties of human intellect (*‘aql*) as practical and theoretical. The human intellect (*‘aql*) is occupied with abstract subjects such as Divine knowledge. The practical human intellect (*‘aql*) mediates between spirit and body in order to direct human intellect (*‘aql*) towards Divine knowledge.¹⁰⁸ There are four faculties of practical human intellect (*‘aql*), namely imagination, estimation, doubt (*wahm*) and memory. These transfer material things to images first, then to conceptions and ideas. They are then saved in the memory in the final stage.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, in the theoretical intellect, there are also three abilities, which are: perception of abstract concepts, necessary and self-evident knowledge, and (the highest) acquisition of knowledge about universal abstract notions such as the God concept and the unseen worlds.¹¹⁰ Frank Griffel also points out that Ghazzālī considers that rational knowledge, which is produced through the practical intellect, is in a sense a preparation for inspiration.¹¹¹ Sufis should pass through the process of knowledge in order to understand inspired abstract concepts.

Ghazzālī classifies the sources of knowledge into two types, knowledge from outside and knowledge from inside. Knowledge by revelation and inspiration (*al-‘ulum al-mukāshafa*) comes from outside to unveil the Divine knowledge.¹¹² In the second account, knowledge comes from inside through pure human nature (*fiṭrah*). Ghazzālī asserts that God planted the Divine knowledge before the existence of man.¹¹³ *al-Mufākirah* has an important role in the process of considering abstract knowledge. It is the necessary subtle faculty which has an

¹⁰⁸ Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought ‘Abd Al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 130.

¹⁰⁹ Binyamin Abrahamov, ‘Al-Ghazālī’s Supreme Way to Know God’, *Studia Islamica*, no. 77 (1993): 130.

¹¹⁰ Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought ‘Abd Al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī*, 130.

¹¹¹ Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85.

¹¹² Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought ‘Abd Al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī*, 130.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

ability to make a synthesis following discussion of two related thoughts.¹¹⁴ In other words, Ghazzālī considers this process as transforming knowledge from potential to actual.¹¹⁵ In support of this argument, the Qur’ān also refers to this process of having knowledge as remembering in many verses, such as 3: 65, 3: 190, 6: 32, etc. In relation to Ghazzālī’s view, some traditions of the Prophet Muhammad on human intellect (‘*aql*) may also be highlighted. One of the well-known prophetic sayings is the *ḥadīth* where human intellect (‘*aql*) is described as the first thing to have been created by God.¹¹⁶ In the light of these arguments, it may not be wrong to say that human intellect (‘*aql*) and its relation with the other faculties have an important role in man’s attaining a certain level in the purification process.

There is an important difference between Al-Ghazzālī and famous Muslim *kalam* philosophers such as Farabi and Ibn Sina. The very heart of the discussion concerns the position of human intellect (‘*aql*) and where it is located. Davidson emphasises that both Farabi and Ibn Sina believe that the certain belief in or the Divine knowledge of God is only achieved as purely intellectual.¹¹⁷ Abrahamov also asserts that according to Al-Ghazzālī the certain belief or the Divine knowledge is only attained by man through intellectual effort.¹¹⁸ However, if Al-Ghazzālī thought that human intellect (‘*aql*) were a separate entity from heart (*qalb*), in that case he would consider Divine knowledge to be an intellectual achievement only. However, Ghazzālī thinks that human intellect (‘*aql*) is also located in the heart (*qalb*).¹¹⁹ In other words, personal experience is an important dimension of the process of producing knowledge. Nevertheless, Abrahamov supports the idea in Ghazzālī of having certain knowledge through personal experience that goes beyond intellectual effort. He writes that Ghazzālī indicates spiritual pleasure (*dhawq*) and *wijdān* (conscience) as the ultimate

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 132.

¹¹⁵ Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Mīzān al-‘amal* [Ameller’de ilāhî saadet], trans. Omer Donmez (İstanbul: Hisar Yayınevi, 1985), 64.

¹¹⁶ Abū Shujā‘ al-Daylamī, *al-Firdaws bima`thūr al-Khiṭāb*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, 1986), 13.

¹¹⁷ Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 105.

¹¹⁸ Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teachings of Al-Ghazālī and Al-Dabbāgh* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 165.

¹¹⁹ al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā Al-‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 12; see also al-Ghazzālī, *Minhaj Ul Abidin*, 128.

stage in possessing Divine knowledge beyond reason.¹²⁰ This stage is based on personal experience.

2.2.1.4 Heart (*Qalb*)

In his discussion of *nafs* Ghazzālī refers only to the heart (*qalb*) as a spiritual substance.¹²¹ In addition, there are two meanings of heart (*qalb*), spiritual and physical.

Heart (*qalb*) is a part of *rūh*, which is the ultimate reality of man. It realises and grasps. In other words, heart (*qalb*) represents the comprehensiveness of man and has full responsibility towards God. According to Ghazzālī, heart (*qalb*) does not describe the true being (*dhāt*), but its manifestations and positions do. Therefore, a man needs to understand the functions of heart (*qalb*).¹²² *Qalb* is very busy because human intellect (*'aql*) and *hawá al-nafs* (first meaning of the *nafs*) are located there; in other words, heart (*qalb*) is always occupied with one of them. Consequently, they are constantly challenging each other.¹²³

The relationship between Heart (Qalb) and Self (Nafs)

Ghazzālī emphasises that self (*nafs*), human intellect (*'aql*), spirit (*rūh*) and heart (*qalb*) can be used interchangeably. However, heart (*qalb*) has access to the others. The relationship between them is like that between a lord and his servant or a mechanic and his tools. In reality, the worshipper of, or the rebel against, God is the heart (*qalb*).¹²⁴

Every connection with God is established through *qalb*, and this connection brings the individual closer to God. According to Ghazzālī, the functions of the heart (*qalb*), like anger (*gadhab*), lust (*shahwa*) and human intellect (*'aql*), are its inner soldiers; however, the five senses, namely imagination, estimation, doubt (*wahm*), memory, and also wisdom,

¹²⁰ Abrahamov, 'Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God', 163.

¹²¹ Whittingham, Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān One Book, Many Meanings, 64.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ al-Ghazzālī, Minhaj Ul Abidin, 128.

¹²⁴ The example of the lord and his servant: al-Ghazzālī, Ihyā Al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn, 2002; see also Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Kimya-I Saa'dat (Tihran: Firdus, 1386), 9.

knowledge, reflection, etc. can be considered different dimensions of the heart (*qalb*), or in other words, the outer soldiers of man.¹²⁵

According to Ghazzālī, heart (*qalb*) is on its path to Divine knowledge, and all other faculties help heart on this path. Ghazzālī's thoughts on the secrets of the heart may be summarised by the *ḥadīth*: "Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body. If it becomes good (reformed), the whole body becomes good. But if it gets spoiled, the whole body gets spoiled. And that is the Heart."¹²⁶

2.2.1.5 *Rūḥ* (Spirit)

Ghazzālī gives two different explanations for spirit (*rūḥ*) in his works. The meaning related to bodily actions such as seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, etc. is not treated in this study. Again, in the spiritual life, spirit (*rūḥ*) is unseen, but is the source of all knowledge. Ghazzālī declares that the purpose of creating the human soul in this material world is to enable it to receive the Divine knowledge through experience, unless the human soul is veiled by bodily pleasures.¹²⁷ Therefore, the human soul needs purification to recall its origin.¹²⁸

On the other hand, we have very limited knowledge about the spirit (*rūḥ*). The Qur'ān [17.85] states: "They ask thee concerning the Spirit [of inspiration]. Say: 'The Spirit [cometh] by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, [O men!]"¹²⁹ Spirit (*rūḥ*) can be further investigated through the relations between the other major concepts, heart (*qalb*), human intellect (*'aql*) and self (*nafs*), but this investigation would still be limited.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ al-Ghazzālī, *Minhaj Ul Abidin*, 127.

¹²⁶ See: *Book of Faith in Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997).

¹²⁷ Ghazzālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, by Mohammed Al-Ghazzali, the Mohammedan Philosopher., trans. Henry A HOMES (Albany, NY, 1873), 9.

¹²⁸ Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, 90.

¹²⁹ al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā Al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 11.

¹³⁰ Ghazzālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, by Mohammed Al-Ghazzali, the Mohammedan Philosopher, 10.

2.2.1.6. Totality of Man; *Qalb*, ‘*Aql*, *Rūḥ*, *Nafs* (Heart, Human Intellect, Spirit and Self)

After briefly explaining the major concepts in Sufism, it is necessary to discuss their relationship with each other. First, Al-Ghazzālī and most Muslim scholars consider ‘*aql* (human intellect) in the spiritual heart (*qalb*). Physics and metaphysics have always been discussed together in the Islamic tradition. Of course, the spiritual heart (*qalb*) corresponds to the unseen world, whereas human intellect (‘*aql*) corresponds to the seen. The relation between human intellect (‘*aql*) and the spiritual heart (*qalb*) has been explained above. This relation can be summed up by a *ḥadīth*, “He who knows his spiritual heart (*qalb*) knows himself”.

All in all, Al-Ghazzālī describes four elements to discuss and describe the totality of man. These four elements are heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*), self (*nafs*) and human intellect (‘*aql*). Al-Ghazzālī further discusses these elements and comes up with four more complementary terms: the material aspect of human intellect (‘*aql al-jismānī*), physical heart (*qalb al-jismānī*), spirit (*rūḥ al-jismānī*), and evil-commanding soul (*nafs al-shahwānī*). His reasoning for this way of defining these complementary terms is described by an example using the term ‘human intellect’ (‘*aql*). Sometimes human intellect (‘*aql*) refers to the quality of a man who knows, and sometimes it refers to the physical substance (*maḥall*) or the physical basis of this quality which is the man himself. Thus human intellect (‘*aql*) refers both to the man and to his quality (both substantial and spiritual).

Al-Ghazzālī’s explanation of the terms receives a twist with the definition of these complementary terms, which are the basis of heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*), self (*nafs*) and human intellect (‘*aql*) in man. For example, *qalb al-rūḥānī*, which is a spiritual notion, is connected to the *qalb al-jismānī*, which is substantial. *Qalb al-rūḥānī* is related not only to the *qalb al-jismānī* but to the rest of the body, but it is important to state here that this relation is only through *qalb al-jismānī*. After describing the totality of man and relating these terms to the substantiality of man, Al-Ghazzālī introduces a fifth term covering and governing all the meanings related to these four terms. According to Al-Ghazzālī, there are four terms, but five meanings. This fifth meaning is specific to each individual, and it is both conscious and wise.

Thus it can be concluded that this fifth meaning is the key, or path, to all the other elements functioning in understanding the attributes of God.¹³¹ This will be discussed in detail during the treatment of the concept of *anā* in the writings of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi.

According to Ghazzālī, the superiority of man over others depends on this fifth meaning, or man's ability to understand the knowledge of God. His position is also determined in accordance with his level of knowledge of God, not only in this life but also in the hereafter.

The Divine Knowledge in relation to the nafs in Ghazzālī

According to Ghazzālī, Divine knowledge is produced by the true interpretation of the relationship between the visible and invisible worlds. Ghazzālī's understanding of cosmology is based on this approach. As was mentioned in the discussion of Ibn 'Arabī's thought, there is one visible and three major invisible worlds, namely *al- 'ālam al-mulk wa al-shahādah* (this corporeal and visible realm),¹³² and *al- 'ālam al-malakūt* (the world of dominion),¹³³ *al- 'ālam al-jabarūt* (the realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Attributes and Names) and *al-ghayb al-muṭlaq* (Absolute Unseen) as the invisible, spiritual realms. The invisible realms are also known as *al- 'ālam al-ghayb* (the world of what is hidden)¹³⁴ or *'ālam al-amr* (the world of command).¹³⁵ These two worlds are also interrelated to produce knowledge. The realm of *al-jabarūt* in respect of Divine knowledge is different from the *'ālam al-malakūt*. However, Nakamura asserts that in Ghazzālī's overall thought the difference between *al-jabarūt* and *al-malakūt* does not have much significance.¹³⁶

To elicit a better understanding of the difference between *al- 'ālam al-mulk wa al-shahādah* (the corporeal and visible realm) and *al- 'ālam al-malakūt* (the world of dominion), Ghazzālī holds that this world has two aspects, the visible and the invisible, so the apparent aspect is

¹³¹ al-Ghazzālī, *Ihyā Al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 2002, 12.

¹³² Majid Fakhry, *A Short Introduction to Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism* (Oxford, England; Rockport, MA, USA: Oneworld, 1997), 255.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Whittingham, *Al-Ghazzālī and the Qur'ān One Book, Many Meanings*, 38.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Kojiro Nakamura, 'An Approach to Ghazzālī's Conversion' (15th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religion, Sydney, 1985), 38.

al-‘ālam al-mulk wa al-shahādah. However, the other aspect of it, which is not apparent, is called *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* (the world of dominion). It is a spiritual aspect and looks to the Divine knowledge.

According to Ghazzālī, the visible world may be considered part of the invisible world since it is the lowest of the stages on the path to God.¹³⁷ Man cannot keep the balance between the visible world and the invisible without understanding the Qur’ān, and vice versa.¹³⁸

Ghazzālī writes there are three ways of knowing God. Watt identifies these methods:¹³⁹ people who follow the first two are called ‘*muqallidūn*’. They follow someone as a role model or follow instructions and guidance provided by demonstrative methods.¹⁴⁰ The third method is through direct inspiration. People who follow this method are called original thinkers; however, they are very few in number.¹⁴¹

In Ghazzālī’s system, *taqlīd* is valid with respect to the Divine knowledge. However, asking critical questions, even superficial ones, is the first step towards achieving certain belief.¹⁴² Ghazzālī further writes that certain proof of the Divine knowledge is stable and can never be defeated by any argument, such as *wahm* (estimation), *shubha* (doubt), etc.¹⁴³ Ghazzālī himself is known as having departed from a sceptical attitude in order to achieve certain belief.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur’ān One Book, Many Meanings*, 43.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1963), 53.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 53–55; see also, regarding al-Ghazzālī’s view of the acquisition of true knowledge, Robert M. Frank, ‘Al-Ghazali on Taqlid: Scholars, Theologians and Philosophers’, *Zeitschrift Für Geschichte Der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991): 207–52.

¹⁴² W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1963), 54.

¹⁴³ Abū-Hāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muḥammad al-Ġazzālī, *al-Munqizu min al-ḍalāl*, trans. Hilmi Güngör (Ankara: Maarif Basımevi, 1960), 14.

¹⁴⁴ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, ‘Gazzali ve Felsefe’, *Ankara, Universitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4, no. 3 (1955): 103, doi: 10.1501/İlhak_0000000303.

Ghazzālī states that there are hurdles to be eliminated to arrive at such a level of Divine knowledge.¹⁴⁵ These hurdles divert people from the truth, God, and the Divine Knowledge. From the perspective of this study, one important hurdle is ignorance of sciences and methods. Since these are built on such knowledge obtained from the universe,¹⁴⁶ which has been introduced as the lowest stage of the Divine knowledge, there is interaction between these hurdles and the Divine knowledge. The man who achieves the Divine knowledge overcomes the hurdles, or fails at both. There is a tendency in the *nafs* (self) towards reaching the Divine knowledge.¹⁴⁷

The concept of *fanā'*

The term *fanā'* is usually translated into English as 'annihilation'.¹⁴⁸ It is considered the highest stage of the spiritual journey in Sufism.¹⁴⁹ *Fanā'* is also a philosophical concept that can be used to scrutinise the relation between soul and body, and also the difference between man's nature and the Divine world.

Man has a unique position in the hierarchy of the universe since he was created as a compendium of the whole universe, in other words, as an index. For Ghazzālī, the *ḥadīth* "Allah created man in His All-Merciful form (*Sūrat al-rahmān*)"¹⁵⁰ should be understood metaphorically, since God can never be portrayed in terms implying He is created. Ghazzālī interprets the *ḥadīth* above such that everything in the universe can reflect some manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes, but not all. However, man is the only creature with the potential to reflect all the Divine Names and Attributes manifested in the universe.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, 50.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Ghazzālī, *Yol, bilgi ve varlık* [Eyyühel'l-veled-ledünni ilim risalesi-miṣkatü'l-envar], 45.

¹⁴⁸ See: Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought* 'Abd Al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī, 119; see also Fakhry, *A Short Introduction to Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, 261.

¹⁴⁹ Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought* 'Abd Al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī, 120.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Khajr Asqalanī, *Ithāh al-mahrah bi al-fawā'id al-mubtakriah min aṭrāf al-'āsharah* (Madinah: Islamic University of Madinah, 1994), ḥadīth no: 9595.

¹⁵¹ Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought* 'Abd Al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Ghazālī,

To reach the ultimate level is to realise that God is the only One that truly exists. This realisation is the gateway to *fanā'*, which is the goal of Sufi practice.¹⁵² It should be noted here that Ghazzālī never thought of Sufism only as the cultivation of ecstatic states. His ultimate concern was to fulfil his potential for the Judgement Day.¹⁵³ He saw Sufism not as an alternative to the formal Islamic observances but as a complementary part of Islam.¹⁵⁴

In Marmura's words, for Al-Ghazzālī "the mystical experience of annihilation (*fanā'*) consists in seeing nothing in existence except the unity of all things and hence losing experience of oneself".¹⁵⁵ Frank also provides an analysis of what the concept of annihilation (*fanā'*) means for Al-Ghazzālī. He writes that it is not synonymous with union with God, but rather, it is an awareness that, for example, all actions are God's actions. For Ghazzālī, the existence of the universe is a reflection of the Divine existence.

The world in a state of annihilation (*fanā'*) also represents the "supra-intellectual" knowledge (for which *qalb* is a facilitator as well as *'aql*) that provides assurance of an epistemological basis. Otherwise sense-perception (*hissiyāt*) and necessary truths (*daruriyāt*) can never be assured or proven.¹⁵⁶ So in the context of Divine Knowledge, annihilation (*fanā'*) plays a critical role as it provides the epistemological basis.

All in all, Ghazzālī writes that true understanding of the Divine Oneness can be achieved by annihilation of the self (*fanā al-nafs*).¹⁵⁷ This can be summarised as seeing and recognising the Divine Names and Attributes in every object and in every action. Divine Knowledge is rooted in such disclosure.

120. al-Ghazzālī, *Mishkatul Anwār*, 71; see also: Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*.

¹⁵² Griffel, *Al-Ghazzālī's Philosophical Theology*, 254.

¹⁵³ Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 154.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 176–177.

¹⁵⁵ See 'Translator's Introduction' in: Abū-Hāmid Muḥammad Ibn-Muḥammad al-, Marmura, Michael E Gazzālī, *The incoherence of the philosophers = Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 2009), xix.

¹⁵⁶ Nakamura, 'An Approach to Ghazzālī's Conversion', 48.

¹⁵⁷ Griffel, *Al-Ghazzālī's Philosophical Theology*, 254.

2.3. A Comparison of the concept of *nafs* in Ibn ‘Arabī and Ghazzālī

Both Ghazzālī and Ibn ‘Arabī made huge contributions to the concept of self (*nafs*). However, another issue to be discussed here is their points of difference and commonalty. They come from two very different traditions. Al-Ghazzālī is mostly seen as a *mutakallim* with mystical tendencies, while Ibn ‘Arabī is seen largely as a mystic.

Both Ibn ‘Arabī and Al-Ghazzālī have written extensively on the concept of the *nafs* rather than the concept of I-ness (*anā-anāniyah*). However, their writings partially cover the concept of I-ness (*anā-anāniyah*) as well. It might be said that Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings related to the individual consciousness might be considered as equivalent to *anāniyah* (“I-ness”).

Ghazzālī discusses the concept of self (*nafs*) through Qur’ānic terminology rather than Sufī. He discusses the concepts systematically using this terminology. By contrast, it is difficult to see horizontal and logical continuity in the writings of Ibn ‘Arabī, since it seems that it is mostly sudden inspirations that occur in his works rather than systematic discussions. Consequently, Ghazzālī’s writings focus on the compartments of the self (*nafs*) and examine them in detail, while Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussions concentrate on the theoretical frame rather than practical things. Thus, the two writers’ main concerns are seen to differ.

2.3.1 Description of *Nafs* according to Ibn Arabī and Ghazzālī

Ibn ‘Arabī and Al-Ghazzālī agree on the definition of self (*nafs*). Both consider that the *nafs* is transmissive against the affections between body and *rūh*. It is the animating principle of the body and is considered as the true self or the immortal aspect of man's being which can be perfected through the spiritual life.

Al-Ghazzālī discusses the *nafs* through its compartments, namely evil commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*). Both Ibn ‘Arabī and Al-Ghazzālī think that only the illuminated scholar can know the reality of *nafs* called *al-nafs al-nāṭiqah* (reasoning soul) himself. This certain level of understanding can be achieved by *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* (tranquil soul) according to Ghazzālī. On the other hand, Ibn ‘Arabī thinks that it is only realised through the knowledge of the five realms (*ḥaḍārāt al-khamsah*), which are Absolute Unseen (*‘ālam al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), the realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Attributes and Names

(*‘ālam al-jabarūt*), the realm of dominion (*‘ālam al-malakūt*), the corporeal realm (*shuhūd al-muṭlaq*), and Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). It seems that there are two different approaches to the realisation of the *nafs* or the reasoning soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*), but in the end they conduce to the same result.

2.3.1.1 Self (*Nafs*) through its compartments

Ibn ‘Arabī, when he discusses the concept of self (*nafs*), has as his main focus discussion of what the reality of self (*nafs*) is in relation to the Divine concept; therefore, he draws attention to the Divine quality and the Divine Names and Attributes of God and their reflections on the self (*nafs*) rather than the compartments of self (*nafs*). Al-Ghazzālī, however, also takes the concepts to pieces through the compartments of self (*nafs*) and discusses them in detail. It can be said that Al-Ghazzālī’s main concern is to guide people who lived in his own time. On the other hand, this is not the main reason for Ibn ‘Arabī’s works. Nursi evaluates Ibn ‘Arabī’s work as follows: “He was rightly guided, but could not act as a guide in all his works ...”¹⁵⁸

According to Al-Ghazzālī, the *nafs* includes three compartments and has two aspects, namely *al-‘ālam al-shahādah* (the corporeal realm) and *‘ālam al-malakūt* (the realm of dominion). He thinks that man should consider two aspects at the same time. Otherwise, if the *nafs* is considered from the first aspect only, man is occupied with worldly pleasures rather than spiritual things. This *nafs* can never grasp the real meaning of the realm of dominion (*al-‘ālam al-malakūt*), which is composed of the miraculous arts (works) of God. Ghazzālī discusses two aspects of each compartment in detail.

2.3.1.2 The Relation between *Nafs* and Knowing God

Ghazzālī discusses the concept of Divine knowledge through the notion of human intellect (*‘aql*) and its relation with the *nafs* and its compartments. He states that *‘aql* also has two aspects, namely *‘aql al-māsh* and *‘aql al-māād*. As was emphasised above, both should be discussed in relation to each other at the same time. Since the *‘aql al-māsh* is occupied with the visible realm, *al-‘ālam al-shahādah*; however, *‘aql al-māād* is occupied with the invisible

¹⁵⁸ See ‘Ninth Flashes’ in: Said Nursi, *The Flashes*, trans. Sükran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözlük, 2004), 59.

realm, *al-‘ālam al-malakūt*. Certain knowledge is produced by establishing the true relation between them. It is important to understand here that, even though it seems that the heart (*qalb*) is not involved in this discussion, Ghazzālī considers the human intellect (*‘aql*) to be located in the spiritual heart (*qalb*). In conclusion, the true self (*nafs*) obtains the Divine knowledge through *al-mufākīrah*, which is one of the functions of the second aspect of human intellect (*‘aql*), which processes abstract knowledge. For this reason, Divine knowledge looks to the invisible realm rather than the physical. This human intellect (*‘aql*) agrees with the heart (*qalb*), according to Ghazzālī.

By contrast, Ibn ‘Arabī employs mystical language and his suggested path is based on spiritual experience, but it is not a main stream which everyone might follow. It is achieved by establishing the true relation with the hidden realms. The Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is a mirror such that he reflects and interprets the Divine manifestations of the other realms (*al-‘ālamūn*) such as Absolute Unseen (*‘ālam al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), the realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Attributes and Names (*‘ālam al-jabarūt*), the realm of dominion (*‘ālam al-malakūt*), and the corporeal realm (*shuhūd al-muṭlaq*).

Ibn ‘Arabī and Ghazzālī consider that everything in the universe can reflect some manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes, but not all. In other words, man, with his potential, can journey in the visible and the invisible realms to achieve a better understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes (*al-asmā’ wa’l-ṣifāt*). Nevertheless, the Absolute Essence of God is not knowable. Even though we know Him by His revealed Names and His Attributes, in the Qur’ān, it is abstract knowledge. However, the Divine knowledge obtained through the *nafs* is the certain level of knowledge since it permits man to experience the abstract knowledge through the inward and outward subtle faculties of man. Therefore, man has the potential to understand the reality of the things.

Although every single man (*nafs*) has the potential for perfection, to be the ‘perfect man’, there are spiritual hurdles on the path. Ibn ‘Arabī thinks that man should overcome all the hurdles to reach the potential knowledge which is already hidden in man’s *nafs*. In that case, the potential of the self (*nafs*) would be transformed into perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), or perfect man. Ghazzālī also comments on the achievement of perfection, saying that man can increase his Divine knowledge through the concept of the Absolute Divine. This is an endless

spiritual journey for a human being, since this relation is between the concept of the Absolute God and the human being who has limited reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes.

Ibni Arabi explains the *ḥadīth* “He who knows himself, knows his Lord” as meaning that God and human beings do not have the same quality of essence, but that the self (*nafs*) mentioned in the *ḥadīth* refers to the totality of man or the self (*nafs*) with its compartments. They have a reflection of the Divine quality that is only indicative of the Divine qualities.

2.3.1.3 The concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being)

The concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Unity of Being) represents an important difference between Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Ghazzālī. The doctrine was introduced by ‘Abd al-Rahman Jāmī. The essential meaning of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is “There is no true existence except the Ultimate Truth (God)”. The reality of the existence of the universe is only like a shade compared to the Divine Existence. He is the essence and the Divine Creator of the universe. However, Ghazzālī defends the idea that the existence of the universe should be considered a level of existence, even it is not comparable with the Divine existence or *wujūd*.

Chapter 3

LIFE AND DISCOURSE OF BEDIÜZZAMAN SAİD NURSI

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Saïd Nursi saw the last days of the Ottoman Empire, its collapse after the First World War and the emergence of the new Turkish Republic. In those turbulent times, Western philosophical ideas and positive sciences exerted a strong influence on the intellectual discourse of Muslims, which led to some anti-Islamic trends in thought and practices. Also, belief in the incompatibility of reason and revelation was adopted from the West. A cultural invasion was also taking place: religious practices and understandings were being customised, just as Christianity had been customised to a degree in the West. It was a period when Muslims were experiencing a global crisis. According to Nursi, some Muslim intellectuals at that time, and the general public, were becoming alienated from the Qur’ān and the traditions of Islām. With the emergence of rationalism Nursi wished to develop grounds for belief (*īmān*). Saïd Nursi describes the basis and the aim of his magnum opus *Risale-i Nur* as “certain belief and the essential reality of the Qur’ān”.¹

This chapter examines Saïd Nursi’s life and discourse and focuses specifically on how throughout his works he developed the notions of self (*nafs*) and its relationship with the notion of the ‘I’ (*anā*). The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first is a chronological account of Nursi’s life within a general framework which aims to show how his life and thought are reflected in his works. In this part, important global and regional events and their impacts on Nursi’s life are discussed in order to achieve a clear understanding of the circumstances in which Nursi lived. This part also attempts to take an analytical approach towards evidence for how Nursi developed his ideas.

Since the present study focuses on the understanding of man and his relation to an understanding of God, in part two of this chapter the notion of self (*nafs*) and ‘I’ (*anā*) is

¹ Said Nursi, *The Rays* (Sözler Neşriyat, 2004), 313.

discussed. In other words, rather than Nursi being scrutinised as a social activist, his understanding of the concept of self (*nafs*) and 'I' (*anā*) will be investigated. Thus the second part is dedicated to understanding how Nursi developed those two notions, and it may also be seen as an introduction to Chapters 4 and 5.

3.2. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SAĪD NURSI'S LIFE

The biography of SaĪd Nursi was published in the late 1950s during the last years of Nursi's life. He personally edited the book, which is entitled *Risale-i Nur Müellifi Bediüzzaman Said Nursi Tarihçe-i Hayatı*. It is still considered the main source for Nursi's life story. The book contains lengthy extracts from his *Risale-i Nur* collection. Nursi's early life has a brief place in the first section.² This is not a usual method for biography, and Nursi probably chose it in order to draw the attentions to his writings rather than his personal life.

SaĪd Nursi himself divides his life into two, the 'Old SaĪd period' and the 'New SaĪd period'. Some modern biographers such as Necmeddin Şahiner³ and Vahide,⁴ on the other hand, consider Nursi's life in three sections, namely the 'Old SaĪd', the 'New SaĪd' and the 'Third SaĪd'. The first period runs from his birth in 1877 up to 1925. Nursi calls this 48-year part of his life 'the Old SaĪd period'. The second period is from 1925 to 1950 and is called 'the New SaĪd period' by Nursi himself. During this second period Nursi was forced to live in exile, where he produced his magnum opus, *Risāle-i Nur* (Epistles of Light). The last ten years of his life, from 1950 to 1960, are known as 'the Third SaĪd' period. It can be said that the main difference between these three periods is Nursi's method of serving the Qur'ān so as to make contributions to society. The main characteristics of the different periods will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

² Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi: The Author of the Risale-I Nur* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Sözlür, 2000), IX.

³ Necmeddin. Sahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflariyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî : Kronolojik Hayati* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınlar, 1976).

⁴ Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*.

Some biographers, however, believe that there are in effect only two Saïds, the old Saïd and the New Saïd.⁵ In the Old Saïd era, Nursi can be seen as an influential social activist who played critical roles in many events in Turkish history. During the New Saïd era, however, his main focus shifted from political activism to writing books. Nursi was still influential in society, but not as a social activist. One important difference between the two Saïds is that in the second period he was seen not only as a theologian or an Islamic scholar but also as an exemplar. He lived for and presented every notion that he stood for in his daily life. He lived his life in exile and solitude, but never gave up his service to the Qur'ān and belief. His target audience was not any particular group in society, but ordinary people in general who were distanced from Qur'ānic belief and faith in general. One can easily see that Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* is the fruit of this second period. During the New Saïd era, Nursi seemed to work relentlessly to demonstrate the logical coherence and validity of the Qur'ānic view of existence and the falsity of scientific materialism.

3.3. THE OLD SAÏD PERIOD (1877–1923)

Although Saïd Nursi's date of birth is not known accurately, most official Ottoman and Turkish sources indicate that he lived between 1878 and 1960.⁶ Nursi was born the fourth of seven children in a Kurdish family in the village of Nurs, a small hamlet in one of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Bitlis, a city in today's Eastern Turkey.⁷

Nursi's father, Ramiz, was a livestock farmer, and his mother was a housewife. His parents were ordinary, humble and pious people.⁸ In order to illustrate their piety, most biographers mention the story of how Ramiz used to lead his animals to his own land to feed them and

⁵ Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, *Said Nursi, Makers of Islamic Civilization* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

⁶ I. S. Markham and S. Birinci, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought and Writings* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 3. Biographies of Said Nursi may refer to several different dates regarding his birth year, which was reported according to official calendars used by the Ottoman Empire; Rumi 1290 and Hijri 1293. Differences occur in converting these dates to a Gregorian calendar date. On the basis of extensive profound research, 1878 will be referred to as his birth year throughout the book. See: Said Nursi, *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursî: tarihçe-i hayatı* (İstanbul: Soz Basim, 2009), 959–960.

⁷ Şukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi' (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 3.

⁸ It is believed that both his parents were the direct descendants of Prophet Muḥammad's family.

cover their mouths on the way so as not to allow them to eat grass from other people's fields.⁹ Nursi's mother also said that she had never fed baby Saïd without **performing wudu**.¹⁰

It is commonly believed that Nursi started his education at the age of six. Some biographers dispute this and think that Nursi left his home for the village of Tag to study at the age of nine in 1886.¹¹ Nursi had a natural (*fiṭrī*) motivation to learn. He had studied in different religious schools (*madrasah*) and was considered a God-gifted student. During his brief period of education he elicited unusual comments. For example, one of his teachers, Molla Fethullah, wrote the following note in the first page of a *madrasah* textbook called *Jam' al-jawāmi'*, which Nursi had memorised in a week: "For this degree of memory and intelligence to be combined in one person is indeed rare."¹² He also had an exceptional ability to understand the most difficult books in a very short time. He completed his entire formal education in six months. This usually takes over fifteen years in *madrasah*.¹³ During the same period of his education, he also noticed that the current curriculum of the *madrasah* was in need of reform.¹⁴

Nursi's exceptional abilities brought him a great reputation, as well as troubles, in a very short time. Despite his youth, he was not an ordinary student but a social activist too. He was involved in important incidents such as warning the Governor of Mardin in strong terms¹⁵ and counselling the Governor of Van.¹⁶ His activities and influence brought him a great deal of

⁹ Sahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflariyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî : Kronolojik Hayati*, 51.

¹⁰ Wuḍū is the Islamic procedure for washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for formal prayers. But people do not have to perform wudu 24 hours in a day. Praying five times a day takes an hour or a little longer, so Muslims have wudu for that period of time only; however, some pious Muslims keep their wudu as much as they can in a day. See *Ibid.*

¹¹ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdag Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri.*, 2: 2122.

¹² Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 12.

¹³ Sukran Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', *The Muslim World* 89 (1999): 209.

¹⁴ Şükran Vahide, 'Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi', in *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 3, <http://ahd1113.activehost.com/pdf/60742.pdf>.

¹⁵ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

trouble and he had to move from one city to another several times.¹⁷ Surprisingly, he earned the respect of the Governor of Bitlis, Hasan Pasha, and the Governor of Van, Tāhir Pasha (d. 1913).¹⁸

Nursi stayed for a while in both governors' residences. During that time, he studied all the standard works on the main Islamic sciences independently.¹⁹ He increased his general knowledge about situations besetting the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world in general. Nursi is said to have memorised forty *madrasah* textbooks.²⁰ While he was in Van, he stayed in Governor Tāhir Pasha's residence. Tāhir Pasha had a considerable library resource in various disciplines and never tired of putting questions to Nursi, with whom he had long discussions on deep philosophical subjects. One day, Nursi came across some books in the library and realised that Tāhir Pasha was asking philosophical questions from these books. He gives a very brief explanation about the books in his biography; they were about the latest versions of materialistic thought in the West and thus gave him the chance to familiarise himself with those materialistic ideas for the first time.

Nursi was not an ordinary Muslim scholar. He was interested in positive and social sciences, including religious subjects. He studied all subject areas, including history, geography, mathematics, geology, physics, chemistry, astronomy and philosophy.²¹ There are some remarkable accounts of him from that period: on one occasion he is said to have had a debate with a geography teacher and on another with a chemistry teacher, each in his own field.²² On both occasions, it is recorded that Nursi won the debate. He is also said to have written a book about mathematics, which was subsequently lost in a fire.²³

¹⁷ Ibid., 10–33.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27–28.

¹⁹ Vahide, 'Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi', 4.

²⁰ See *ibid.*; See also *Tarihçe-i Hayat in: Nursi, Kaynaklı, İndeksli Risale-i Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-İcâz, Mesnevî-i Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdağ Lâhikası, Tarihçe Haya ve Diğerleri.*, 2: 2123–2124.

²¹ See: Vahide, 'Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi', 4; see also Alparslan Açıkgenç, 'Said Nursi', *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988).

²² *Islam at the Crossroads : On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 73.

²³ Ibid.

Meanwhile, he was continuously thinking about renovating the *madrasa* system. When he finalised his educational model, while he was staying in Tāhir Pasha's palace, he called the model *Madrasat al-Zahrā*.²⁴ He also occupied himself with Islamic philosophy (*ilm al-kalām*). He soon realised that *kalām* did not sufficiently reflect the true wisdom of the Qur'ān and needed reform. Only then would questions be answered correctly.²⁵

These were the founding ideas for Nursi's *Madrasat al-Zahrā*' project, which would bring together modern secular schools, religious schools and Sufi *tekkes*. At that time Nursi was the only person in Ottoman religious circles to think that both positive and social sciences might be considered in the same proposal.²⁶ His idea was that *Madrasat al-Zahrā*' would be the first link in a chain of universities in eastern Anatolia. He planned to expand this university model into the Middle East at later stages. This group of universities was to consist of several campuses. The central campus was planned for Bitlis. Another was to be built in the city of Van, and another in the city of Diyarbakır. Nursi's proposal was that modern and Islamic sciences be taught on the same campus. Nursi had a curriculum in mind for these universities. One of the most important parts of his intended curriculum was that the Qur'ān and Islām would be subjects too, but only through bringing together different educational traditions.²⁷ His main purpose was to combine science and religion. However, the political circumstances were not amenable to realising this project, which is reflected in several places in *Risāle-i Nur*.

Nursi proposed the Arabic language as the medium of instruction at this university. Turkish would be the second language, and Kurdish the third. Nursi writes in his *Münazarat* (Debates):

²⁴ For further information about Nursi's education reform project about Al-Madrasah al-Zahra; see also Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 101–110.

²⁵ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 213.

²⁶ *Islam at the Crossroads : On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 7–8.

²⁷ Sükran Vahide, *A Chronology of Said Nursi's Life in Islam at the Crossroads*, ed. Ibrahim Abu Rabi (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), xvii.

in this university the language of Arabic is obligatory, the language of Kurdish is acceptable and the language of Turkish is necessary ...²⁸

After Nursi had spent several years in eastern Anatolia, Tāhir Pasha advised him to visit Sultan Abdulhamid II (d. 1918) in Istanbul and provided a reference letter for him. There were in fact two important reasons for Nursi's journey to Istanbul. One was his project for the reform of the education system, Islamic Modern University in the east of Turkey (*Madrasat al-Zahrā'*).²⁹ The other was that he had health problems. He always felt tired, as his brain was always occupied with deep subjects.³⁰

When he arrived in Istanbul, he settled in a hotel room in Fatih district, where most *madrasah* were located.³¹ He put up a sign saying "Here all questions are answered, all problems are solved, but no question is asked."³² Within a few months, Nursi submitted his proposal asking the government to support his ideas on educational reform. However, his proposal was not welcomed by governors, who were seen as corrupt,³³ so Nursi could not find an opportunity to present his project to the Sultan. Still, he never lost his motivation and continuously lobbied the governors at every available opportunity. Unfortunately, these governors then decided that they wanted to get rid of the persistent Nursi. They had him arrested and sent to *Topbashi* mental asylum.³⁴ The medical report, however, concluded that Nursi was in good mental condition, and he was consequently discharged from the asylum.³⁵

Even though his educational project was not realised during his visit to Istanbul, Nursi had had an excellent opportunity to meet many contemporary scholars and become known to them.³⁶ At the time, Istanbul was the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Sultan was also the caliph of the Muslim world, so many Muslim scholars had settled in

²⁸ Said Nursi, *Münazarāt (Sözler, Istanbul)*, 28.

²⁹ Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 26.

³⁰ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 37.

³¹ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 214.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Vahide, 'Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi', 5.

³⁴ Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 47.

³⁵ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 215.

³⁶ Abdullah Aymaz, Personal Interview, 2010, May.

Istanbul. Nursi attracted the attention not only of Muslim scholars and students, but also of ordinary people. People from both groups visited him to ask him questions in a variety of different fields. He answered all the questions given by the masters of the religious teachers (*shaykhs* of the *madāris*), who were apparently most impressed by his great knowledge.³⁷ Soon, he became a very well-known scholar in Istanbul. The masters of the religious teachers (*shaykhs* of the *madāris*) also confirmed his nickname ‘The wonder of the age’ (*Bediüzzaman*). Many years prior to this, one of Nursi’s masters, Molla Fethullah of Siirt, had given young Saīd this nickname in recognition of his success and outstanding ability;³⁸ at that time Nursi had been no more than fourteen or fifteen years old.³⁹

In 1908, the grand mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Muhammad Bakhit (d. 1935), who was also one of the members of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, came to Istanbul. The Istanbul scholars (*ulama*), who themselves had been unable to best Nursi in argument and debate, asked the Sheikh to meet Nursi in a debate. One day after the prayers in Sultan Ahmet Mosque, they had a chance to meet. The sheikh asked about the future of the Ottoman Empire and of Europe. Nursi answered the sheikh’s question straightaway without hesitation:

the Ottoman State is pregnant with Europe and it will give birth to a European state one day. And Europe is pregnant with Islam; one day it will give birth to an Islamic state.⁴⁰

Nursi had not only answered his question but had also expressed his thoughts with the fluency of poetry. Sheikh Bakhêt concluded by saying that one could not argue with this young man: “I am of the same opinion. But only ‘the wonder of the age’ (*Badī‘ al-zamān*) could express it so succinctly and eloquently.”⁴¹

³⁷See ‘Tarihçe-i Hayat’ in: Nursi, Kaynaklı, İndeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyati: Isârâtü’l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdag Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri., 2: 2131.

³⁸Vahide, ‘The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’, 209; Vahide, ‘Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi’, 204.

³⁹Vahide, ‘The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’, 209.

⁴⁰Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 42.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

The same year, the Young Turks issued the Second Proclamation of Constitutionalism.⁴² The aim of constitutionalism was to take a further step towards democracy. This was another attempt following the First Constitutionalism. Earlier in 1878, the first parliament had been suspended by Sultan Abdulhamid II on the grounds that it did not reflect the true demographics of the empire. Initially, Nursi was positive about the idea of constitutionalism as it gave more representation to ordinary members of the public and ensured freedom of speech. He wrote several articles in the newspapers and gave speeches in support of constitutionalism in Istanbul and Salonika.⁴³ Nursi also travelled in eastern Anatolia, starting from the City of Van, to give speeches among the tribes on freedom and constitutionalism and to persuade them that constitutionalism did not contradict Islamic principles.⁴⁴ He collated the questions and answers in a book, called Debates (*Münazarāt*). This was a popular book addressing the general public and was published in 1911.⁴⁵ During the same period, Nursi also wrote another book called Reasoning (*Muḥākamāt*), for scholars (‘*ulamā*’). This was published in 1913.⁴⁶

In short, Nursi and a number of other Muslim thinkers supported constitutionalism since they believe that the Ottoman Empire could be saved through more freedom and constitutional government. Only then could progress be achieved and Islamic civilisation be re-established.⁴⁷ Nursi continued his political activities and became a founder-member of the Society for Muhammadan Unity (*İttihad-i Muhammedi Cemiyeti*). In 1909, after the Thirty-First of March Incident,⁴⁸ he was arrested and Court Martialled. He was acquitted after 24

⁴² Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey : A Modern History* (I. B. Tauris, 2004), 93.

⁴³ Turner and Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 15.

⁴⁴ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 84–89.

⁴⁵ See: Abdullah Aymaz, *Münazarat üzerine* (Istanbul: Şahdamar Yayınları, 2006), 4, <http://www.iikv.org/academy/index.php/books/article/view/682>.

⁴⁶ Vahide, ‘The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’, 209; Vahide, ‘Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi’, 204.

⁴⁷ Safâ Mürsel, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve devlet felsefesi* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1976).

⁴⁸ The Thirty-first of March Incident was a revolt against İttihad ve Terakki (The Young Turks) who took charge of government after the Second Constitutional Revolution. It occurred on 31 March 1325 in the Rumi calendar (13 April 1909), hence it is called The Thirty-first of March Incident.

days in prison. In 1910, he published his defence under the title ‘The Court Martial’ or ‘Two Schools of Misfortune’ (*Divān-ı Harb-i Örfi*).⁴⁹

In 1911, Nursi travelled to Damascus in Syria, which was part of the Ottoman Empire at the time (only falling under the French Mandate as the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the First World War). There he gave a speech in Umayyad Mosque. It is reported that there were around ten thousand people in the audience, including a hundred Muslim scholars. In his speech, Nursi identified what he believed were six sicknesses of the Muslim world and offered remedies from ‘the pharmacy of the Qur’ān’. The sicknesses Nursi identified were: (i) the rising to life of despair and hopelessness in social life, (ii) the death of truthfulness in social and political life, (iii) love of enmity, (iv) not knowing the luminous bonds that bind believers to one another, (v) despotism, which spreads, becoming widespread as though it were various contagious diseases, and (vi) restricting endeavour to what is personally beneficial.⁵⁰ Nursi’s speech was printed twice, under the title *The Damascus Sermon (Hutbe-i Şamiye)*, in Damascus the following week.⁵¹

Nursi returned from Damascus to Istanbul and joined the official visit of Sultan Rashād (d. 1918) to the Balkans in June 1911 as the representative of the eastern provinces.⁵² The mission was to gain the support of the Balkan nations, which were still living under the Ottoman flag. Although the trip was successful in the sense of refreshing the bonds, the upcoming events of the First World War would eventually see the Balkans separated from the empire. The trip provided an opportunity for Nursi to explain to the Sultan his proposal for an Islamic Modern University in the east of Turkey (*Madrasat al-Zahrā*). In fact, the Sultan already had in mind another university project for the Balkans. However, later, after the Balkans War, the Sultan’s project had to be cancelled and the funds were diverted to Nursi’s *Madrasat al-Zahrā* project. The foundations of Nursi’s university were laid in Van in 1913.

⁴⁹ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 78.

⁵⁰ See *Hutbe-i Şamiye (Damascus Sermon)* in Nursi, *Kaynaklı, İndeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdag Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri*.

⁵¹ Turner and Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 15.

⁵² Vahide, ‘*Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi*’, 9.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 meant the project had to stop, and Nursi and his students had to join the military to defend the eastern provinces. Nursi was appointed by Enver Pasha to serve as a commander against the invading Russian forces.⁵³

In the midst of these events, in 1913 Nursi wrote a commentary on the Qur'ān, called 'Signs of Miraculousness' (*al-Isharāt al-I'jaz*), which was dedicated to demonstrating the miraculousness of the Qur'ān's eloquence.⁵⁴ This work was later incorporated into Nursi's *Epistles of Light*. In fact, Nursi planned to complete the *Signs of Miraculousness* in sixty volumes, yet managed to write only one volume. This first and only volume was written on horseback during the war. Nursi explained that he then changed his main focus to the theme of belief in the Qur'ān, rather than explaining every single verse. Vahide writes about how present-day scholars admire Nursi's subtlety concerning the exposition of the Qur'ān's word-order (*naẓm*), which in places surpasses that of the great masters of the past such as Jurjani (d. 1078) and Zamaksharī (d. 1143/4).⁵⁵

During their defence of Bitlis, Nursi and some of his students were captured by Russian forces and were sent to the prisoner-of-war camp in Kostroma in north-western Russia.⁵⁶

3.4. THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION, 1918–1925

Nursi's captivity in Russia may also be included in the transitional period of his life. The Russian prisoner-of-war camp and subsequent escape affected Nursi's thought for the rest of his life.⁵⁷ This transitional period can be considered in two parts. The first is Nursi's two and

⁵³ Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 118.

⁵⁴ This work was published by Nursi when he came back from war camp prison in Russia, 1918. Enver Pasha provided the paper for it to show his appreciation of the work and Nursi's service in the war. Nursi accepted his paper offering, because at that time paper was not easy to find in wartime Turkey.

⁵⁵ See Şükran Vahide, *Towards the Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi*, in *Islam at the Crossroads : On the Life and Thought of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 9.

⁵⁶ Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 124; Nursi, *Kaynaklı, İndeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdag Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri.*, 2: 56.

⁵⁷ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 366.

a half years as a prisoner in Russia during the First World War; the second begins when he came back from Russia and ends with the beginning of the New Saīd period, when he started writing the *Risāle-i Nur*. The period of transition from ‘the Old Saīd’ to ‘the New Saīd’ took around eight to ten years in total.

Upon Nursi’s capture in the east of Van, Russian forces took him to the province of Kostroma in north-western Russia with other prisoners of war.⁵⁸ A few months later, Tatar villagers, who lived close to the camp, requested Nursi as an *imām* to lead their prayers in the local mosque, which was beside the River Volga. Nursi was leading the Tatar villagers as a religious leader (*imam*) during the day, but he was alone during the long winter nights, so he found plenty of time to think about his life and reflect deeply on his relationship with God. One night, Nursi thought that he had had enough of mixing in social life with people and decided to spend the rest of his life in the caves worshiping God. He decided that as he would enter the grave alone, solitude was better than mixing with people.⁵⁹

After around two years in Kostroma, Nursi managed to escape from Russia to Istanbul via Warsaw and Sofia.⁶⁰ His arrival in Istanbul was announced by the newspapers on 25 June 1918.⁶¹ Despite all the public congratulations, he was determined to realise his decision to stay in a cave in solitude throughout the rest of his life. Nevertheless, as a result of great pressure from high-ranking governors like Enver Pasha (d. 1922) and others who were acquainted with him from the past, he had to postpone his plans. Vahide writes:

Nursi was revered in Istanbul as a hero, warrior, and exemplar of Ottoman courage. He received invitations from prominent pashas and dignitaries or he was visited by similar people. He was offered various positions of honour. In the meantime, he was awarded a war medal.⁶²

⁵⁸ Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 124.

⁵⁹ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 129.

⁶⁰ Said Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Sözlür, Mektubat, Lemalar, Şualar*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Nesil Yayinlari, 1994), 708.

⁶¹ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 132.

⁶² Şükran Vahide, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, 132.

In August 1918, without his knowledge, Nursi was appointed President of Religious Affairs (*Daru'l-Hikmah*), the second highest position after the President.⁶³

During this new period of his life, Nursi lived in different parts of Istanbul, such as Çamlıca Hill, Yuşa Hill and Sariyer Hill. Yet he found it painful trying to reconcile his desire to live a life of worship in isolation and his active role in society at this time. The life of partial solitude he had been obliged to lead in Russia in 1918 had reinforced his strong motivation towards the inner life. During this period in Istanbul he read the works of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166) and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindī (1563–1624), also known as Imām Rabbānī.⁶⁴ He was bewildered as to whom to follow. After some thought, he decided to follow the guidance of the Qur'ān only,⁶⁵ since, he concluded, all paths are inspired by the Qur'ān.

During this transitional period Nursi wrote *The Seedbed of the Light (Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri)*, which is focused more on the internal world (*anfūsī*) than the external world of man (*'afāqī*). This book expresses a fine balance between the inner tension of man and the major concepts in the Qur'ān such as Divine Oneness, Resurrection and Prophecy. In the 1920s, Nursi wrote several small books, including *Sûnūhāt*,⁶⁶ *Lemaāt*, *Isharāt* and *Hutuvat-i Sitte*.⁶⁷

Nursi's transitional period occurred during a very turbulent time for the Ottoman Empire, which was about to collapse as a result of the First World War. It must be said that Nursi was psychologically affected by the war too. There are two elements which explain his psychology. First, although the Ottoman Empire had been a superpower for several centuries and the sultan represented the Muslim world as caliph, at that time the Ottoman Empire was called 'the sick man of Europe' and was seen as being about to die.⁶⁸ The Ottomans were in a terrible situation as they fought on several different fronts including North Africa, the Balkans and the Caucasus. The war conditions must have had an effect on Nursi. As a result,

⁶³ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 133.

⁶⁴ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri.*, 2: 34.

⁶⁵ Nursi, *The Rays*, 2004, 313.

⁶⁶ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 162.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁶⁸ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 298.

he may have been bewildered about what would happen in the future after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The second element was that at that time Nursi was only around forty-five years old,⁶⁹ and yet, possibly as result of his wartime experiences, he considered himself old rather than his real age. Nursi's own words explain this feeling:

“A day that will turn the hair of children grey” (Qur’ān, 73: 17) even made children old.

Even though he was in his forties he felt as if he were eighty.⁷⁰ There are several examples from his transitional period that explain his feelings. One of his works, which was written around the 1930s during the New Saīd period, was called ‘Treatise for the Elderly’.⁷¹ Nursi gives an especially clear account of his feelings in the Twenty-sixth Flash, which consists of sixteen hopes. All the examples in that work can be summed up as showing that Nursi thinks that he is old enough and should focus on the hereafter, rather than the worldly life. He thinks that he has reached a crossroads, where he must make that choice. External factors, such as his friends, are inviting him to worldly positions, but even though these positions relate to helping people to practise their religion internal arguments propel Nursi to prefer spiritual progress. Nursi's feelings are also apparent in his Seventeenth Word. There, he mentions two scenes. The first depicts the reality of the world of the heedless:

Don't call me to the world; – I came, and saw it was transitory.
 Heedlessness was a veil; – I saw the light of truth was concealed.
 All the beings in existence, – I saw were ephemeral, harmful.
 If you say, being, I dressed in it; – Alas! It was non-being; I suffered much!
 If you say, life, I tasted it; – I saw it was torment upon torment.
 ...
 If you say the Beloved, I found him; – Alas! On separation I suffered grievous pain.⁷²

However, the second scene indicates the reality of the world of the people of guidance who are luminous or pious:

⁶⁹ Nursi, Kaynaklı, *İndeksli Risale-i Nur Külliyyati: Sözlür, Mektubat, Lemalar, Şualar*, 1: 703.

⁷⁰ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 128.

⁷¹ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 286.

⁷² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 218.

Then the heedlessness passed, – And I saw the light of truth clearly.
 Existence became the proof of God; – See, life is the mirror of God.
 The mind became the key to treasures. – See, transience is the door to permanence.
 The spark of perfection died, – But, behold the Sun of Beauty!

...

If you are a true slave of God, – See, it is a limitless pleasure and ease.
 Taste its uncountable rewards, – Experience its infinite happiness ...⁷³

These scenes might be considered as representing Nursi's inner talk or self-criticism, a means whereby he helped himself to understand his inner reflections.

In 1922, Nursi eventually left Istanbul when he was invited to Ankara by Mustafa Kemal (d. 1938) and the new government of the Turkish Republic to work for them.⁷⁴ Nursi found another opportunity to present his *Madrasat al-Zahrā'* project, this time to the newly established Turkish Parliament. He immediately gained the support of 167 deputies in the assembly, who signed his petition. Two years later, however, the project was again rejected by a higher committee and sent back to the assembly. This was Nursi's second failure to realise the project.⁷⁵ Mustafa Kemal and the foremost governors were **primarily** secularists and did not make any room for religious thought in the foundation of the new Turkish Republic. Disappointed by the attitude of the new government, Nursi left Ankara in April 1923.⁷⁶

Nursi started a new, simple and humble life in Van.⁷⁷ He had a few students to instruct, with whom he discussed Islamic sciences such as the exegesis of the Qur'ān, hadith and *fiqh*, etc.⁷⁸ A few years later in 1925, the Sheikh Sa'īd (d. 1925) Revolt broke out.⁷⁹ Nursi was arrested and exiled to Western Turkey on the grounds that he might have a strong influence on the local Kurdish population, even though he had played no part in the revolt. First he was

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 222.

⁷⁵ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 172.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 173.

⁷⁷ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 223.

⁷⁸ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 177.

⁷⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey : A Modern History*, 172. Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 224. Vahide, "The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi", 224.

brought to Burdur.⁸⁰ Then he was taken to Isparta and finally to Barla, where he was to stay for around nine years.⁸¹ Nursi later described his Barla exile in terms of his dream of spending his life in solitude come true. Nursi writes in *The Flashes* of the dream he had, while a prisoner of war in Russia, of spending his life in contemplative solitude:

That night in the mosque on the banks of the Volga made me decide to pass the rest of my life in caves. Enough now of mixing in this social life of people.⁸²

Now he was forced to live in solitude in a small village, Barla, which was scarcely populated and had no road or rail access to anywhere.

Nursi thought that God transformed the solitude on the mountain, which was unsafe and exposed to the elements, into a retreat in the safe and sincere mountains of Barla.⁸³ Nursi also likens his other periods of imprisonment and exile in Kastamonu, Emirdağ, Eskişehir, Denizli and Afyon to that of his dreamed life of solitude. During this period Nursi devoted himself to expounding the Qur'ān and writing the *Risāle-i Nur*, a work of approximately six thousand pages.

3.5. THE NEW SAĪD PERIOD (1925–1950)

Nursi describes his *Risāle-i Nur* as a kind of exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'ān. There are two fundamental methods of exegesis of the Qur'ān: the analytical approach (*al-'ittijāh al-tajzi'i fī al-tafsīr*) and the thematic or synthetic approach (*al-'ittijāh al-mawḍū'i fī al-tafsīr*).⁸⁴ In terms of this classification, it can be assumed that Nursi's *Risāle-i Nur* falls into the second category, since Nursi's approach in his writings was mainly aimed at elaborating the concept of belief only. It seems that Nursi intentionally focused on this concept alone. For example,

⁸⁰ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 225.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Nursi, *The Flashes*, 299.

⁸³ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 63.

⁸⁴ The term 'thematic', i.e. relating to a theme, is used to describe the method by which an exegete selects a group of verses related to a single theme. We may also call this method 'synthetic' because it does not seek to impose human experience on the Qur'ān; rather, it seeks to synthesise these verses and their meaning into a single composite view and to unite human experience with the Qur'ān. See: Muḥammad Bāqir Ṣadr, *Muqaddimāt fī al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'i lil-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Tawjīh al-Islāmī, 1980), 10.

in his explanations, there are three steps in the last renewal of Islām in the end times, namely belief, life and shariah. Nursi explains that his lifetime is not sufficient for all three of these, but that the most important of the three is belief.⁸⁵ That is why he focused on belief rather than on life and shariah.

In addition, it is worthwhile to note that almost all of Nursi's books, such as *The Words*, *The Letters*, *The Flashes*, *The Rays* and *The Mathnawi*, focus on reinforcing belief. They are the fruits of the New Saīd era. Describing Saīd Nursi's *Risale-i Nur*, Vahide writes:

Risale-i Nur incorporates the traditional Islamic sciences and modern scientific knowledge, and while instilling those truths, effectively refutes the basis of materialist philosophy... [in a] unique way in the Islamic world for the renewal of belief.⁸⁶

The main body of *Risāle-i Nur* consists of the four main themes of the Qur'ān. These are: (1) the existence of the Single Maker i.e. God, (2) prophethood, (3) the resurrection of the dead, and (4) justice.⁸⁷ Nursi dedicated his life to explaining these concepts in detail in his works. As mentioned earlier, the New Saīd Period overlaps with the time of the new Turkish Republic. Nursi's life-philosophy contradicted the doctrine of Atatürk's new secular republic, which was established on his own power monopoly. It was a radical programme of secularisation and also aimed at modernisation on that basis.⁸⁸ There was no room for religious figures, whereas Nursi wanted Islamic values and morality to be also incorporated, an idea Atatürk strongly opposed.⁸⁹ When he was staying in Ṭahir Pasha's residence in Van, Nursi had become well informed about the arguments produced by Jean Baptist Lamarck (d. 1829), Auguste Comte (d. 1857), Ludwig Büchner (d. 1897), Charles Darwin (d. 1882) and the like. He considered these positivist understandings of the universe flawed compared to the arguments developed in the Qur'ān.

⁸⁵ Nursi, Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Digerleri., 2: 2061–2062.

⁸⁶ Vahide, 'Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi'.

⁸⁷ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Miraculous Quran and Some of Its Mysteries* (Lanham: Tughra Books, 2009), IV.

⁸⁸ Zürcher, *Turkey : A Modern History*, 172.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Atatürk's new regime transformed several cultural codes, which were mostly relevant with regard to the religious dimension of public life. The Arabic call to prayer was banned. The Sufi lodge (*tekkes*) and religious schools (*madrasas*) were also closed.⁹⁰ The education system was designed in accordance with materialist philosophy. The Caliphate and the Sultanate were abolished in a couple of years.⁹¹ The sultan was the caliph who represents the Muslim world. The aim was to remove the power of religion or of Islam from society.

The public in general was quite displeased with the revolutions. They caused unpleasant reactions such as the Sheikh Said⁹² revolt of 1925.⁹³ Sheikh Said, who was a Kurdish tribe leader with huge support from the Kurdish community in eastern Anatolia, also desired Nursi's support before taking his action since Nursi was a well-known Kurdish scholar in the region, but Nursi refused to take part in this revolt against the new regime. Nursi denounced violence, and exclaimed:

Those soldiers (The Turkish Army) are the sons of this land. They are my kith and kin and your kith and kin. Whom will you kill? And whom will they kill? Think! Use your head! Are you going to make Ahmed kill Mehmed and Hasan kill Hüseyin?⁹⁴

He reiterated that the greatest enemy of the people was ignorance and that salvation was 'to offer illumination and guidance through the truths of the Qur'ān and belief'.⁹⁵ Still, Nursi was exiled to Burdur along with many tribal and religious leaders.

Nursi wrote the first part of the *Risāle-i Nur*, called *The First Gateway to Illumination*,⁹⁶ in Burdur. From here he was again exiled to Isparta, then to Barla. Barla was a very small village without any proper road, so Nursi was transported in a very small boat across Lake Burdur. In Barla, Nursi wrote eighty per cent of *Risāle-i Nur*. Nursi's religious effort

⁹⁰ Ibid., 173.

⁹¹ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 224.

⁹² Zürcher, Turkey : A Modern History, 170–173.

⁹³ Ibid. For further information see: Robert W Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

⁹⁴ Sahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî : Kronolojik Hayati*.

⁹⁵ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 224.

⁹⁶ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 185.

attracted central government attention. The new government increased pressure on Nursi and his volunteer students, although Nursi had only a few followers. *Risāle-i Nur* was repeatedly copied out by hand by his students up until the late 1940s. Some estimate that around 700,000 copies of *Risāle-i Nur* were produced this way.

After eight years had elapsed, the Ankara government had failed to stop Nursi's scholarly activities. In 1935, Nursi and 120 of his students were arrested and charged with "opposing the reforms and belonging to a secret political organization ... exploiting religion for political ends, forming an organization that constituted a possible threat to public order and giving instruction in Sufism".⁹⁷ Ninety-seven of his students were acquitted by the court, but Nursi was sentenced to eleven months' imprisonment for opposition to the dress code and taken to Eskisehir Prison.⁹⁸

Having served his sentence in Eskisehir Prison, Nursi was exiled to Kastamonu. He had to stay in the local police station for several months. Then a house was rented for him just opposite the police station so that he could be under surveillance at all times. During his Kastamonu exile, he wrote *The Supreme Signs* and some parts of *The Rays*. Nursi again became the centre of attention in Kastamonu. New students were gathering around him. Simultaneously, he was in touch with old students in Isparta by post. The number of his students and his works were increasing day by day. Eventually central government was irritated and took action against him once again.

Nursi and 126 of his students were arrested and sent to Denizli Prison. The court brought similar charges to those of the Eskişehir trial, but Nursi and his students were all acquitted, along with the *Risāle-i Nur*. However, during the trial, they had to stay in Denizli prison in

⁹⁷ See 'A Chronology of Said Nursi's Life' by Sukran Vahide' in: *Islam at the Crossroads : On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, XXI.

⁹⁸ Ataturk introduced the new dress code in 1925, which made the use of the hat obligatory. Anyone refusing to put a hat on was punished severely. See: Zürcher, Turkey : A Modern History, 173.

harsh conditions for some nine months.⁹⁹ Detention proved to be fruitful as Nursi wrote *The Fruits of Belief* during his stay in Denizli Prison.¹⁰⁰

Following his time in Denizli Prison, Nursi's exile in Emirdağ started in 1944. *Risāle-i Nur* was almost completed by 1947. After three and half years in Emirdağ, in 1948 Nursi and his students were detained once again and sent to Afyon Prison, where Nursi remained for twenty months. At the end of the Afyon trial both Nursi and *Risāle-i Nur* were cleared once again. But prison conditions had been too harsh for 75-year-old Nursi. Şahiner highlights incidents where the prison authorities kept one of Nursi's window panes broken to make sure he was exposed to the harsh Afyon cold, and he was poisoned by corrupt governors several times.¹⁰¹ Nursi had been literally left to die in his prison cell. Perhaps this was the harshest of all Nursi's prison terms. At last he was acquitted, and was sent to Emirdağ to reside for the second time.

3.5. NURSI'S FREE YEARS (1950–1960)

The last ten years of Nursi's life are seen as the Third Saīd period. The general style of Nursi's life was more or less the same, but the progress of modern Turkey towards democracy sharply accelerated. After 27 years of single party rule by the Republican People's Party (RPP), Turkey was experiencing true democracy for the first time.¹⁰²

The Democrat Party (DP), led by Adnan Menderes (d. 1960), beat the RPP by a huge margin. Compared to the RPP with its secularist policies, Adnan Menderes's DP could be considered conservative. The DP's first action was to lift the ban on the Arabic call to prayer. Vahide writes:

⁹⁹ Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi', 236.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁰¹ Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursî : Kronolojik Hayatı*.

¹⁰² Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 305; The charges against *Risale-i Nur* and the *Nurcus* kept coming until the removal of Article 163 of the Penal Code in 1991; in this regard see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 412.

It was clearly a massive positive step forward in terms of an end to the oppression. Although DP seriously improved democracy in Turkey, the attorneys were still free to press charges on Nursi based on the old Article 163 of the Penal Code.¹⁰³

Nursi gave support to the DP in the name of democracy. Yet he was never a part of it. As a matter of principle, Nursi was determined not to take an active part in politics. He said:

“I must take up the Qur’ān’s light, I declared: ‘I seek refuge with God from Satan and from politics’ and threw away the club of politics; I embraced the light with both hands. I saw that among the political movements are lovers of those lights in both the opposition and the supporters. The Qur’ān is far superior to all political currents and partisanship.”¹⁰⁴

Nursi believed that whoever is serving God should never take sides against others. Thus he could offer support to the DP, but never took an active role in it.

During the 1950s, *Risale-i Nur* students started to travel abroad in different parts of the world in order to introduce the *Risale-i Nur* and establish relations, in various countries and major cities, including Finland and Washington DC, as well as a number of Islamic countries, such as Pakistan.¹⁰⁵ Nursi also received visits from religious scholars and figures from the Islamic world. Pakistan’s deputy education minister, Sayyid Ali Akbar Shah, visited him on 15 January 1951.¹⁰⁶ He also sent copies of *Risale-i Nur* to the Pope in Rome. Nursi received a letter of thanks from the Vatican dated 22 February 1951.¹⁰⁷

The relation between the Muslim world and Christianity is another important issue in Nursi’s free years. Nursi considers the West in two aspects. In the first, its sciences serve justice and right and technological developments that are beneficial for society. It takes its inspiration from true Christianity. However, the second face of Europe is corrupted by materialist philosophy, which has driven mankind to vice and misguidance.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Nursi emphasises the need for co-operation between Muslims and sincere Christians against

¹⁰³ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 285.

¹⁰⁴ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 49.

¹⁰⁵ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 316.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 160.

aggressive atheism. Nursi considered the communist regime of the Soviet Union to be the representative of the ‘great Dajjal’ or Atheism. Nursi’s main focus was the concept of belief, so he spent his last years challenging the idea of atheism by means of his main work, *Risāle-i Nur*, because he believed and advocated the idea that all monotheist religions should act as allies in opposing atheism.¹⁰⁹ He took unusual steps to build a bridge between Islam and sincere Christianity. For example, Nursi visited the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Istanbul, Athenagoras (d. 1972), in the spring and summer of 1953.¹¹⁰

In 1956, the court declared the acquittal of *Risāle-i Nur*. The whole *Risāle-i Nur* collection was printed. Nursi believed that *Risāle-i Nur* and its students would now be able to perform their duties,¹¹¹ and called this time “The *Risāle-i Nur* Festival”.¹¹²

Four years later, in 1960, after a long life which had been spent in the service of God, Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi died peacefully in a hotel room in Urfa in Eastern Turkey. The remaining part of this chapter will focus on the works of Nursi, and on the concept of self (*nafs*) and ‘I’ (*anā*) and their relationship with the concept of God.

3.6. THE BASIC MISSION OF SAÏD NURSI AND *RISĀLE-I NUR*

There is a strong correlation between the main concepts of *Risāle-i Nur* and modern man’s needs: the main mission of the *Risāle-i Nur* is to guide people away from materialist interpretations of philosophy and science. Man’s spiritual progress is based on human intellect (‘*aql*) and heart (*qalb*). According to Nursi, it is important to challenge any doubts about any religious matters with the eye of the heart (*qalb*) and the eye of the human intellect (‘*aql*). This is the method that Nursi extracted from the Qur’ān. He found a way to the essence of reality by employing both the heart (*qalb*) and the human intellect (‘*aql*).

¹⁰⁹ On the issue of Nursi’s Muslim–Christian dialogue, see: Zeki Saritoprak, ‘Said Nursi on Muslim–Christian Relations Leading to World Peace’, *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 19, no. 1 (2008): 25–37.

¹¹⁰ Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey : An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 333.

¹¹¹ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyati: Sözlür, Mektubat, Lemalar, Şualar*, 1: 1094.

¹¹² See ‘A Chronology of Said Nursi’s Life’ by Sukran Vahide in: *Islam at the Crossroads : On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, xxiii.

In the present study, the concept of self (*nafs*) and 'I' (*anā*) are considered the key elements of man's spiritual progress. In the last section of this chapter, in order to comprehend the totality of man in Nursian thought, six spiritual faculties of man, heart, human intellect, spirit, conscience and 'I' (*qalb*, '*aql*, *rūh*, *nafs*, *wijdān* and *anā*) and their relations, as conceptualised by Nursi himself, will be detailed. Nursi's sixfold schema differs from those traditionally used in Muslim psycho-spiritual literature, where only four faculties (i.e. heart (*qalb*), human intellect ('*aql*), spirit (*rūh*) and self (*nafs*)) are used.

During the period of the Old Saīd, as he writes, Nursi filled his mind with the philosophical as well as the Islamic sciences, and familiarised himself with both Islamic and Western ideologies. However, after his imprisonment in Russia in 1918, he had a tendency to direct his attention more to his inner life. He was contemplating which path, or whom, he should follow. During this period, he read the books of Abd al-Qādir Gilāni and Ahmed Sirhindi. He was inspired by these scholars and their writings, and decided to make his *qiblah* one person. This means taking one person as master and following him, and not concerning oneself with anyone else. Nursi was bewildered as to whom to follow. He reflected on this, and then, because the Qur'ān was the source of all the various ways, he decided to follow the Qur'ān only.¹¹³

3.7. ALLIANCE OF 'AQL AND QALB IN NURSI'S SPIRITUALITY

Nursi assigns considerable importance to Sufism in his works, but he was not a Sufi in classical terms. There are two important indicators of his differences with the classical understanding of Sufism.

Firstly, while, like al-Ghazzālī, Nursi is an important Sunni scholar in Islamic history, and also aimed to divert the attention of Muslims to the essential reality of the Qur'ān and the path of tradition (*Sunnah*), in the time of al-Ghazzālī Sufism was highly dependent on personal experience and did not have much of a structure. Also, in time it had started to move away from the original path of the Qur'ān and tradition (*Sunnah*). Al-Ghazzālī, through his major works such as *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and others, aimed to redirect the attention of Sufis to

¹¹³ Nursi, *The Rays*, 2004, 313.

the main sources, that is, the Qurʾān and tradition (*Sunnah*). While Nursi shared this focus on the main sources with al-Ghazzālī, by the time in which Nursi lived Sufism had already become highly structured and formalised.

Secondly, as Nursi belongs to a different period in time, man's requirements and understandings have changed a great deal from what they were in the times when the fundamentals and dynamics of Sufism were discussed and set. Nursi realised the necessity to redefine and improve the methods of Sufism in the light of contemporary conditions. This, of course, is linked to the purpose of the *Risāle-i Nur* and his definition of 'certain belief' (*īmān-i taḥqīqī*). According to Nursi, certain belief is

certain, affirmative belief or belief by investigation. As a conscious assent and verification, it is the opposite of belief by imitation (*īmān-i taqlīdī*).¹¹⁴

To achieve this main purpose of the revitalisation of faith, Nursi sought to bring together or, more accurately perhaps, carry out the essential functions of various traditional religious sciences such as Islamic philosophy (*kalām*), the tenets of belief ('*aq'ā'id*), the scientific method of religion (*usūl al-dīn*) and exegesis (*tafsīr*), together with modern sciences",¹¹⁵ while making these accessible to all people whatever their background or class.¹¹⁶

Like al-Ghazzālī, Mawlāna Jalal-al-Din Rūmi (d. 1273) and Ahmed Sirhindi, Nursi also preferred a path which based the development of individuals on both the dynamics of the heart (*qalb*) and the human intellect (*aql*). Few prominent scholars take both into

¹¹⁴ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 330–331.

¹¹⁵ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 5.

¹¹⁶ Gündüzalp, who was one of the foremost student of Nursi, underlines that "[w]hen perceptive and appreciative people first come to know Bediuzzaman and the *Risale-i Nur*, they are infinitely regretful they did not know of them previously, and in order to make up for lost time, never waste their spare time, and if they have five minutes even, pick up the *Risale-i Nur*, and read it day and night. This extraordinary interest and demand has never ever been shown for the work of any psychologist, sociologist, or philosopher. Only the educated can benefit from them. If a middle school student or a housewife reads the work of an eminent philosopher, he or she does not profit from it. But everyone profits from the *Risale-i Nur* in accordance with his level." *Ibid.*, 3.

consideration: there were some other paths which based their fundamentals on either heart (*qalb*) or on human intellect (*'aql*) alone.¹¹⁷ Nursi also confirms their path, and he explains:

The aim and goal of the Sufi path is – knowledge of God and the unfolding of the truths of faith – through a spiritual journeying with the feet of the heart ... and all saints of his community make their spiritual journeying under the shadow of the Ascension, with the spirit and heart.¹¹⁸

Nursi found that more than anything else, this way, employing both the *qalb* (heart) and the *'aql* (mind), cured his wounded spirit (*rūh*) and heart (*qalb*). Also, ‘silencing Satan and his evil-commanding soul’ rescued him from doubts and scepticism.¹¹⁹ Nursi, while defining his spiritual architecture, proceeded through an alliance of human intellect (*'aql*) and heart (*qalb*).

Despite all the political and social turbulence, Nursi always wished to refine the truths of Islam, and to dispel the doubts of the enemies of religion and repel the underground fears of externalists and those who go to excess.¹²⁰

Nursi explains his life mission in *The Words* as follows:

One time I had a dream: I was at the foot of Mount Ararat. The mountain suddenly exploded, scattering rocks the size of mountains all over the world, shaking it.

Then a man appeared at my side. He told me: “Expound the aspects of the Qur’an’s miraculousness you know, concisely and succinctly!”

I thought of the dream’s meaning while still dreaming, telling myself: the explosion here symbolizes a revolution in mankind.

¹¹⁷ Nursi, *The Rays*, 2004, 174.

¹¹⁸ See ‘Mesnevi-i Nuriye’ in: Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri*, 2: 1277.

¹¹⁹ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 507.

¹²⁰ See ‘Towards the Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi’ by Sukran Vahide in: *Islam at the Crossroads : On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 8.

As a result of it, the guidance of the Criterion of Truth and Falsehood will be exalted everywhere, and will rule. And the time will come to expound its miraculousness!¹²¹

Nursi was aware of, and not happy with, the fact that Islamic literature had been polluted with *Isra'illiyat* and ancient Greek philosophy. These had caused an axial dislocation in Islamic literature, not a complete one, but severe. Some Muslim scholars had not been affected by this dislocation – al-Ghazzālī, Ibn ‘Arabi, Rūmi, Nursi, and others – but some scholars and their works had been heavily affected. This issue concerns the difference between the wisdom of the Qur’ān and philosophy. In other words, it is about different views of the philosophy of science in the Western and the Islamic context. The difference between those two disciplines is discussed and elaborated later in this thesis, most specifically in Chapter 5. Nursi structured his own thought in accordance with an Islamic philosophy of science which compromises both modern sciences and the Qur’ān and in which they are not in conflict at all.¹²²

3.8. NURSI'S STYLE OF EXPOSITION IN *RISĀLE-I NUR*

Nursi wrote the treaties in *The Words* using very simple language. He used allegories to make the context clear to his readers, most of whom were not highly educated. He then reveals the truth behind the allegory. For the proof of the Maker, for instance, Nursi tells the story of two men travelling through a country. One man, who apparently represents atheist philosophy, is empty-headed and the other, who represents the theist, is the wise man. Concerning the empty-headed man's rejection of Deity, the wise man replies:

Every village must have its headman; every needle must have its manufacturer and craftsman. And, as you know, every letter must be written by someone. How, then, can it be that so extremely well ordered a kingdom should have no ruler? And how can so much wealth have no owner, when every hour a train arrives filled with precious and artful gifts, as if coming from the realm of the unseen? And all the announcements and proclamations, all the seals and stamps, found on all those goods, all the coins and the flags waving in every corner of the kingdom — can they be without an owner? It seems

¹²¹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 336.

¹²² See Said Nursi, *Muhakemat (Reasoning)*, where Nursi dedicated almost this entire book to the hakikat (reality) of Islam. For example, he explained verses such as 18: 86: Until when he reached the place where the sun set, he found it going down into a black sea, and found by it a people. We said: O Zulqarnain! either give them a chastisement or do them a benefit, and 51: 48: And the earth, We have made it a wide extent; how well have We then spread (it) out.

you have studied foreign languages a little, and are unable to read this Islamic script. In addition, you refuse to ask those who are able to read it. Come now; let me read to you the king's supreme decree.¹²³

In terms of methodology, Nursi's style resembles that of Plato. In *Laws*, Plato uses two imaginary characters, namely Cleinias and the Athenian Stranger. These characters represent opposing philosophical ideas. Similarly, Hume, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, speaks in the mouths of Demea, Cleanthes and Philo in order to represent the cosmological theist, the experimental theist and the sceptic.

Nursi, however, uses the word 'philosophy' (*falsafah*) to represent negative philosophy: that is, materialist, naturalist and atheist thought. He never uses the expressions 'atheist philosophy' or 'theist philosophy', but in order to refute such philosophy he makes the Qur'ān speak. His writings often illustrate the clash between philosophy (*falsafah*) and the Qur'ān.

3.9. INTERPRETATION OF THE CREATION

The book of the universe (*kitāb-i kāināt*) and the beautiful names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*):¹²⁴ throughout *Risāle-i Nur*, Nursi methodically depicts the universe as a 'cosmic book' written by God. He explains that, like a mirror, the universe reflects all the different Beautiful Names and Attributes¹²⁵ of its Creator. To Nursi, every being has been created for a purpose, and they are all the signs (*āyāt*) of their Creator. Therefore, the purpose of man's creation is to attain belief in God, which can be achieved by correctly interpreting the cosmic narrative.

Nursi distinguishes between the materialistic philosophy of science and the Qur'ānic understanding of the reality of the things in the universe (or the cosmic book written by God). Nursi explains the method he has developed for understanding the true face of the universe through an Arabic linguistic rule: there are two notions to indicate meanings, (a) other-

¹²³ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 60.

¹²⁴ For the Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*), see Appendix 2, p. 294.

¹²⁵ Nursi mentions more than the classical 99 Beautiful Names of God listed in the hadīth.

indicative meaning (*ma' nā-yi ḥarfī*)¹²⁶ and (b) self-referential meaning (*ma' nā-yi ismī*).¹²⁷ It is important to understand these notions to grasp Nursi's understanding of the universe and the reality of the things in it. Such an understanding is also helpful from the point of view of grasping the concept of self (*nafs*) and other concepts in Nursi's works.

One of the translator's notes in Nursi's *al-Mathnawī al-Nūrī* contains a quotation from Nursi in which he explains the terms 'other-indicative meaning' (*ma' nā-yi ḥarfī*) and 'self-referential meaning' (*ma' nā-yi ismī*):

A letter has no inherent meaning and so points to something else, such as the work of which it is a part and its author (*ma' nā-i ḥarfī*), a word, however, has a complete meaning in itself and so points primarily to itself (*ma' nā-i ismī*). Instead of using meaning related to the letter and meaning related to the name, Turner translates the term *ma' nā-i ḥarfī* as other-indicative and *ma' nā-i ismī* as self-referential meaning.¹²⁸

Nursi writes that

God makes it possible to solve the greatest ontological problems by one linguistic rule: The meaning related to the letter (*ma' nā-i ḥarfī*) and the meaning related to the name (*ma' nā-i ismī*). The universe is a book; the creatures in it are its words. These words should be viewed only on their Insciber's behalf, for their primary function is to serve as messages of the Lord manifesting His All-Beautiful Names. Considering creatures on behalf of themselves causes ignorance, ingratitude and erroneous philosophy, while considering them on behalf of their Insciber is the origin of knowledge, belief and wisdom.¹²⁹

According to Nursi, a true understanding of the Attributes and Names of God depends on a true interpretation of the universe, which is only possible by considering all creatures with their other-indicative meaning rather than their self-referential meaning. To further express the importance and central role of this approach, Nursi writes:

¹²⁶ Colin Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi's Epistles of Light* (Berlin: GERLACH PRESS, 2013), 97.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Said Nursi, *Al-Mathnawī Al-Nūrī : Seedbed of the Light*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Somerset, NJ: The Light, 2007), 351.

¹²⁹ See: Colin Turner, *The-Sided Vision of Said Nursi: Towards a Spiritual Architecture of the Risale-i Nur in; Abu-Rabi, Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur*, 37.

during forty years of my life and thirty years of my studies, I have learned four words or phrases ... the phrases are; other-indicative meaning, self-referential meaning, intention and viewpoint.¹³⁰

Nursi considers man to be at the centre of the universe and also a conscious fruit of it. Furthermore, according to Nursi, man has comprehensive abilities and inner faculties to help him understand and experience all the Divine Names manifested in the universe.¹³¹ As a result of such an arrangement, most of the wisdom, aims, purposes and benefits of the universe look to man.

3.10. SPIRITUAL COMPREHENSIVENESS OF MAN IN NURSI

According to Nursi, man has many inner faculties and notions which enable him to read and interpret the cosmic text. Like many scholars, Nursi has produced a definition of the spiritual architecture of human beings. Of course, understanding the self (*nafs*) as well as other faculties (notions) is an important and vital step in mapping the spiritual comprehensiveness of man.

Nursi's understanding of self (*nafs*) is similar to that of al-Ghazzālī and other great scholars in the history of Islam such as Muhiddin al-Arabi, Ahmed Sirhindi, Rūmi, and one of Rūmi's important followers after many centuries, Iqbal. Along with an exploration of Nursi's ideas on this topic, his thought will be compared to the works of those scholars and similarities will be underlined.

Like al-Ghazzālī, Nursi emphasises the strong and dynamic relations of self (*nafs*) with other important notions, namely heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūḥ*) and human intellect (*'aql*), in man's spiritual life. Furthermore, Nursi adds two other important notions to these three, *wijdān*

¹³⁰ Original ex.; in a word or sentence, a letter points to the meanings of other things, not itself. A word points to itself in meaning. Considering something from the view point of what a letter signifies, or on account of the creator, means considering it a 'mirror' that reflects God's Names and Attributes manifested on it. Considering something from the viewpoint of what a word signifies means considering it because of or on account of itself. See: Nursi, Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light, 300.

¹³¹ Ibid., 67.

(conscience) and ‘I’ (*anā*). All these notions will be discussed in detail so as to provide a better understanding of the concept of *nafs*.

3.10.1. Heart (*Qalb*)

According to Nursi, the heart (*qalb*) directs all man’s faculties towards realising the reality of self (*nafs*) or being a perfect person. Nursi gives a brief explanation of heart (*qalb*) in The Twenty-Seventh Word:

Man possesses many senses and subtle faculties charged with duties, like the mind, spirit, *nafs*, and others. The perfect man is he who, driving all those subtle senses towards reality on the different ways of worship particular to them, marches heroically like the companions in a broad arena and rich fashion towards the goal, with the heart as a commander and the subtle faculties as soldiers.¹³²

As Nursi, al-Ghazzālī, and many other Sufis agree, heart (*qalb*) has two meanings. One denotes the body’s most vital component, which is located in the left part of the chest and resembles a pinecone. In the Sufi terminology, however, heart (*qalb*) signifies the spiritual aspect as the centre of all emotions and intellectual and spiritual faculties, such as perception, consciousness, sensation, reasoning and willpower. Sufis call this the ‘human truth’; philosophers call it ‘the reasoning soul’. An individual’s real nature is found in the heart.¹³³

According to Nursi, heart (*qalb*) is the place of belief and also one of the two spiritual faculties which long for the creator of the universe (the other faculty is *wijdān*). If heart (*qalb*) needs anything, or when it feels impotent, it looks for an absolute power to stand by. This longing or feeling is only satisfied by belief in or submission to God. Heart (*qalb*) is not a mere pinecone; rather, it is one of the inner faculties which is connected with conscience (*wijdān*) and human intellect (‘*aql*). Heart (*qalb*) feels through conscience (*wijdān*) and thinks with the human intellect (‘*aql*).¹³⁴ Heart (*qalb*) is vital for the spirituality of man just as

¹³² Nursi, The Flashes, 456.

¹³³ Nursi, The Words, 2005, 511.

¹³⁴ See ‘Muḥākamāt’ in: Nursi, Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyati: Isârâtü’l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Digerleri., 2: 2021.

the heart (*qalb*) is vital to the body. Without heart (*qalb*), man is not a human being, but only a sculpture.¹³⁵

Nursi also describes heart (*qalb*) as a window through which to view the unseen worlds, and through which other inner faculties also frame the luminous reflections of the Divine Names. Thus heart (*qalb*) itself is a luminous map which declares the manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes of God.¹³⁶

In Sufi tradition the spiritual treatment, perfection or development of the heart (*qalb*) is described metaphorically as fire which is incorporated with the notion of love. Nursi is well aware of this tradition and uses it to set out the difference of the ways of the *Risāle-i Nur*.

According to Nursi:

qalb is like a seed which is to be watered by Islām and receive light from belief. If, in the soil of servanthood (*ubudiyyah*) and purity of intention (*ikhlas*), it is watered by Islām and awakened to life by belief, it grows into such an illustrious spiritual tree that it becomes its corporeal body's spirit. If it is not watered, it remains a dried seed having to burn in fire until it acquires the quality of light.¹³⁷

The path of traditional Sufism, which Nursi describes as necessitating burning in fire, has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

3.10.2. Rūḥ (spirit)

Religions, as well as philosophy, define spirit (*rūḥ*) as the source of life, feelings, motion, consciousness, etc. Some definitions and discussions of the topic render it more confusing, even incomprehensible, but all definitions of spirit (*rūḥ*) reflect on its non-material nature.

Nursi discusses the concept of spirit (*rūḥ*) in conjunction with the reality of life. According to him, the pure essence of life, or even life itself, is spirit (*rūḥ*). He also sees many

¹³⁵ Nursi, *The Flashes*; see also Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Sözlür, Mektubat, Lemalar, Şualar*, 1: 2021.

¹³⁶ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdag Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri.*, 2: 1180.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 2020.

resemblances between spirit (*rūḥ*) and the laws of nature, but the human spirit (*rūḥ*), which is like the laws in nature, has consciousness. To further explain their resemblance, Nursi states:

Both are unchanging and permanent, and come from the World of (the Initial Manifestation of) Divine Commands. If Eternal Power had clothed laws with external existence, each would have been a spirit; if the human spirit were stripped of consciousness, it would become an immaterial law.¹³⁸

Although spirit (*rūḥ*) has a non-material nature, it is a fundamental requirement for matter and existence. According to Nursi, “matter is not something dominating, so that things should be referred to it; rather, it is something dominated, subject to the decree of something which has a fundamental place in existence. That thing is life, the spirit (*rūḥ*), and consciousness.”¹³⁹

3.10.3. ‘Aql (human intellect)

Human intellect (‘*aql*) as a term refers to a Divine light through which a person can capture the things that are not in the realm of our bodily senses. Through human intellect (‘*aql*) it is possible to understand the interaction between cause and effect, which can be extended to mean the functioning of the universe.

According to Muslim scholars, human intellect (‘*aql*) is an internal faculty which is inarguably connected to other faculties such as heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*rūḥ*). The importance of human intellect (‘*aql*) lies its potential to lead all the internal faculties of man to perfection unless it is under the influence of evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). If the human intellect (‘*aql*) is guided by the Qur’ān and tradition (*Sunnah*), it reflects on the universe, which ultimately leads to belief and tranquillity by reading the Divine Names and Attributes of God. Knowledge of God is both a need that human intellect (‘*aql*) must satisfy and a source from which it must feed itself.¹⁴⁰

According to Nursi, human intellect (‘*aql*) plays a central role in the comprehensiveness of man and his spiritual life. In a situation of conflict between human intellect (‘*aql*) and

¹³⁸ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 170.

¹³⁹ See ‘The Epigrams or Seeds of Truth’ in: Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 529.

¹⁴⁰ See ‘The Twenty-Ninth Word’, in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 529.

revelation, Nursi prefers to base the final conclusion on human intellect (‘*aql*), which interprets the revelation.

3.10.4. *Wijdān* (conscience)

Wijdān (conscience) is one of the spiritual mechanisms in man, which comprise four main components, namely spiritual intellect (*fu’ād, laṭīfa-i Rabbaniyah*), willpower (*irādah*), consciousness (*zihn*) and the power of perceptiveness (*his*).

According to Nursi, *Wijdān* (conscience) is located at the junction of the unseen (*ghayb*) and the material (*shahādah*) realms. Thus it can be considered as ‘the senses of the spirit’, and it allows man to make contact with, and take an overview of, the unseen worlds through its components. On the other hand, additionally to all other functions, Nursi states that there is an ultimate purpose for each one of these components.

The ultimate purpose of willpower (*irādah*) is worshipping God; for the consciousness (*zihn*), it is having knowledge of God; for the power of perceptiveness (*his*) it is love of God; and for the spiritual intellect (*fu’ād, laṭīfa-i Rabbaniyah*) it is the vision of God.¹⁴¹

Nursi further discusses these functions, and concludes that what is called piety (*taqwā*) or the perfect form or degree of worship is only attainable through the functioning of conscience (*wijdān*). Through conscience (*wijdān*) and its components, man can acquire information about the knowledge of God. This knowledge is direct (coming not through any other mediator) and based on personal experiences and intuition. While conscience (*wijdān*) acquires this information, it can also influence the human intellect (‘*aql*).¹⁴²

It is, moreover, the only inner faculty which always proclaims the existence of God. In other words, the eye of the conscience (*wijdān*) is always open to reflect on the Divine Unity,

¹⁴¹ Nursi, Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri., 2: 1980.

¹⁴² Nursi, Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Sözlür, Mektubat, Lemalar, Şualar, 1: 1372; see also: Nursi, The Letters, 1994.

although human intellect (*'aql*) may be busy with judgements and reflections, and other such functions.

Nursi also develops another approach to elaborate on conscience (*wijdān*). He writes that there is a correlation between conscience (*wijdān*) and the Divine laws of nature, because both conscience (*wijdān*) and the natural or inborn qualities of things do not lie. He likens *wijdān* to the inclination in a seed to grow, the inclination in eggs to live or the inclination in water to expand while it freezes, even so much as to crack an iron container. Such inclinations manifest the commands of creation issuing from the Divine Will.¹⁴³

3.10.5. Anā (I)

According to Nursi, the concept of *anā* (I) is one critical key with which to solve the riddle of the creation and to arrive at the knowledge of God, because it adjusts the position of the individual before God, and also gives him the tools to understand not only himself but also the concept of God. Nursi points out:

As the key to the Divine Names, which are hidden treasures, the 'I' is also the key to the locked talisman of creation; it is a problem-solving riddle, a wondrous talisman. When its nature is known, the 'I', that strange riddle, that amazing talisman, is disclosed, and it also discloses the talisman of the universe and the treasures of the Necessary World.¹⁴⁴

Realisation of the unity in the universe is also related to the understanding of 'I' (*anā*):

“When its true nature and the purpose of its creation are known, as it is itself solved, so too will be the universe.”¹⁴⁵

Nursi also relates the way to know the attributes and Names of God to the concept 'I' (*anā*). Of course, this understanding determines the standpoint of an individual both towards himself and in front of God. The concept 'I' (*anā*) in relation to all other internal faculties is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁴³ Gülen, 'Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism: Emerald Hills of the Heart', 1: 226.

¹⁴⁴ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 376.

¹⁴⁵ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 558.

3.10.6. *Nafs* (Self)

Nursi defines self (*nafs*) as a mirror to the manifestation of Divine Oneness and the manifestation of the Eternally Besought One.¹⁴⁶ Owing to its function as a mirror, Nursi places the self (*nafs*) at the centre of man's constant struggle to achieve a true understanding of God and the universe. If self (*nafs*) is employed by all the other internal faculties, and especially by *anā*, as a mirror to reflect the names and attributes of God in the way defined by the Qur'ān and tradition (*Sunnah*), then man can rise to the level of certain belief.

The mirror metaphor is an important topic in the writings of Nursi. It helps to draw the distinction between other-indicative meaning (*ma'ná-yi ḥarfī*) and self-referential meaning (*ma'ná-yi ismī*). If the self (*nafs*) is realised by the 'I' (*anā*) as a mirror-like structure, it perceives the Divine Names in all the reflections that are in the mirror. If, however, 'I' (*anā*) looks at the mirror with its self-referential meaning then it attributes all the reflections in the mirror to itself. This interpretation results in ignorance, ingratitude and erroneous philosophy.

The concept of self (*nafs*) in relation to all the other faculties of man, and in the writings of Nursi, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

3.11. CONCLUSION

Nursi lived through three distinct periods of Turkish (and Ottoman) history, which influenced his thought. During the last few decades of the Ottoman Empire, he was mainly concerned with saving the falling empire. Nursi's thought had its first turning-point here. He committed himself to acquiring all the knowledge available to him so as to understand the Qur'ān and prove its truth. The Old Saīd period, which coincided with the last years of the Ottoman Empire, was Nursi's more politically active period. He was preoccupied with reform of the education system in order to prevent the collapse of the empire, and with other social issues. With the collapse of the Empire, Nursi turned to fight the materialist philosophy which was becoming the official ideology of the new Turkish Republic. It is clear in the *Risāle-i Nur* that there is a great shift towards Islamic Philosophy (*kalām*)-style refutation of atheism in pieces like *The Word*, *The Letters* and *The Flashes*, which were all written during the first

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

years of Kemalist Turkey. Nursi did not object to secularism, since he considered it a guarantee of freedom of faith; however, he was seriously concerned about materialism and its negative effects on the predominantly Muslim public. He developed a unique way in Islamic Philosophy (*kalām*), where he merged modern science and the traditional Islamic knowledge of the *medrese* to address the issue of doubts surrounding the Qur'ān. Unlike pieces like *Muḥākamāt*, and *Ishārāt al-I'jāz*, which addressed scholars, Nursi's writings in the New Saīd period were mainly aimed at the ordinary public. Nursi explained that every reader benefits from *Risāle-i Nur* according to his or her abilities. In general, he condemned philosophy on the basis that it did not submit to revelation. However, he also criticised some famous Muslim philosophers (*mutakallimūn*) such as *Ibn-i Sinā* and *Fārābi* on their judgements. It can be seen that Nursi's Islamic Philosophy (*kalām*) is more in line with that of *al-Ghazzālī*.

After the Second World War existentialism arose, and gained prominence in the West. In response to existentialism's effects, both on Western people and also globally, Nursi redesigned some of his arguments to counteract existentialism's attack on belief. Nevertheless, Nursi's philosophy is unique and stands on a Qur'ānic basis rather than being reactionary. Nursi describes one of its key elements in *Risale-i Nur* as its discussions and proofs that there is a heaven in this world for the people of faith and a hell in this world for the people of disbelief. Mental tranquillity and awareness may be some of the dynamics of heaven on this earth. So for Nursi, the discussion about self, self-interpretation and self-affirmation is closely related to belief (*īmān*) and the concept of God. The interpretation of these concepts by a believer and non-believer would be completely different.

In this study, it is recognised that the turbulent times also affected Nursi's spiritual development and his developing concepts. Nursi was an eminent Muslim scholar whose arguments were never defeated by anyone, as well as being an observant and pious person. He developed the idea of self (*nafs*) and 'I' (*anā*), besides many other subjects, and affected not only ordinary people but also advanced intellectual societies.

The concepts of self (*nafs*) and 'I' (*anā*), as Nursi developed them, and the relation between them, has a particular importance in his works, since he related these concepts and their relations to the concept of God and Divine knowledge.

Chapter 4

NAFS IN NURSI

4.1. EXPLANATION THROUGH METAPHOR AND ANALOGY

In his writings, Nursi explains spiritual notions through metaphors and analogies rather than imparting abstract knowledge, or a detailed description of self (*nafs*), or any other internal faculties such as heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūh*) and human intellect (*‘aql*). In this way he enables each individual to derive the conclusions best fitted for himself. In *Ayetül Kübra Risalesi*,¹ a fine example of Nursi’s method, the topic is explored through the experiences of a traveller, while Nursi invites readers to travel along with the explorer:

Since man has been created on the most excellent of patterns and has been given most comprehensive abilities, he has been cast into an arena of trial and examination in which he may rise or fall to stations, ranks, and degrees from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high, from the earth to the Divine Throne, and from minute particles to the sun. He has been sent to this world as a miracle of Divine Power, the result of creation, and a wonder of Divine art before whom have been opened two roads leading either to infinite ascent or infinite descent.²

Nursi believes that faith (*īmān*) is not only an intellectual concept but also a personal experience. In the Twenty-Sixth Letter, he refers to a discussion between Ibn ‘Arabī and Fakhr al-Din Razi, where Ibn ‘Arabī writes to Razi, “To know God is different to knowing that He exists.”³ Nursi asserts that Ibn ‘Arabī was reminding Razi that faith (*īmān*) is not an abstract thing which is gained only through knowledge. Subtle faculties other than reason also have their share in it. The knowledge is first processed

¹ Said Nursi, *The Rays, The Seventh Ray: Reflections on Islamic Belief, Thought, Worship, and Action*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Clifton, NJ: Tughra Books, 2010), 116–201.

² Said Nursi, *The Words : The Reconstruction of Islamic Belief and Thought*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Somerset, NJ: Light, 2005), 335.

³ Said Nursi, *The Letters: Epistles on Islamic Thought, Belief, and Life*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Somerset, NJ: The Light, 2007), 345–346.

by reason, then absorbed by other faculties such as spirit (*rūh*), inner heart (*qalb*) and soul (*nafs*).⁴

In addition, metaphorical expression is also one of the most frequently employed methods in Nursi's works. Nursi writes that this method is also frequently employed by the Qur'ān to make the book of Divine Guidance accessible to various different levels of understanding:

All praise be to God, distant truths were brought close through the telescope of the mystery of comparisons. Through the aspect of unity of the mystery of comparisons, truly disparate matters were collected together. Through the stairs of the mystery of comparisons, the highest truths were easily reached. Through the window of the mystery of comparisons, a certainty of belief in the truths of the Unseen and fundamentals of Islam was obtained close to the degree of witnessing (*ṣuhūd*). The intellect, as well as the imagination and fancy, and the soul and caprice, were compelled to submit, and Satan too was compelled to surrender his weapons.⁵

Nursi comments on the verse “Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs [in return] is the garden [of Paradise]”⁶ in the Sixth Word, which is dedicated to the concept of self (*nafs*).⁷ This verse does not directly define the concept of self (*nafs*), but Nursi still placed this verse at the centre of his discussion.

Nursi employs a metaphor to discuss the concept. In the metaphor, there was a king who entrusted two of his subjects with an estate each, including all necessary workshops, machinery, horses, weapons and so forth. But since it was such a

⁴ Nursi, *The Letters*, 2007, 345–346; see also Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 388–389.

⁵ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 434–435.

⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (9: 111).

⁷ Said Nursi, *The Words : The Reconstruction of Islamic Belief and Thought*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Somerset, NJ: Light, 2005).

turbulent, war-ridden age, it was not possible for them to retain these objects. So they were destined either to disappear or to change. Because the king had infinite mercy, he sent a most noble lieutenant to suggest to the two men:

Sell me the property you now hold in trust, so that I may keep it for you. Let it not be destroyed for no purpose. After the wars are over, I will return it to you in a better condition than before. I will regard the trust as your property and pay you a high price for it. As for the machinery and the tools in the workshop, they will be used in my name and at my workbench. But the price and the fee for their use shall be increased a thousand fold. You will receive all the profit that accrues.⁸

The king said, further, that the men would not be able to manage these great tasks in the way they should be managed, and so the only way to benefit was to sell all to him.⁹ Nursi interprets the metaphor and the symbols in it thus:

As for the king, he is the Monarch of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, your Sustainer and Creator. The estates, machinery, tools and scales are your possessions while in life's fold; your body, spirit and heart within those possessions, and your outward and inward senses such as the eye and the tongue, intelligence and imagination. As for the most noble lieutenant, it is the Noble Messenger of God; and the most wise decree is the Wise Qur'an.¹⁰

He interprets the word self (*nafs*), in the verse, as the totality of the human being, which consists of the inner and outer faculties of man. Man can use all his faculties either to know God and understand the purpose of creation to achieve perfection or just to enjoy worldly pleasures as proposed by the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*).

⁸ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 36.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Nursi further discusses the differences between the two accounts through clear examples. The eye is one of the senses, a subtle faculty, which might be considered as a window. The spirit looks out through this window to this world. If man does not employ the human eye to attain the Divine Knowledge, the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) employs it to present a handful of transient, impermanent beauties and scenes. It will sink to the level of being a pander to lust and the concupiscent soul. On the other hand, if the human eye is employed in the name of the eye-Maker, who designed all different eyes, the human eye will rise to the rank of a reader of the great book of being, a witness to the miracles of dominical art, a blessed bee sucking on the blossoms of mercy in the garden of this globe.¹¹ On the one hand, it is a transitory tool, which works for the evil-commanding soul to obtain bodily pleasures. On the other, it is a thousand-times-more-meaningful, fine, subtle faculty for obtaining the Divine knowledge.¹²

Yet another example is the tongue, the sense of taste. If it is not engaged with understanding its Wise Creator, the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) employs it for the sake of personal satisfaction. Again the tongue becomes a piece of flesh, which enjoys food and drink to entertain man's body. In this state, where it is commanded by the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), it will only be like a watchman or a guard. But if the tongue is employed to distinguish the tastes in order to understand the Generous Provider and the manifestations of His Names and Attributes, then it will rise to the rank of a skilled overseer of the treasuries of Divine compassion, a grateful inspector in the kitchens of God's eternal power.¹³ In this second account, in respect of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*), it can achieve the status of a person who is occupied with fine tasks such as art and science. In the

¹¹ Ibid., 37.

¹² Ibid., 38.

¹³ Ibid.

following part of this chapter, where the reality of the human being is investigated, the employment of these senses will be discussed with regard to the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) and the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*).

The third example concerns human intellect (*'aql*). If man does not employ it to obtain the Divine knowledge, human intellect (*'aql*) will become a poor and impotent tool that will burden man with all the sorrows of the past and with terrifying fears about the future. It will descend to the rank of a discouraging and destructive tool. But if it is employed as a key to open the talisman of the Universe and unlock the infinite treasures of compassion and the vaults of wisdom that creation contains, it will thus rise to being a dominical guide preparing its owner for eternal bliss.¹⁴

Nursi invites the human intellect (*'aql*) to compare both accounts in each example regarding the senses of man, the human eye, the human tongue and the reason, and see the differences between a tool of destruction and the key with which to unlock the secrets of all being:

And look carefully, O eye! See the difference between an abominable pander and the learned overseer of the Divine library! And taste well, O tongue! See the difference between a stable doorkeeper or a factory watchman and the superintendent of the treasury of God's mercy!¹⁵

Nursi discusses the concept of self (*nafs*) via the same approach, mentioned above, that he takes with the three examples. He believes that the compartments of the self (*nafs*), namely evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

nafs al-lawwāmah) and the tranquil *nafs* (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*), and their subtle faculties, have two aspects and can be considered in two accounts.¹⁶

As discussed above, according to Nursi, if the senses and subtle faculties are not employed in the name of God to attain the Divine Knowledge, they are employed by evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). Nursi takes this as an example of the concept of ‘wrongdoing’ (*ẓulm-u nafs*), which was discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁷

Gülen (1938–) is an important contemporary Muslim scholar who is an expert on *Risale-i Nur* and Sufism. Gülen’s definition of self (*nafs*) is similar to that in *Risale-i Nur*. One of Gülen’s books, *Sufism*, is used as a secondary source in this study. In it Gülen defines the self (*nafs*) as

a substance that is essentially free of matter but which is in close connection with it in its acts and functions; it is the origin or essence of something or its self and it is a transformable, reformable, and refinable mechanism connected to human corporeality.¹⁸

According to Gülen:

The soul has a constant, experienced connection between the body and the spirit. It is through this connection that humans receive, recognize, and distinguish their outer and inner sense-perceptions and go beyond the corporeal realm into metaphysical worlds.¹⁹

¹⁶ These three terms are Qur’ānic in origin. For example, *nafs al-ammārah* appears in Q (12: 53), *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* comes in Q. (75: 2), and *nafs al-muṭmainnah* is mentioned in Q. (89: 27).

¹⁷ See: p. 61.

¹⁸ M. Fethullah. Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism: Emerald Hills of the Heart*, trans. Ali. Unal, vol. 3 (Somerset, NJ: Tughra, 2009), 216.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Gülen writes that there is a connection between body and spirit, which transmits their revenues to each other continuously. Gülen explains this relation as being just like the seas and the earth continuously exchanging currents of water through vaporisation and rains.²⁰ According to him, self (*nafs*) is a ground on which the physical and spiritual faculties of man are united. The nature (*fiṭrah*) of the self (*nafs*) can also be explained in the light of this verse:

We have indeed created man in the best of moulds, Then do We abase him [to be] the lowest of the low, Except such as believe and do righteous deeds: For they shall have a reward unailing.²¹

There are two paths for man. He is capable of falling to the lowest of the low, as well as rising to the highest of the high, perfection. The difference between the two paths lies in employing the faculties of the self (*nafs*) either for evil or for good. Gülen's understanding of the *nafs*, mentioned above, is a positive case. Gülen further writes that only this (positive) continuous connection can provide the highest level of certain belief (*haqq al-yaqīn*).²² This subject will be discussed in greater depth in the following parts of this chapter.

Certain belief is achieved through a true relation between the outer and inner faculties in man. Man cannot reach and explore the highest level of certain belief and submission without the bodily senses, since knowledge is only abstract without the body and cannot be experienced. However, experience provides certainty to belief.²³ This is the way to possess the Divine Knowledge. The relation between body and

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (95: 4–6).

²² Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*, 3: 219.

²³ Ibid.

spirit is necessary for a true understanding of the manifestation of Divine Names and Attributes.²⁴

Another important dimension of the discussion concerns the difference in quality of the existence of the Absolute Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) and the existence of the contingent being. This is discussed in depth in Chapter 2, on Sufism.²⁵ Although the existence of things is not comparable with the Divine quality, things still have existence (*wujūd*) for, if things did not exist or have existence (*wujūd*), the discussion would be ontologically problematic: some Divine Names and Attributes, such as ‘All Generous Provider’ (*Razzāq*) and ‘Absolute Creator’ (*Khāliq*), could not be manifested.²⁶

The first aspect of the external existence of things is related to the God concept, as explained above. However, its other aspect looks to the engagement of man with the Divine knowledge. For man cannot understand the manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes at a certain level without there being the external existence (*wujūd*) of man and things. The Divine Name ‘All Generous Provider’ (*Razzāq*), among many other requirements, can be fully understood and appreciated through personal experience. For man, it is impossible to fully understand the taste of honey without tasting it.²⁷ In addition, this critical argument emphasises the importance of the relation between body and spirit in possessing certain belief, and also points to the main difference between men and angels. Angels can only reflect the Divine Names

²⁴ Ibid, 218.

²⁵ See: p. 92.

²⁶ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 62.

²⁷ Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*, 3: 228.

and Attributes without experiencing them. However, man is the perfect mirror for reflecting the Divine names and Attributes, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2.²⁸

4.2. THE COMPARTMENTALISATION OF *NAFS*

In Classical Sufism, there are a number of different stages of potential perfection for the self (*nafs*). Self (*Nafs*) moves ever closer to God, or alienates itself from the reality of its own nature (*fitrah*), by negotiating the different compartments or different stages, namely evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-mut'mainnah*). It is further said that these changeable situations depend on the inward dimensions such as heart (*qalb*), secret (*sirr*), spirit (*rūh*) and human intellect (*'aql*).²⁹

The self (*nafs*) has been discussed in terms of these compartments, namely plant, animal and human soul, since Aristotle.³⁰ For this reason, Islamic philosophy (*kalām*) was heavily influenced by Aristotelian categorisation, and the same terminology is employed in its literature. However, Nursi, for the first time, adds another dimension to these categories of compartmentalisation of the self (*nafs*). Nursi keeps those three categories, but adds one more dimension which he calls 'belief soul' (*nafs-i imānī*).³¹ As explained above, Nursi considers the things through two accounts, namely their self-referential meaning and their other-indicative meaning. The fourth compartmentalisation appears in considering the second aspect of the first three compartments. In other words, it is to consider plant, animal and human soul in respect of the Divine Knowledge concept. Therefore, through the four

²⁸ See p. 86.

²⁹ See 'Second Remark of 23th Word' in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 338.

³⁰ See: p. 5.

³¹ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 289.

compartmentalisations of the self (*nafs*), the self (*nafs*) can be examined under these four compartmentalisations, namely plant, animal, human, and the sphere of belief.

In addition, Aymaz explains the dynamics of these spheres, as follows. He argues that the plant sphere covers bodily needs such as drinking, eating and sleeping.³² The animal sphere covers instincts and feelings such as lusts, anger, or the instinct to defend oneself. These two spheres are reactionist and hence do not behave radically, but only with feelings and instincts. The third sphere is the human, which covers notions such as wisdom, conscience and other inner faculties. The last sphere of self (*nafs*) is belief, with which man can go beyond himself and reach his true potential to be the perfect man.³³ The sphere of belief is only realised by employing all the instruments of self (*nafs*) or the faculties of the three spheres with respect to the Divine Knowledge.

4.3. TWO ASPECTS OF THE *NAFS*

In Nursi's understanding of the universe there are two important concepts, namely other-indicative meaning (*ma 'ná-yi ḥarfī*) and self-referential meaning (*ma 'ná-yi ismī*). These two notions have been introduced in detail in Chapter 3.³⁴ For Nursi, the universe resembles a cosmic book:

The creatures in it are its words. These words should be viewed only on their Inscraper's behalf, for their primary function is to serve as messages of the Lord manifesting His All-Beautiful Names. Considering creatures on behalf of themselves causes ignorance, ingratitude and erroneous philosophy, while considering them on behalf of their Inscraper is the origin of knowledge, belief and wisdom.³⁵

³² This topic was discussed with A. Aymaz in an interview conducted in January 2011.

³³ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 289.

³⁴ See: p. 168.

³⁵ See 'The-Sided Vision of Said Nursi: Towards a Spiritual Architecture of the Risale-i Nur' by Colin Turner in: Abu-Rabi, *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I*

Nursi emphasises that the first aspect looks at itself; it is called self-referential meaning (*ma 'ná-yi ismī*).³⁶ However, the other aspect looks at its Creator rather than at itself, and is called other-indicative meaning (*ma 'ná-yi ḥarfī*).³⁷ As was highlighted above, the concept of belief is to consider things with respect to their Creator first. According to Nursi, a true understanding of the attributes and names of God depends on a true interpretation of the universe, which is only made possible by considering all creatures through their other-indicative meaning rather than their self-referential meaning. This is also the first step towards understanding the purification of the self (*nafs*) in Nursi. In the following section, two aspects of the self (*nafs*) will be discussed in detail with respect to their relevant frame.

In the meantime, it is important to emphasise that Nursi considers two accounts of Western philosophy. In the first, it is inspired by true Christianity and follows the sciences. It serves justice and right, and the industries beneficial for the life of society through inspiration.³⁸ However, in the second it claims that there is no God and that all the sciences, and scientific developments, are the purpose of life.³⁹ This second account of Western philosophy is interested in the material aspect of the universe only. There is no room for the God concept in the materialistic interpretation of the universe. Nursi challenges this second account.

4.3.1. The self-referential meaning of the self (*nafs*)

If the three spheres of self (*nafs*), plant, animal and human soul are considered in respect of their self-referential meaning, then they are seen to be limited to their own

Nur, 37.

³⁶ Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed*, 97.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 160.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

spheres. Such a consideration means to make a connection between each sphere and its specific functions only. In that case, plant soul will be only a supplier for bodily needs, the animal soul will only be expressed as instincts and feelings, and the human soul will only incorporate notions such as wisdom, conscience and others. All bodily and spiritual instruments will be considered according to their contributions to man's worldly life. They will not have any aspect other than their self-referential meaning.

They are also all interconnected and affected by each other. In any given day, man has a variety of different psychological and physical needs, such as for food, sleep, security, or for being good to others. Nursi writes that man's experience reaches out to all the different spheres in every twenty-four-hour period.⁴⁰

Even though man is considered a moral being, he feels strong pressure from the plant and animal soul, which are not easy to manage. In modern psychology as developed by the German psychiatrist Groddeck, plant and animal soul are considered the child portion of the self (*nafs*). This is called the *id*.⁴¹ Freud suggests a theory for taking the subject further. He considers three notions, *id*, *ego* and *super ego*. The super ego represents the moral part of the self and the ego is a mediator. According to this theory, the ego maintains the balance between the plant and the animal soul within the human soul.⁴²

If the three spheres of self (*nafs*) are illustrated according to the self-referential meaning **using** the examples of the Sixth Word, their frames may be much clearer. There were three examples from man's self: the human intellect, the eye and the

⁴⁰ Nursi, Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light, 289.

⁴¹ Georg Walther Groddeck, The Book of the It (New York: International Universities Press, 1976).

⁴² Freud, The Ego and the Id, 33.

tongue. The eye and the tongue may be considered as belonging to the same group as the examples of the plant and animal soul. They both represent bodily needs rather than spiritual. The self-referential meaning of the eye is as an operator for a handful of transient, impermanent beauties and scenes.⁴³ The tongue is an operative worker for the sake of the stomach. It becomes a piece of flesh, which enjoys food and drink so as to entertain man's body.⁴⁴ The human intellect (*'aql*) becomes a poor and impotent tool that burdens man's weak person with all the sad sorrows of the past and terrifying fears for the future. It descends to the rank of a discouraging and destructive tool.⁴⁵

4.3.2. Other-indicative meaning of the *nafs*

Compared to the self-referential meaning, Nursi writes, the other-indicative meaning will provide a comprehensive understanding of things, because it is not only considering things with respect to their Creator but also providing a better understanding of the universe. The Divine unity in the universe can only be explained through the Divine Oneness of the Creator. In this case, the relation or harmony between things in the universe can be explained. Otherwise, there would have been chaos; as the Qur'ān says: "If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: [High is He] above what they attribute to Him!"⁴⁶

The examples in the Sixth Word provide a clear understanding of how Nursi conceptualises the differences between the two accounts. If the human reason is considered according to its other-indicative meaning, it becomes a key with which to open the hidden messages in the universe. The human eye is a window with which to

⁴³ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 37.

⁴⁴ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (21: 22).

see the Divine arts and to read the Divine Names and Attributes on them. This attitude takes man to the upper levels of belief.⁴⁷ Moreover, if the tongue tastes in order to distinguish tastes so as to understand the Generous Provider, the tongue will rise to the rank of a skilled overseer of the treasuries of Divine compassion, a grateful inspector in the kitchens of God's eternal power.⁴⁸

Nursi considers man to be the conscious fruit of the tree of creation.⁴⁹ Furthermore, according to Nursi, man has comprehensive abilities and inner faculties with which to understand and experience all the Divine Names manifested in the universe.⁵⁰ As a result of such an arrangement, most of the wisdom, aims, purposes and benefits in the universe look to man.

The purification path for each one of these spheres is separate and unique to it. For example, while eating, the affected compartment of self (*nafs*) is the plant soul. Nursi argues that although the process of purification is realised in any one of those four spheres, it will impact on them all as they are all interconnected.⁵¹

In Nursi's path to achieve purification, realisation of all these spheres is important. Man begins his life in the spheres of plant and animal and in time develops the sphere of the human as well. If man cannot develop the sphere of belief, he can think that humanity is restricted to existing in only the human, plant and animal spheres. This can lead to a man living for only his own benefit and seeing all creation in accordance with its specific benefit to him. Nursi gives the example of a man living in only the spheres of plant and animal exchanging a fragrant flower for the planet Venus,

⁴⁷ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 582.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 289.

because he would be content with what is of little value to him rather than what is the true value as being.⁵²

4.3.3. al-Nafs al-Ammārah

Throughout Islamic history, scholars have discussed evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) in Islamic literature. When Sufis discussed the levels of the self (*nafs*), they gave evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) the lowest ranking.⁵³ It is the evil commander, or source of evil things in man; hence it requires purification (*tazkiya*) of the self.⁵⁴

Nursi gives the example of three abilities of man as being limitless; these are wisdom, anger and lust or desire.⁵⁵ According to Nursi, the potentials of these abilities should be maintained or moderated so that they stay in a middle way, such that they are not excessive or neglected. Because such abilities are limitless, they all tend to reach their own (limitless) potential. For example, the drive of lust would cause desire for any food just for the sake of its taste, without considering issues of health or anything else, and so it should be moderated by willpower so that it stays in a middle way. If it is not moderated, the sphere of plant soul (*nafs*) extends and takes over the others. Benefits related to the sphere of plant soul (*nafs*) become the driving force in life. Just as the power of lust is related to the sphere of plant soul (*nafs*), the power of anger can be likened to the sphere of animal soul (*nafs*) and the power of wisdom to the sphere of human soul (*nafs*).⁵⁶ If other internal faculties such as willpower moderate all these abilities, the sphere of belief becomes the major element in the self (*nafs*).

⁵² Abdullah Aymaz, 'Personal Interview' (Frankfurt, 2011).

⁵³ William C Chittick, *Sufism a Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 58.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 290–298.

⁵⁶ Said Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness: The Inimitability of the Qur'an's Conciseness*, trans. Sükran Vahide, vol. 6, *Risale-I Nur Collection* (Istanbul: Sözlere Nesriyat, 2007), 29–30.

If man cannot moderate his abilities to bring them to a middle way, then the spheres of plant soul (*nafs*) and animal soul (*nafs*) become the major elements governing the behaviour of all the faculties. Such a man is described as being at the level of evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). Thus it can be seen that the term ‘self’ (*nafs*) is used for both the level of certain belief and the personality of man at the same time.

These spheres (plant and animal soul), which, if left unchecked, can provoke the self (*nafs*) to command evil, are still vital for purification (*tazkiya*) of the *nafs* (self). Nursi employs a metaphor to explain the relationship between the compartments of self (*nafs*) in man. He likens man to a palace and the inhabitants of the palace to certain external and internal facets of the human being.⁵⁷ In a vision, Nursi sees that at the doors of some of these palaces there were gatherings aimed at attracting and entertaining people. In such palaces the doorkeeper and the dog were acting as directors in the absence of the lord. Because of the decline in the morals of the inhabitants and the lord of the palace, important duties were abandoned and people had taken degraded roles at the door. Describing the vision further Nursi mentions another palace where a faithful dog is stretched out at the door and a firm and quiet doorkeeper stands in front. When Nursi goes into the palace to explore, he realises that the people of the second palace are all busy with refined duties, fine arts and beautiful embroideries. On the top floor, the lord of the palace is also busy with his own attainments and progress.

Nursi explains all the symbols in the story thus:

⁵⁷ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 330.

The people of the palaces were the subtle faculties in man like the eyes, ears, *qalb*, secret, *rūḥ*, '*aql*, and things like the *nafs* and caprice, and powers of lust and anger. Each of man's faculties has a different duty of worship, and different pleasures and pains. The *nafs* and caprice and powers of lust and anger are like the doorkeeper and the dog. Thus, to make the elevated subtle faculties subject to the *nafs* and caprice and make them forget their fundamental duties are certainly decline and not progress.⁵⁸

It is important to make a distinction between self (*nafs*) and evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). If the plant and animal self (*nafs*) are not moderated, they tend to govern all other faculties of man and degrade the man to the level of evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). This can be likened to the role of the doorkeeper and the dog in the first palace. Nursi uses the term 'self' (*nafs*) in decoding the symbols of the doorkeeper and the dog, but in the case of the first palace he means evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) because of the roles the doorkeeper and the dog have. With the second palace, the term 'self' (*nafs*) is used again for the doorkeeper and the dog, but it resembles the moderated condition of all the abilities and the powers, so that all the other faculties can focus on their own duties. This ultimately leads to a certain level of belief and perfection. In sum, Nursi, in his metaphorical approach, describes the relation between the plant and animal spheres of self (*nafs*) and the sphere of belief as the relation between the lord of a palace and the doorkeeper and the dog.

For Nursi, evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) and progress are both closely related to the interpretation of man's true potential and the powers within. Nursi describes progress as the occupation of all the inner faculties (heart (*qalb*), human intellect ('*aql*), spirit (*rūḥ*), imagination (*khayāl*), etc.) with the particular duty of worship, which is worthy of it. Similarly, decline means plunging into worldly

⁵⁸ Nursi, *The Rays* at 685. See also 'The Twenty-Third Word', in Nursi, *The Words* at 330–331.

caprices and dedicating all the potentials of the subtle inner faculties to the satisfaction of the desires of evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*).

In that sense, Nursi sees man as a seed, which has the potential to grow into a luminous tree with all the inner faculties being its branches. This is only possible, he claims, if the seed is watered by Islam, has the light of belief, and is in the soil of worship and servitude to God, conforming to the commands of the Qur'ān. Such a path will turn man's faculties towards their true aims. On the other hand, if all its capabilities and potentials are wasted on paths other than their true aims, the seed is bound to decay and decompose.⁵⁹ These three arguments become Nursi's five practices in his purification method; they can be considered as water–*Islām* (religion), light–belief (*imān*) and soil–worship (*'ubūdiyyah*), counted as the essentials needed for the seed to be grown. This is discussed below.

Nursi concludes his ideas about the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) as follows:

The evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) is transformed into the self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) or the tranquil soul (*nafs al-mut'mainnah*), and it hands over its weapons and equipment to the nerves. Then the nerves and veins of temperament perform its function till the end of life. Although the person's evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) long beforehand, his nerves are still apparent.⁶⁰

This transformation of self (*nafs*) is related to its dynamic structure and is applicable to all individuals. Nursi adds that some great saints and holy men have complained, in the history of Islam, about their evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*); however, their souls (*nafs*) were tranquil and their hearts (*qalb*) were completely

⁵⁹ Nursi, *The Rays*, 2004, 330–331.

⁶⁰ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 387.

sound and illuminated. The issue was not about the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), but the soul's functions that had been handed over to their nerves. Their complaints were not from the heart, Nursi writes, but from the imagination.⁶¹

This is why Nursi writes, “O my *al-nafs al-ammārah*, worship whomever you wish and claim whatever you wish. As for me, I worship only Him who has created me and subjected to me everything that exists (other than Him).”⁶² The concept of man's abilities being limitless is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

4.4. COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE *NAFS* IN NURSI'S TEACHINGS

Sūrat al-Shams is one of the shortest *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān, which, though brief, is an important group of verses for understanding the relationship between God, man and the universe. Nursi interprets *Sūrat al-Shams* (the first seven verses) with a focus on the seventh verse to further explore the comprehensiveness of self (*nafs*). The first seven verses of the *Sūrat al-Shams* are:

By the sun and its glorious splendour; By the moon as it follows it; By the day as it shows [the sun's] glory; By the night as it conceals it; By the firmament and its wonderful structure; By the earth and its wide expanse; By the *nafs* and the order and proportion given it.⁶³

Verse seven in *al-Sūrah al-Shams* uses the term ‘self’ (*nafs*), but while Nursi explores the meaning of this term he interprets it as the totality of man, which includes man's life and all his faculties.

⁶¹ Nursi, *The Letters*, 2007, 343.

⁶² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 331–332.

⁶³ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 156.

Nursi considers and defines the reality of the self (*nafs*), as a mirror to the manifestation of Divine Oneness and the manifestation of the Eternally Besought One.⁶⁴ He places self (*nafs*) at the centre of man's ability to grasp the true understanding of God and the Universe. To further clarify the concept of self (*nafs*), Nursi asks several questions: what the purposes of its life are, what its nature is, what the form of man's life is, what the true meaning of the self (*nafs*) is, and what its (*nafs*) perfection and happiness are.⁶⁵

4.4.1. Purposes of *Nafs*

Since man possesses faculties and abilities in order to reflect and understand the Divine Names and Attributes manifested in the entire creation, he is like a point of focus displaying all the names in his mirror-like essence, thus proclaiming God's Oneness. Nursi asserts nine purposes of self (*nafs*):

- *The first purpose* is to understand, taste and evaluate the bounties and the treasuries of the Divine Mercy through the functions, inner faculties and senses, so as to be able to offer thanks to God.
- *The second purpose* is to know the hidden Divine Names by using all the abilities and faculties inherent in man.
- *The third purpose* is to be able to display and announce the manifestations of the Divine Names which are attached to the self (*nafs*).
- *The fourth purpose* is to proclaim worship of the Creator's dominicality both verbally and through disposition.

⁶⁴ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (91: 1–7).

⁶⁵ See 'The Eleventh Word', in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 141.

- *The fifth purpose* is to display and announce the manifestations of the Divine Names before God and to appear in the observant view of the Pre-Eternal Witness.
- *The sixth purpose* is to be able to understand and witness all living creatures' worship, salutations and glorifications of God through reflection.
- *The seventh purpose* is “through taking as units of measurement the small samples of attributes like the partial knowledge, power, and will given to man's life ... to know through those measures the absolute attributes and sacred qualities of the All-Glorious Creator. For example, since, through partial power, knowledge, and will, man has made a house in well-ordered fashion, he should know that the Maker of the palace of the world is its Disposer, and Powerful, Knowing, and Wise to the degree it is greater than his house.”
- *The eighth purpose* is to be able to grasp the Divine Oneness and the Dominicality of God in the particular expressions of the creatures in the universe.
- *The ninth purpose* “is to understand through impotence and weakness, poverty and need, the degrees of the Divine power and dominical riches. Just as the pleasure and degrees and varieties of food are understood through the degrees of hunger and the sorts of need, so man should understand the degrees of the infinite Divine power and riches through man's infinite impotence and poverty.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ See ‘The Eleventh Word’ in: Said Nursi, *The Words : The Reconstruction of Islamic Belief and Thought*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Somerset, NJ: Light, 2005), 141.

Man, Nursi writes, should consider his self (*nafs*) as being a ground with which to realise these nine purposes. Also, understanding of all the topics is only possible through understanding the fundamentals of self (*nafs*).

4.4.2. Consideration of the Meanings of the *self* (*nafs*) in Different Aspects in Nursi

Nursi discusses the self (*nafs*) through different aspects such as ‘the nature of the self (*nafs*)’, ‘the position of the Self (*nafs*) in the entire creation’, ‘the True or the Deep Meaning of the Self (*nafs*)’, and ‘the Ultimate goal of the Self (*nafs*)’.

Nursi considers the nature of the self (*nafs*) an ‘index’ of the Divine Names⁶⁷ because the *nafs* is the only mirror which possesses all the manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes, albeit in a very limited form and different quality.⁶⁸ Nursi further elevates the discussion when he writes that God creates the human eye to open man to the sight-concept and to make him realise the absolute Divine Sight.⁶⁹ In relation to the eye and its functions in man, Rabbani also argues that God does not need an eye to see.⁷⁰ Therefore, man can be considered an index through such manifestations. According to Nursi, self (*nafs*) is also a ‘scale’ for measuring the Divine attributes in order to make comparisons and to understand Divine attributes.

This analogy represents a means of understanding how man is also a ‘balance’ of the worlds within the universe and a ‘list’ of the mighty world. Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussions of the perfect man may help us to understand how man is a balance of the worlds. As was discussed in the chapter on Sufism, Ibn ‘Arabī writes that man is the only mirror

⁶⁷ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 140.

⁶⁸ For the word ‘thermometer’ see *ibid.*, 555. See also Chapter 5, p. 234.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁰ İsa Çelik, ‘İmam Rabbani Perspektifinden İbnul Arabiye Tendidi Bir Yaklaşım’, *Tasavvuf | İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi (İbnü’l – Arabî Özel Sayısı – 2)*, no. 23 (2009): 163.

reflecting the four realms other than the visible world (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*). This accords him a unique position, which is the balance between the worlds and realms.⁷¹ Man is also a ‘map’ of the cosmos and a ‘summary’ of the vast book of the universe, and a ‘bunch of keys’ with which to open the hidden treasures of Divine power. Consequently, man is the most comprehensive mirror with which to understand the Divine Qualities.⁷²

4.4.3. The True Meaning of *Nafs* and its Perfection

Nursi considers the things through their other-indicative aspect at first in order to explain their real meanings. He draws attention to the *ḥadīth* “I was a hidden treasure; to be known I created the universe”. Ibn ‘Arabī interprets this hadith as meaning “I created the universe to reflect my Beautiful Names and Attributes on it”.⁷³ As is emphasised above, self (*nafs*) has a unique position in creation. It is considered the most comprehensive mirror for reflecting all the Divine Names and Attributes.⁷⁴ According to Nursi, every single self (*nafs*) is a unique inscribed (*ahadī*) word in a letter of the entire creation. It has unique (*ahadī*) wisdom, written by the pen of power.⁷⁵ The self (*nafs*) reflects all the Divine Names and Attributes in unique (*aḥādī*) form at once.⁷⁶ This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Nursi explains the true perfection of the self (*nafs*) and its happiness in relation to its having a true understanding of itself and the nature of the universe. Examining the relation between man, God and the universe is likened by Nursi to a riddle or

⁷¹ See Chapter 2, p. 83.

⁷² See Chapter 2, p. 86.

⁷³ See Chapter 2, p. 83.

⁷⁴ Nursi, From the Risale-I Nur Collection. 6, Signs of Miraculousness, 6: 23–24.

⁷⁵ Nursi, The Words, 2005, 140.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

talisman.⁷⁷ According to Nursi, this relation is realised by the notion of ‘I’ (*anā*), which is given as a key to man so that he can solve this riddle. If the true nature of ‘I’ (*anā*) is understood, man can solve the riddle of the universe and read the cosmic text, and also explore the treasures of the Necessary World (*al-‘ālam al-wujub*) by ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*).⁷⁸ The self (*nafs*) and the universe are read through the notion of ‘I’ (*anā*) like a cosmic text and are ultimately interpreted into the knowledge of God. The relation between the concept of self (*nafs*) and the notion ‘I’ (*anā*) will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In Sufism, this relation is indicated in the *ḥadīth* “He who knows his self (*nafs*) knows God”.⁷⁹

Another *ḥadīth* indicates the comprehensiveness of the self (*nafs*) and its happiness: “The heavens and the earth contain me not; yet, how strange! I am contained in the hearts of believers.” Nursi writes that happiness is to

perceive the lights of the Pre-Eternal Sun which are depicted in the mirror of the *nafs*, and to love them. It is to display ardor for Him as a conscious being. It is to pass beyond yourself with love of Him. It is to establish the reflection of His light in the centre of your heart.⁸⁰

4.5. THE PURIFICATION OF SELF (*NAFS*) IN NURSI

In Nursi’s view, man’s self (*nafs*) is the most comprehensive mirror-like essence in the universe. In addition, men also have specific abilities, which are given to them not only to reflect the Divine Names and Attributes but also to help them understand and interpret their meanings.

⁷⁷ Ajluni, *Kashf Al-Khafa*, II: 2532.

⁷⁸ See ‘The Thirtieth Word’, in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 558.

⁷⁹ M. Fethullan Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism: Emerald Hills of the Heart*, 4 vols (Somerset, Nj: Light, 3, 2007), 253.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

As was discussed earlier, the drives of man are unrestricted and therefore there are numerous possible spiritual conditions. This is also emphasised in the Qur'ānic verse which reads, “We have indeed created man in the best of moulds, Then do We abase him [to be] the lowest of the low”.⁸¹ The ultimate reason for the drives of man being unrestricted is the infinitude of the Divine Names and Attributes of God.

The important feature of the purification method of Nursi is its suitability for man in the modern era, because one who follows Nursi's method of purification will not be alienated from the modern era and its conditions. Also, practising Nursi's method is, he claims, easy and logical. However, it is important here to indicate that the ultimate goal of the purification of self (*nafs*) is unchanged. It should not be understood that Nursi has developed a method which only presents a summary or a part of the reality.

Nursi writes:

I have seen in the Qur'an one way leading to the truth without any such initiation, and another way leading to the attainment of desired (religious) science without studying instrumental sciences (such as logic, mathematics, and methodology). The all-embracing Divine Mercy is expected to grant the children of the present time – a time flowing too fast – a short, yet safe, way.⁸²

Nursi further states that there truly are numerous ways leading to Almighty God, and these are taken from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Some of them are shorter, safer and more general than others.⁸³

Nursi offers another metaphor to explain the differences between the methods of purification of the self (*nafs*). This metaphor concerns the sun and its reflections on

⁸¹ See 'The Eleventh Word', in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 141.

⁸² Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (95: 4–5).

⁸³ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 295.

three different objects and the differences between them. The objects are a flower, a droplet and a translucent atom.⁸⁴ In Nursi's metaphor they indicate three major groups: a flower indicates the path of intellectual thought, which is premised on human intellect (*'aql*); a droplet indicates the path of sainthood, which uses heart (*qalb*); and a translucent atom indicates the path of prophethood, which uses human intellect (*'aql*) and heart (*qalb*) together. They have two different associations with the sun, direct and indirect. Direct association enlightens all three of them. The first relation, which is direct, points to the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. However, the second is indirect and each object can benefit from this in accordance with its capacities and abilities. Here, only the metaphor of the translucent atom (*rashḥah*), which indicates Nursi's purification method, will be discussed.

According to Nursi, the translucent atom is “a direct mirror to the Sun. At whatever degree you are, you will find an opening, a window, looking purely at the Sun itself in a fashion that affords absolute certainty.”⁸⁵ Also, the atom has a window through which the sun is seen, irrespective of the level of its self (*nafs*). On the other hand, the flower and the droplet cannot reflect the sun directly, but only through their colours and structures. For example, the flower's colours arise from the seven colours in the Sun's light.

As was stated above, following the path of Prophethood is symbolised by the metaphor of the translucent atom. In this method, purification of the *nafs* depends on purifying heart (*qalb*) and human intellect (*'aql*). These notions are the basic dimensions of Nursi's purification method.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ See 'The Twenty Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 491.

⁸⁵ See 'The Twenty-Fourth Word', in *Ibid.*, 345.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 349.

First of all, it is not possible to understand any concept comprehensively without using the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* as primary sources. In other words, the comprehensive explanation of the Qur'ān cannot be imitated by the human mind. Even a saint who has penetrated to the inner dimensions of existence, or an illuminated philosopher who sees the inner side of things, or a purified scholar seeing into the Unseen, cannot comprehend the absolute truth with his limited abilities, but only can figure out one aspect of it. Nursi gives an example to explain this reality. Assume, he writes, that there are several diving groups who are gathering treasures from the sea floor. One group finds a large diamond, another finds ornaments, and others find a round ruby and a square piece of amber. Each group supposes that the treasure is limited to what they have found. Therefore, they are not able to comprehend the totality of the treasure. Their comments will not maintain balance and proportionality concerning the reality of the treasure.

Nursi further writes:

The Qur'an is also a diver – but a diver with an open eye that sees the whole treasure and describes it exactly as it is, without going to extremes, neglecting anything, or destroying the balance and proportion among its parts. For example, it contains whatever is necessary to describe God Almighty's Grandeur.⁸⁷

The Qur'ān and the Prophet Muhammad are primary and direct sources for the knowledge of reality. Nursi uses a metaphor to explain the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān and the Prophet. There are two ways to enlighten a dark house or its garden covered by a roof. The first is by holding up a mirror which receives sunlight and directs the sunlight to the darker regions, but it can only light as much as its capacity allows. The other way is to open broad windows at the top of the house or in the roof

⁸⁷ Ibid. 349.

over the garden so as to directly expose it to the sun in the sky.⁸⁸ Just as opening windows to shed light is superior to, and incomparably more powerful than, using mirrors, so the comprehensiveness and clarity of the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* is superior to other sources of reality. This is why Nursi insisted on developing his method of purification of the self (*nafs*) on the basis of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*.

The works of Gülen entitled ‘Sufism’ are important resources which discuss purifying the heart (*qalb*) and human intellect (‘*aql*) and the method of Nursi. Gülen, one of the foremost contemporary commentators on *Risale-i Nur*, discusses Nursi’s ideas about Sufism in terms of a comparison with the other Sufi traditions.⁸⁹

Nursi’s method for purifying the self (*nafs*) is based on four notions: impotence (‘*ajz*), poverty (*faqr*), compassion (*shafaqah*) and reflection (*tafakkur*).⁹⁰ According to Nursi, these four notions are grounded in the interpretation of certain belief, which is defined as “the true affirmation of Divine unity”,⁹¹ and true worship, in the light of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. The following sections discuss these notions in turn.

4.5.1. Impotence (‘*ajz*), poverty (*faqr*)

As underlined above, the process of Nursi’s purification method is different from the processes defined by other Sufi traditions. It is a method to realise, through certain belief and true worship, the perfect man, whose potential is hidden in the self (*nafs*) just as the potential tree is hidden in the seed:

⁸⁸ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri: Seedbed of the Light*, 188–89.

⁸⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005.

⁹⁰ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*. See also 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 491.

⁹¹ Nursi, *The Words*, 'The Twenty-Second Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 299–300.

If he listens with the ear of his heart to the lessons in belief from the tongue of the Qur'an and raises his head and turns towards unity, he may rise through the ascension of worship to the throne of perfections. He may become an eternal man.⁹²

Nursi emphasises the importance of affirmation of the Divine Unity and explains the two kinds. The first is superficial and common affirmation, which is a simple acceptance of Almighty God, who has no partner or like and whose universe this is.⁹³ The second is the true affirmation of Divine unity, which is “through seeing on everything the stamp of His power, the seal of His dominicality, and the inscriptions of His pen”.⁹⁴ Nursi further describes the true affirmation as follows:

To open a window directly onto His light from everything and to confirm and believe with almost the certainty of seeing it that everything emerges from the hand of His power and that in no way has He any partner or assistant in His Godhead or in His dominicality or in His sovereignty, and thus to attain to a sort of perpetual awareness of the Divine presence.⁹⁵

The concept of ‘I’ (*anā*) is another dimension, which is closely related to reading the universe as a cosmic text and the true affirmation of Divine Unity. Nursi explains this by saying, “Rend the ‘I’ (*anā*) in your self (*nafs*) and show Him.”

This statement needs to be understood in a correct way, since, according to Nursi, ‘I’ (*anā*) has two aspects. These two aspects are differentiated in respect of other-indicative (*mana-i harfī*) and self-indicative meanings (*mana-i ismī*). If ‘I’ (*anā*) is considered in respect of its self-referential meaning, then man looks at himself and sees no meaning other than his own, but if it is considered in respect of its other-indicative meaning, ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*) solve or disclose the talisman

⁹² Ibid., 344–350.

⁹³ Ibid., 299–300.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ See 'The Twelve Word', in Ibid., 147.

of the universe and the knowledge of the Necessary World (*al-alam al-wujud*).⁹⁶ This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Through affirmation of Divine Unity, man realises that not only he himself but also other creatures are the ‘manifestations’ of All-Compassionate (*Al-Raḥīm*) Divine Names and Attributes of God. This means that whatever he has as his matter or spiritual possessions, it is all a form of shadow of the Divine Names and Attributes. Man realises that all his possessions and his surroundings are nothing but indicators of the Divine Names and Attributes: “Through its impotence, weakness, poverty, and need, my life acts as a mirror to the power, strength, wealth, and mercy of the creator of life. Not only human beings, but all creatures act as mirrors to the Maker’s power and riches through their impotence and poverty.”⁹⁷ This is why man has limitless impotence and poverty before God. However, this is not a negative condition for man (self (*nafs*)); on the contrary, it is the way to know the reality of God and the reality of man. According to Nursi, ‘I’ (*anā*) can grasp the reality of its nature, which has limitless impotence and poverty. Finally, he writes, “Rend the ‘I’ (*anā*) in your self (*nafs*) and show Him.”⁹⁸

Understanding the true nature of worship is another crucial point in Nursi’s method of purification of the self (*nafs*). After ‘I’ (*anā*) has disclosed its true nature through its other-indicative meaning, it recognises itself as a worshipper and a being totally dependent on God. The concept of worship should be considered carefully, since it has been violated over time and has been isolated from its deeper meaning and reduced to ritual only. Nursi means, by the term ‘worship’, “to realize the Greatness

⁹⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 564.

⁹⁷ Abu-Rabi, *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’s Risale-I Nur*, 10.

⁹⁸ ‘The Twenty-Fourth Word’, in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 369.

of God and also manage man's position before him". It is also closely related to the true understanding of the terms 'impotence' and 'poverty':

Just as the darkness of the night is a perfect mirror for displaying electric light, so man's vast impotence and poverty have the reverse function of allowing man to act as an extensive mirror to the innumerable manifestations of the All-powerful and Compassionate One Whose power is infinite, the All-Generous and Rich One whose wealth is boundless.⁹⁹

As was explained above, the true affirmation of Divine unity, impotence and poverty, and true worship, are like circles within each other. It should also be noted that the rituals of worship are vitally important as a means of understanding the position of man before God, not in their violated or reduced forms, but in their comprehensive structure. Once man understands the true meaning of worship and certain belief through impotence and poverty, he can further purify his self (*nafs*).

4.5.2. Compassion (*Shafaqah*)

For Nursi, compassion (*shafaqah*) is one of four carefully selected notions derived from the Qur'ān. The notions should also be considered in relation to the true affirmation of Divine unity and true worship in Nursi's works. They should be understood with the same logic and with the processing of the 'I' (*anā*) on the face of the universe. So, according to Nursi, the notion of compassion can lead the self (*nafs*) to the name of All-Compassionate (*al-Rahīm*), which is a Divine Name, and Nursi witnesses (*al-mushāhada*) a great compassion in the whole of the universe.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Abu-Rabi, *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 491.

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the Divine manifestations in the universe establish the relationship between God and man. Man can attain knowledge of God through reading the universe as a cosmic text. Also, through the notion of ‘I’ (*anā*), man can realise the compassion manifested in the universe. After achieving this first step, man should also experience compassion through ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*). This step consists of exploring “the treasures of the Necessary World” opened up by the experiences of ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*). As is discussed in Chapter 5,¹⁰¹ one of the instructions of the line of Prophethood and Religion is to “be distinguished by God-given morals and turn towards God Almighty with humility recognizing your impotence, poverty, and defectiveness, and so be a slave in His presence”.¹⁰² Following these instructions and relying on the mercy of the All-Compassionate One is in accord with the interpretation of ‘I’ (*anā*) with its other-indicative meaning.

Nursi compares the notion of compassion with the notion of ecstatic love. As was stated in the chapter on Sufism, ecstatic love is an important notion with which to understand the God concept in Sufism in respect of His Names and Attributes. It was commonly employed by famous Sufis such as Sirhindi, whom Nursi mentions and cites in the *Risale-i Nur* collection.¹⁰³

This is an interesting comparison, because the notion of ecstatic love is presented by the classical Sufis as the more comprehensive notion among the Divine Names and Attributes in terms of elucidating the God concept. However, Nursi asserts that the notion of compassion is the most comprehensive. Nursi claims that the notion of compassion has superiority over the notion of love.

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 5, p. 224.

¹⁰² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 564.

¹⁰³ See 'The Eighth Letter', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 133–134.

There are two examples in the Qur'ān from *Sūrat al-Yūsuf* which can be compared to discern the differences in this respect between the discourses of Sirhindi and Nursi.¹⁰⁴ The first is the intense and brilliant emotion that the Prophet Jacob felt for Joseph. Imam Sirhindi considers this emotion in the circle of love notion, but does not consider worldly love. He makes a distinction between ecstatic love and worldly love, since the latter is not fitting for the rank of prophethood. Thus, he gives the further explanation that Jacob's love for Joseph is not of a worldly kind such that it would have been defective, since his virtues pertained to the hereafter.¹⁰⁵

Nursi criticised Rabbani's explanation of the intense and brilliant emotion the Prophet Jacob felt for Joseph. He draws attention to the second example from *Sūrat al-Yusuf*, which concerns the intense and strong emotion Zulaikha felt for Joseph. Nursi writes that this strong and intense emotion is to indicate the notion of love, whereas the relation between Jacob and Joseph indicates the notion of compassion, rather than the notion of love. Nursi asserts the superiority of compassion over love using three arguments. Firstly:

compassion is gentle and pure, whereas many sorts of love and passion are beneath one's dignity. Secondly, compassion is open and embracing, whereas passion and love either restricts its gaze to its beloved and sacrifices everything for it, or so elevates it that it denigrates everything else. And thirdly, compassion is sincere and pure and wants nothing in return, whereas passionate love wants remuneration.

It is presumably for these reasons that Nursi considers compassion to be a swifter and broader path.

¹⁰⁴ See 'The Eighth Letter', in Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 48–49.

¹⁰⁵ Ahmad Sirhindī, *Mektûbât-I Rabbânî*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Erhan Yayınları, n.d.), 1562–1564.

The notion of compassion is sourced from the heart (*qalb*), and the notion of reflection is sourced from human intellect (*'aql*). Nursi underlines the importance of the mutual development of heart (*qalb*) and human intellect (*'aql*) and writes: “the light of the mind is science, the light of the heart *qalb* is religion so combining both causes the manifestation of the reality; separating them from each other, the mind goes to positivism while the heart goes to bigotry”.¹⁰⁶ Once man has a true understanding of compassion, his heart (*qalb*) will start to function in a direction that will lead him on the path to purify his self (*nafs*).

According to Nursi, the major dynamic for purifying the heart (*qalb*) is through the notion of compassion, and the dynamic for developing human intellect (*'aql*) is through the notion of reflection. Nursi writes that the *Risale-i Nur* collection has the manifestations of both the Divine Names, All-Compassionate and All-Wise.¹⁰⁷

4.5.3. Reflection (*Tafakkur*)

Reflective thought, or reflection,¹⁰⁸ is the last notion Nursi describes as a method of purifying the self (*nafs*). The notion ‘wisdom’ should also be considered in respect of the true affirmation of Divine unity and true worship in Nursi’s works, but the true affirmation of Divine unity occupies a foreground position.

¹⁰⁶ Said Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Digerleri.*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Yeni Asya Yayinlari, 1995), 1956.

¹⁰⁷ See 'The Fourth Letter', in Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 37–38.

¹⁰⁸ Reflection in the writings of Nursi is closely related to wisdom. The original word is ‘*tafakkur*’, which means reflection through wisdom. For this reason, to avoid any confusion due to the limitations of the translation, the words ‘reflection’ and ‘wisdom’ will be used as synonyms, and to replace each other.

In the universe, Nursi writes, some of the Divine Name and Attributes are understood at first glance, but some of them, which are concerned with ‘the treasures of the Necessary World’, require a deeper understanding of the universe and knowledge. The Divine wisdom has a very special place among all the Names and Attributes. For example, the Attribute of compassion can be truly understood and interpreted if the universe is examined carefully. Once a careful observation is made of the universe, the relations between the tree and its fruit, or the mother and her baby, or, all in all, the relations of man to the universe, all reflect the notion of compassion. This observation, and revealing of the notion of compassion in all the relations in the universe, comes only through reflection and wisdom.

The Attribute of wisdom at times requires an even more careful and focused observation or reflection. For example, Nursi writes, if the design of a tree and its relation to its environment and its needs are considered, the Attribute of wisdom can be understood to a degree. A single tree is closely related to the rest of the universe through its needs and requirements. The water for a tree is supplied through the atmosphere, and its minerals are provided to it through the earth, and the earth is balanced in the solar system with the moon, etc. All in all, every element in the universe is interconnected by a Grand Design. Seeing the Divine wisdom in all creation at all times is not as easy. This is why the Qur’ān says, “and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing”.¹⁰⁹ So seeing it is called “a benefit overflowing”.

Nursi uses a metaphor about why God created the universe. In the Eleventh Word, he gives the example of an imaginary king¹¹⁰ who builds a huge palace to view and also

¹⁰⁹ Quran (2: 269).

¹¹⁰ See also ‘The Eleventh Word’, in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 133–134.

exhibit his magnificence and his arts and unique skills. The king invites people to the palace for a great banquet, but some respect his magnificent arts and unique skills while others do not. In the Twelfth Word, Nursi uses another metaphor for a similar issue: a renowned ruler who was both religious and a fine craftsman wanted to write the All-Wise Qur'ān in a script worthy of the sacredness in its meaning and the miraculousness in its words, so he wrote a unique Qur'ān with great arts and expensive gems. Thereupon, he invites two men, one of whom is a non-Muslim philosopher and the other a Muslim scholar. The renowned ruler asks both of them to write a book to introduce the written Qur'ān. The non-Muslim philosopher writes a book, but he does not mention the meanings because he does not know Arabic, but just mentions the beautiful arts and expensive gems. However, the other man, who is a Muslim scholar, writes his book and explains the meaning in detail and does not mention the arts and gems. The second man is awarded the prize by the ruler.¹¹¹

The reality of the metaphor is that the Qur'ān written with the magnificent arts and expensive gems is the universe. The non-Muslim philosopher examined it through its physical conditions, but the Muslim scholar wrote a book which indicated the sacred truths and lights of the mysteries beneath the veil of the decorations; he wrote a truly fine commentary.

As is emphasised through the metaphor, wisdom lies in being able to read the universe as a cosmic book and attain knowledge of God. Nursi, in one of his works called *Ayāt al-Kubrā*, travels the universe from an atom to the huge planets and concludes that there is no place for polytheism in the universe. He adds that, after having written *Ayetül Kübra*, he had succeeded in capturing the meaning of the *ḥadīth*:

¹¹¹ See 'The Twelve Word', in *Ibid.*, 143–144.

“an hour’s reflection is better than a year’s (supererogatory) worship.” According to Nursi, belief is not an abstract issue, but a personal experience.

4.5.4. Five Practices in Nursi’s Method

Nursi, in his short path, advises his followers to maintain five religious practices: the practices of the Prophet Muhammad, performing the religious obligations, giving up serious sins, performing the prescribed prayers correctly and with attention, and saying recitations after the daily prayers (*tasbiḥāt*) after the prescribed prayers.¹¹² These practices have an important role in his way of purifying the self (*nafs*).

- *Practices of the Prophet Muhammad*

Nursi defines the *Sunnah* as the best means of understanding true worship and achieving certain belief. For Muslims all over the globe, the *Sunnah* should be considered as the attempt to be like the Prophet, but it should not be limited to actions only. The meaning or the motivation of all the actions and behaviour of the Prophet should also be understood and reflected on. Such an understanding of the *Sunnah* would lead to a true understanding of worship and certain belief. Nursi writes, in reference to the comment of Sirhindi: “While traversing the degrees in my spiritual journeying, I saw the most brilliant, splendid, subtle, and sound among the levels of the splendid to be those who took to following the Practices of the Prophet.”¹¹³

- *Performing the Religious Obligations and Giving Up Serious Sins*

Nursi gives the performing of religious obligations and giving up serious sins a central role in his path to purify the self (*nafs*).¹¹⁴ This might be due to an

¹¹² See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in *Ibid.*, 491–492.

¹¹³ Said Nursi, *The Gleams: Reflections on Qur’anic Wisdom and Spirituality*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (Somerset, NJ: Tughra Books, 2008), 64.

¹¹⁴ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 491–492.

understanding that the inner faculties of man, which would be used to purify the self (*nafs*), can only flourish and be functional by performing religious obligations and giving up serious sins.¹¹⁵ It is again possible to conclude from such a statement that Nursi centres his method on the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*.

- *Perform the Prescribed Prayers Correctly*

Performing the prescribed prayers with attention is the basic dynamic in the lives of Muslims. When the Qur'ān identifies the believers at the very beginning of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, the second distinctive characteristic is emphasised with mention of those “who ... are steadfast in prayer”.¹¹⁶ Also, the Prophet Muhammad underlines the importance of the prescribed prayers in hundreds of *ḥadīths*.

Nursi also points out the importance of the prescribed prayers in several parts of his work. In one of his letters to the students of *Risale-i Nur*, he explains the importance of the prescribed prayers in achieving true sincerity. He writes that he has taken two lessons to achieve sincerity. The first was from the Prophet Muhammad's conduct in the battle of *Badr*, when he performed the prescribed prayer on time with the congregation (*al-jamāa*); the second was from the fourth Caliph, Ali, who paid tremendous attention to performing the prescribed prayers in great submission to God.¹¹⁷ As can be seen, both lessons about achieving true sincerity are concerned with performing the prescribed prayers.

Nursi offers a further explanation regarding the reality of the prescribed prayers and their unique functions for man's spiritual life. He writes:

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 338.

¹¹⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (2: 3).

¹¹⁷ See: Nursi, *From the Risale-I Nur Collection*. 6, Signs of Miraculousness, 6: 51. Vahide.

It is an elevated link, a lofty relationship between the bondsman and the pre-eternal monarch, and an honourable act of service, it is characteristic of this relationship that it captivates the spirit... The *salat* perpetuates on the heart the idea of the maker's sublimity and makes the mind conscious of it as to induce obedience to the divine laws of justice and compliance with the dominical order of things. Man is in need of this because he is human and because he is by nature civilized.¹¹⁸

It should be noted that Nursi never considers performing the prescribed prayers as a physical ritual alone, but only as a part of one's belief. In the Eleventh Word, there is an explanation about the importance of the prescribed prayers for man to build the right relation between him and the universe. The prescribed prayers provide and balance this relation.

- *Saying 'Recitations after the Daily Prayers' (Tasbiḥāt) after Prescribed Prayers*

The last ritual of the five is 'the recitations after the daily prayers' (*tasbiḥāt*), which is the regular practice of the Prophet Muhammad after the prescribed prayers. Saying 'recitations after the daily prayers' (*tasbiḥāt*) can be simplified to giving glorification, exaltation and praise to God. These are like the seeds of the prayers¹¹⁹ and are directly related to the knowledge of God. This is one of the reasons why 'recitations after the daily prayers' (*tasbiḥāt*) is important in the path to purify the self (*nafs*).

2.3.5. BASIC STEPS IN APPLICATION OF NURSI'S PURIFICATION METHOD IN EACH COMPARTMENT OF SELF (NAFS)

Nursi discusses his purification methods through the four notions, namely impotence ('*ajz*), poverty (*faqr*), compassion (*shafaqah*) and reflection (*tafakkur*).¹²⁰ He also

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ See Vahide 'The Ninth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 52.

¹²⁰ See 'Twenty sixth Word' in: Ibid., 494.

suggested five practices.¹²¹ Additionally, Nursi proposes four steps with which to apply his purification method to the concept of self (*nafs*). Through these steps, Nursi displays what is behind the curtain or purification process in detail, since each of the basic application steps of his purification method is related to the different compartments of the self (*nafs*). For example, in the first two steps Nursi addresses the plant and animal soul, the third step is connected with the human soul, and the final step is related to the other-indicative meanings of the first three souls, which Nursi calls ‘belief soul’ (*al-nafs al-imānī*).¹²² In fact, the fourth step may be considered the major difference between Nursi and classic considerations of the concept of the self (*nafs*).

In the following discussion of the steps, the crucial point is to recognise that each compartment of self (*nafs*), plant, animal and human soul, has two aspects as was explained above, namely the self-referential meaning (*ma ‘ná-yi ismī*) and the other-indicative meaning (*ma ‘ná-yi ḥarfī*).¹²³ Therefore, the main strategy of Nursi’s purification method is to recognise the difference between the two aspects and to employ the inner and outer faculties of each soul to realise the Divine Knowledge in each step. In other words, it is a method for attaining the Divine knowledge by experiencing the abstract knowledge via the inner and outer faculties of self (*nafs*).

In each step, it can be seen how Nursi’s four notions, impotence (*‘ajz*), poverty (*faqr*), compassion (*shafaqah*) and reflection (*tafakkur*), form the main frame of the purification process of the specific compartment such as plant soul, animal soul, etc.

- *First Step*

¹²¹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005.

¹²² Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 289.

¹²³ See Chapter 4, p. 168.

Nursi points to the first step of his proposed purification method through the meaning of the verse “not to justify your self (*nafs*)”,¹²⁴ or, as he writes, “For on account of his nature and innate disposition man (self (*nafs*) which is the totality of man) loves himself before anything else and only himself”.¹²⁵ The important question is why man loves himself before anything else. Nursi gives a further explanation concerning this question in the Twenty-Fourth Word. He writes:

Your intense love for yourself and your soul is love for the Divine Essence which you misuse and spend on your own self. In which case, rend the egotism in your soul and show Him. All your loves dispersed through the universe are love given to you to spend on His Names and attributes. You have used it wrongly and you are suffering the penalty.¹²⁶

The differentiating factors are the other-indicative meaning and the self-referential meaning. If self (*nafs*) interprets love with the self-referential meaning, it assumes that all names and attributes manifested in itself are derived from itself; however, they are not.

On the other hand, considering the self (*nafs*) as a mirror-like essence and understanding its other-indicative meanings can lead man to the right path. Nursi writes that in that case, man can consider his self (*nafs*) as a comprehensive mirror for displaying the divine Names and Attributes leading to the knowledge of God. In other words, the man who differentiates the other-indicative meaning of the plant and animal soul attains Divine knowledge through the inner and outer faculties in these two compartments.

¹²⁴ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (53: 32).

¹²⁵ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 379.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

If man considers his self (*nafs*) as the source of those perfections, “he sacrifices everything other than himself to his own soul. He praises himself in a manner befitting some object of worship and also does not see his faults and justifies them.”¹²⁷ The Qur’ān defines the ultimate mentality of such a man in the verse “Who takes as his god his own desires”.¹²⁸

The remedy of the self (*nafs*) is given in another verse: “Therefore, do not justify yourselves”.¹²⁹ It suggests not justifying the faulty understanding of the self (*nafs*). Nursi also writes:

[The] [e]ssential nature of man is kneaded out of fault, deficiency, poverty, and impotence, and like the relative degree of darkness and obscurity shows the brightness of light, with regard to opposites, you act as a mirror through them to the perfection, beauty, power, and mercy of the Beauteous.¹³⁰

It should be understood that the faulty and impotent nature of man does not indicate that man lacks any ability, but highlights the fact that his impotence and poverty give man the potential to reflect the Divine Names and Attributes as they should be reflected. Thus, his purification and cleansing in this step is not to purify but to absolve and accept himself as faulty, deficient, impotent and poor.

- *Second Step*

Nursi highlights a key word, ‘forgetting’, in the second step. He refers to the verse “And be not like those who forget God, and He therefore makes them forget their own selves”¹³¹ in further explaining the second step.

¹²⁷ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 492.

¹²⁸ The Quran (25: 43).

¹²⁹ The Quran (53: 32).

¹³⁰ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 492.

¹³¹ The Quran (59: 19).

The phrase “those who forget God” in the verse points to the man who considers his plant and animal souls with their self-referential meaning, and maintains that all the abilities that he has are derived from himself alone. He would not regard himself as subject to death or any misfortune. Therefore, he forgets his true nature, puts pleasures at the centre of his life and steers clear of any duties or responsibilities.¹³² “He (God) therefore makes them forget their own selves” in a way points to such a state of man.

On the other hand, if man considers his self (*nafs*) as a mirror-like essence for reflecting the Divine Names and Attributes, he will forget about his self (*nafs*) when it comes to evil desires, but be mindful of it when it comes to death and service. This will ultimately lead man to be aware that he is vulnerable, impotent and poor, and also that he has a duty of worship.¹³³

- *Third step*

The third step is derived from the verse “Whatever good happens to you is from God, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself (self (*nafs*))”.¹³⁴ In this step, Nursi addresses the human soul rather than the plant and animal soul. Since the human being is the only conscious creature in the visible realm, he thus realises the other-indicative aspect of the things around him. As is highlighted in the Twenty-Third Word, man can be considered in two accounts, which are ‘good and existence’ and ‘evil and non-existence’.¹³⁵ If man is considered in relation to the account of good and existence, his abilities are limited by his power. On the other hand, in the account of

¹³² See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 492.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ The Qur’ān (57: 22).

¹³⁵ See, 'The Twenty-third Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 335.

evil or non-existence, man can destroy in a day a huge building which has been built in a hundred days by a hundred workers.¹³⁶ It is obvious that man's potential to do evil and lead to non-existence is much greater than his potential to do good and lead to existence.

Man's potential to do good is not related to him alone: there are many other factors. Nursi gives the example of a garden to further explain this topic. He argues that the garden would only be alive and in good condition if all the workers performed their duties. However, if just one of the workers did not perform his or her duties, then the garden would dry up and the flowers would die.¹³⁷ In the same way, the good in the universe comes into existence only through all the factors being apparent and together. Man can consider himself as only one factor among many.

By contrast, if non-existence or evil is considered, just one man not performing his duties would be enough to initiate it. That is why, as is highlighted by the verse "Whatever good happens to you is from God, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself (self (*nafs*))", man should give thanks instead of being conceited, and offer praise instead of boasting.¹³⁸

Nursi concludes the third step with the remedy "Truly he succeeds who purifies it".¹³⁹ His purification at this stage is to know his perfection to lie in his imperfection, his power in his impotence, and his wealth in his poverty.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Nursi, Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü'l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Digerleri., 2: 1382.

¹³⁸ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, The Words, 2005, 492–493.

¹³⁹ Ali, The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary (91: 9).

¹⁴⁰ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, The Words, 2005, 493.

As regards the previous three steps, the inner and outer faculties, which are concluded by the self (*nafs*), have been discussed in the early part of this chapter.¹⁴¹ Therefore, Nursi suggests distinguishing the two aspects of the inner and outer faculties of each soul to attain the Divine knowledge. In the next step, Nursi's main focus is on discussing the eternity concept and also the share of man with respect to eternity.

- *Fourth Step*

Under the previous step in Nursi's development method, the verse "Everything will perish save His countenance"¹⁴² was discussed. Nursi writes that the verse can be considered in two different perspectives:

According to the apparent meaning of things (the self-referential meaning), which looks to each thing itself, everything is transitory, lacking, accidental, non-existent. But according to the meaning that signifies something other than itself (other-indicative meaning) and in respect of each thing being a mirror to the All-Glorious Maker's Names and charged with various duties, each is a witness, it is witnessed, and it is existent.¹⁴³

The purification of a man in this stage comes through his understanding that "in his existence he is non-existent, and in his non-existence he has existence."¹⁴⁴ That is to say, if he values himself and attributes existence to himself, he is in a darkness of non-existence as great as the universe."¹⁴⁵ If man considers himself in the account of other-indicative meaning and also gives up the misunderstood 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*), then "he gains all beings and an infinite existence. For he who finds the Necessary

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 4, p. 167.

¹⁴² Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (28: 88).

¹⁴³ See 'The Twenty-Sixth Word', in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 493.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ See '26th Words' in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 493.

Existent One, the manifestation of Whose Names all beings manifest, finds everything.”¹⁴⁶

2.3.6. Comparison between the path of Nursi and Classical Sufism

At the end of The Twenty-Sixth Word, in an addendum, Nursi explains his unique Qur’anic approach to the spiritual development of man. His path “consists not of ten steps like the ‘ten subtle faculties’ of some of the Sufi orders (*ṭarīqah*) employing silent recollection, nor of seven stages like the ‘seven self (*nafs*)’ of those practising public recitation, but of four steps. It is reality, rather than a Sufi path (*ṭarīqah*). It is ‘the way of Qur’an and the Tradition (*sharia* ‘ and *Sunnah*)’.”¹⁴⁷

In addition to explaining the differences between his own purification method and those of others through a metaphor employing a flower, a droplet and a translucent atom,¹⁴⁸ Nursi calls his method “the Companions’ sainthood”,¹⁴⁹ which is based on the legacy of prophethood. As was argued above, it is realised by employing human intellect (‘*aql*) and heart (*qalb*) together, rather than human intellect (‘*aql*) or heart (*qalb*) only. It passes directly from the apparent to reality without travelling the intermediate path, and looks to the unfolding of divine immediacy. It is very short, and extremely elevated.¹⁵⁰ However, the second is the classic way of sainthood, which is achieved by the spiritual journey. They have to traverse the intermediate realm of the Sufi path.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 493.

¹⁴⁷ See ‘26th Word’ in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 493.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

There is a key phrase, ‘unfolding of divine immediacy’, with which to understand the major difference between Nursi’s method and others. Nursi explains the ‘unfolding of divine immediacy’ via a metaphor:

For example, the sun is near to us, for its light and heat are present in the mirror we are holding. But we are far from it. If we perceive its immediacy from the point of view of luminosity, and understand our relation to its reflection in our mirror, which is a similitude; if we come to know it by that means and know what its light, heat, and totality are, its immediacy is unfolded to us and we recognize it as close to us and we become connected to it.

Nursi considers the inner and outer faculties as the reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes through the notion of ‘I’ (*anā*), which is discussed in Chapter 5. He ascribes those manifestations to God directly, like the reflections on the mirror, which belongs to the sun rather than the mirror in the metaphor. This is the ‘unfolding of divine immediacy’ according to Nursi. However, he further discusses the classic Sufi method in the following part of the metaphor:

If we want to draw near to it and get to know it in respect of our distance from it, we are compelled to embark on an extensive journeying in the mind, so that by means of thought and the laws of science we can rise to the skies in the mind and conceive of the sun there, and through lengthy scientific investigation understand its light and heat and the seven colours in its light.¹⁵²

It proceeds mostly on the basis of proximity, and traversing numerous degrees in spiritual journeying is necessary.

With all the arguments discussed above, it may be concluded that impotence (‘*ajz*’) and poverty (*faqr*) are the tools with which to realise the qualitative difference between God and man as resembling the difference between the sun and its reflections

¹⁵² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 345–351.

on the mirrors. Reflection (*tafakkur*) is related to the human intellect (*'aql*), and compassion (*shafaqah*) to the heart (*qalb*). They are the central qualities man needs to understand his position in the universe and before God. Once this position is fixed, purification of the self (*nafs*) is begun.

4.6. SUMMARY

According to Nursi, the self (*nafs*) is one of the key concepts with which to understand the Divine Concept. He discusses abstract concepts through metaphors such as self (*nafs*), human intellect (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*rūh*). This is why Nursi elaborates on the subject using tangible metaphors, so that individuals can aim to achieve the most fitting conclusions for themselves.

Nursi claims that, in very general terms, the self (*nafs*) includes the totality of the outward and inward senses of man, including the body, spirit and heart within those possessions. In Nursi's purification of the self (*nafs*), there are two tools but three major paths for understanding the Divine concept. Human intellect (*'Aql*) and heart (*qalb*) are these tools.¹⁵³ The paths are Islamic philosophy (*kalam*), achieved through human intellect (*'aql*), Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), practised through spiritual experiences by the heart (*qalb*), and the path of Prophethood (*Nubuwwah*), realised through reason, human intellect (*'aql*), and heart (*qalb*) together. Thus Nursi asserts that his suggested path is included in the third way, which is the way to obtain the highest level of understanding of the Divine concept, because it is achieved through the alliance of the eye of the heart (*qalb*) and the eye of the human intellect (*'aql*) together.

Since the time of Aristotle, the self (*nafs*) has been categorised into three compartments, namely plant, animal and human soul. However, Nursi considers the

¹⁵³ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 345–351.

concept of self (*nafs*) in four compartments rather than three. Nursi suggests one more compartment called the belief soul (*al-nafs al-imānī*).¹⁵⁴ This new dimension of the self (*nafs*) only emerges with a new interpretation of things, which is only made possible by considering all things through their other-indicative meaning rather than through their self-referential meaning alone.

Nursi explains his understanding of the concept of self (*nafs*) via a new interpretation of the universe. In other words, all outward and inward subtle faculties included by the three compartments of self (*nafs*) have two aspects. In the first account, there is an engagement with the material aspect of the things. The other aspect of the subtle faculties is engaged with their immaterial aspect, which looks to the concept of the Divine Knowledge. This level of *nafs* is considered representative of the certain level of belief (*al-haqq al-yaqīn*). In other words, according to Nursi, this level of certain belief (*al-haqq al-yaqīn*) is only achieved by experiencing the abstract knowledge through those subtle faculties.

Nursi also elaborates on the relations between the three souls (*nafs*) in the Qur'ānic categorisation, namely evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*), using the same method. He asserts that self (*nafs*) is like a double-edged sword, so when the three compartments of the soul, plant, animal and human soul, are considered through the self-referential meaning, they are directed to worldly pleasures and are alienated from their reality. He who follows this path is considered to be at the level of the evil-commanding self (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). However, through the other-indicative meaning, the three compartments are directed to understanding the real meaning or

¹⁵⁴ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 289.

aspect of the things in the universe. He who follows this path is considered to be at the level of tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*).

Nursi is in agreement with other Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabī and Al-Ghazzālī, such that he considers and defines the reality of the self (*nafs*) as a mirror to the manifestation of Divine Oneness and the manifestation of the Eternally Besought One. Nursi puts in order the nine purposes of the self (*nafs*). The main focus of the purposes is concentrated on endeavouring to understand the hidden Divine Qualities through the functions, the inward and outward faculties of the self (*nafs*), and also to display and announce the manifestations of the Divine Names, which are attached to the self (*nafs*). The human being alone succeeds in displaying and announcing the manifestations, since the human being is the only conscious being in the visible realm.

Man is the mirror, because there is a qualitative difference between the Divine Qualities and their reflections on the self (*nafs*). Nursi asserts that impotence and poverty are the two major qualities of human beings wherewith to realise the qualitative difference between the Divine quality and the human being. However, both impotence and poverty are necessary qualities for the human being in helping him to understand the degrees of the Divine power and dominical riches, since man is only able to understand the degrees of the infinite Divine power and riches through man’s infinite impotence and poverty.

On the other hand, man is a comprehensive mirror for reflecting all the Divine names and attributes or Divine qualities. Therefore, Nursi presents the self (*nafs*) as an index of the Divine Names, a scale for measuring the Divine attributes, and a ‘bunch of keys’ with which to open the hidden treasures of Divine power. He also considers the self (*nafs*) as a ‘balance’ of the worlds within the universe and a ‘list’ of the mighty world, a ‘map’ of the cosmos and a ‘summary’ of the vast book of the universe. Consequently, man is the most comprehensive mirror for understanding the Divine Qualities.

In addition, the concept of perfect man is another main focus of Nursi. He is mostly in agreement with mainstream Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers. However, the (only) important difference between Nursi and other Sufis concerns the concept of the Supreme and Transcendent Unity of the Divinity (*al-aḥadiyah*). According to Nursi, this means that every single self (*nafs*), and also every single creature in the universe, is a mirror for reflecting the Divine Names and Attributes, but in unique (*aḥadī*) form within the visible world, just like a word in a letter of the entire creation. This is the aspect which looks to the wisdom of the creation of the self (*nafs*). The other aspect looks to the true perfection of the self (*nafs*) and its happiness, so that self (*nafs*) is the only conscious mirror in the entire creation; its happiness depends on the realisation of a true understanding of itself and on reading itself and the entire creation as a cosmic text which introduces the Divine concepts through His qualities, names and attributes. Man realises that he is the unique mirror in the entire creation for reflecting all the Divine Qualities.

According to Nursi, purification of the self (*nafs*) is achieved through the heart (*qalb*) and the human intellect (‘*aql*). His suggested path is based on four notions, namely impotence (‘*ajz*), poverty (*faqr*), compassion (*shafaqah*) and reflection (*tafakkur*). Impotence (‘*ajz*) and poverty (*faqr*) serve to realise the qualitative difference between God and man. Reflection (*tafakkur*) can be matched with the human intellect (‘*aql*), while compassion (*shafaqah*) can be matched with the heart (*qalb*).

Nursi calls deep Divine Qualities ‘hidden treasures’. They are abstract concepts, which can only be realised through deeper reflection on things, which have the manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes. On the other hand, Nursi compares the notions of love and compassion; he thinks that compassion is the most comprehensive quality of the heart with which to understand the Divine Qualities. In Nursi’s path, there are five religious practices: tradition (*Sunnah*), performing the religious obligations (*fard*), giving up serious sins (*tark al-kabāir*), performing the

prescribed prayers correctly (*iqāmah al-ṣalāh*), and saying ‘recitations after the daily prayers’ (*tasbiḥāt*) after prescribed prayers.

There are some similarities and differences between Nursi’s suggested path and other paths. Consequently, it might be said that he combines the personal experiences of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) and the Sufi path (*tarīqah*) with the knowledge of the religious school (*madrasah*). In other words, Nursi did not discover new notions in Sufism, but discussed the existing notions systematically and in detail.

Chapter 5

CONCEPT OF *ANĀ*

Philosophers, scientists and theologians have written extensively on self-knowledge and have also tried to unravel the dynamics of an individual's connection with the spiritual or, ultimately, with God. This connection appears to be a critical path in understanding the secrets of the self. The questions and problems associated with the self and understanding of one self have become more obvious since the nineteenth century. On this subject, Nursi's concept of 'I' (*anā*)¹ might be helpful for each individual in enabling him or her to take his/her stand against these challenges.

5.1. CONCEPT OF THE HUMAN 'I' *ANĀ* IN BEDIÜZZAMAN SAİD NURSI

In Nursi's works, the Arabic term 'I' (*anā*) the human 'I' appear to have been used – at least in one treatise – as one of the manifestations of Divine quality on the mirror-like *nafs*.² It also plays a crucial role in respect of the establishment of the psyche. Nursi writes that 'I' (*anā*) denotes the real identity or the reality of man. As a result, it has the potential to be the most luminous faculty of man.³

For Nursi, understanding the secrets of the self is not an intellectual pursuit only for philosophers and theologians, but a necessary tool for each individual, because it not only helps one to understand one's own self (*nafs*), but also gives a clearer understanding of the concept of God. Indeed, Nursi presents the concept of 'I' (*anā*) as the way to know the Attributes and Names of God.⁴ Of course, this understanding

¹ In many translations, the concept "anā" is translated as "I" and "anāniyyah" as "I-ness". In this study, the terms "anā" and "anāniyyah" will be used instead of the translations.

² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 554.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 555.

determines the standpoint of an individual both towards himself and in front of God. Like Western theologians and philosophers, Sufis have also addressed similar issues in their writings and discussions.⁵

According to Nursi, self (*nafs*) or self-affirmation or self-interpretation is not a rigid concept. In a sense these concepts are subjective⁶ for each individual, and in this subjectivity, belief (*īmān*) is a determining factor as regards how the individual takes his or her stand.

The ‘I’ (*anā*) concept is one critical key in this matter, because it adjusts the position of the individual before God. As was highlighted above, the basis and aim of Nursi’s writings were certain belief and the reality of the Qur’ān, and this was again the defining notion. The problems of self-affirmation and self-interpretation were no different for him. He evaluated these issues in relation to the Divine Names and Attributes of God.⁷ Realisation of the unity in the universe is also related to the understanding of ‘I’ (*anā*). Nursi writes:

As the key to the Divine Names, which are hidden treasures, the ‘I’ (*anā*) is also the key to the locked talisman of creation; it is a problem-solving riddle, a wondrous talisman. When its nature is known, the ‘I’ (*anā*), that strange riddle, that amazing talisman, is disclosed, and it also discloses the talisman of the universe and the treasures of the Necessary World.⁸

Nursi discusses the concept of the ‘I’ (*anā*) in relation to the concept of self (*nafs*) to disclose the talisman of the universe and the treasures of the Necessary World because, as he writes, “The key to the world is in the hand of man and is attached to

⁵ William C Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God Principles of Ibn Al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), XII.

⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 556.

⁷ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 175.

⁸ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 554.

his self (*nafs*)”.⁹ As was discussed in Chapter 2,¹⁰ there is a very famous hadith, “He who knows his self (*nafs*), knows his God”.¹¹ It is mostly seen in discussion about the Divine knowledge and purpose of creation among major Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabī and Al-Ghazzālī. Nursi’s discussion might be considered in line with those of other Sufis.¹² However, Nursi’s approach to the relation between self (*nafs*) and the ‘I’ (*anā*) provides an opportunity to discuss these subjects in detail. However, in order to obtain Divine knowledge, it is necessary to understand the reality of the self (*nafs*) and read it as a cosmic text.¹³

The concept of self (*nafs*) in Nursi, already discussed in Chapter 4, has been defined in detail as the essence of man, and also the totality of man’s inward and outward faculties. In other words, the self (*nafs*) is a ground for body (*wujud*) and spirit (*rūh*) and their tools, through which they interconnect, and the purification process for man is dependent on this interconnection.

The importance of self (*nafs*) in this context can be discussed using the mirror metaphor in Nursi; the Divine Names and Attributes are reflected on the self (*nafs*), and self (*nafs*) is the mirror that bears the image. Man opens the doors of the universe with the key of ‘I’ (*anā*),¹⁴ which is the image on the mirror-like self (*nafs*).

Man, Nursi writes, should be able to read himself as a book in order to understand the reality of the Divine Names and Attributes correctly. Similarly, the whole universe should also be read on behalf of the Divine Names and Attributes. Thus both universe

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Chapter 2, p. 89.

¹¹ Ajluni, *Kashf Al-Khafa*, II: 2256.

¹² Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 174.

¹³ Ibid., 175.

¹⁴ Ibid., 180.

and man are sources with which to attain Divine Knowledge.¹⁵ This means that there is a correlation between the true understanding of the universe and the self (*nafs*). Nursi points to this relation in writing, “For while being apparently open, the doors of the universe are in fact closed.”¹⁶ This means that if the universe is not analysed and understood as an other-indicative entity to show the Divine Names and Attributes, the knowledge of it (the sciences) cannot lead man to his purpose, which is to know God.

According to Nursi, man is a balance, a list, a map, and a summary of the universe. If the relations between man and the universe are established and also interpreted in a correct way, all the knowledge attained from these relations transforms into the knowledge of God.¹⁷ Buber discussed a similar concept, stating that there is a potential in every *I–It* relation to change form and show the unity or wholeness of being.¹⁸ Nursi goes further, to explain that this transformation is only possible through the ‘I’ (*anā*), which is a unit of measurement and a tool for discovery.¹⁹ Otherwise, all knowledge would be captured only on its own behalf and only through its benefits to man. For this reason, Nursi writes that the key ‘I’ (*anā*) is attached to man’s self (*nafs*).²⁰

5.2. THE OTHER-INDICATIVE OR SELF-REFERENTIAL MEANING OF ANĀ

Nursi explains how the ‘I’ (*anā*) can consider itself in two different aspects, namely the other-indicative (*ma ‘nā-yi ḥarfī*) and self-referential meanings (*ma ‘nā-yi ismī*).²¹

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 493.

¹⁷ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Sözlür, Mektubat, Lemalar, Şualar*, 1: 856.

¹⁸ Martin Buber and Ronald Gregor Smith, *I and Thou*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), 58.

¹⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 555.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 556.

Both approaches will be summarised and compared in order to make the nature of the ‘I’ (*anā*) and its functions clear.

To grasp the concept of the ‘I’ (*anā*) in Nursi’s works, it is vitally important to understand two notions, namely other-indicative meaning²² (*ma ‘ná-yi ħarfī*)²³ and self-referential meaning²⁴ (*ma ‘ná-yi ismī*).²⁵ These have been discussed in detail in Chapter 4.²⁶

According to Nursi, a true understanding of the Attributes and Names of God depends on a true interpretation of the universe, man himself and God in relation to others. Understanding the true interpretation of the universe and man and their relations with God is only possible through considering all creatures with their other-indicative meaning, rather than their self-referential meaning.²⁷ Nursi writes, “The world is a book of the Eternally Besought One. Its letters and words point not to themselves but to the essence Attributes and Names of another. In which case, learn its meaning and grasp it ...”²⁸ Here, two interpretations are used to discuss what the ‘I’ (*anā*) and the ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*) are. It is helpful to understand not only the concepts of the ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*), but also the other tools in self (*nafs*) in respect of Divine knowledge.

²² Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 278.

²³ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ve Digerleri.*, 2: 1297.

²⁴ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 278.

²⁵ Nursi, *Kaynakli, Indeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-Icâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikasi, Kastamonu Lâhikasi, Emirdag Lâhikasi, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Digerleri.*, 2: 1297.

²⁶ See Chapter 4, p. 168.

²⁷ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 146–147.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 556.

Transformation of knowledge, or, in other words, establishing a relation with which to interpret the notion of God as well as the universe, is only possible through the ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*).²⁹ Other-indicative meaning (*ma ‘ná-yi ḥarfī*) and self-referential meaning (*ma ‘ná-yi ismī*) are the two possible paths via which the ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyyah*) can process the information that is gathered from the universe and within. That expresses the whole difference between belief and disbelief.

In Nursi’s work, every single tool of the inward and outward subtle faculties of self (*nafs*) has two aspects.³⁰ It can be likened to a double-edged sword:³¹ whatever direction you move it in, it cuts via that side. Nursi explains this matter in his works through several examples. One of his examples is passionate love, which is a very strong kind of love. It can be considered through its self-referential meaning or its other-indicative meaning. If it is directed to transitory objects, that means it is being employed through its self-referential meaning, and it causes perpetual pain; whereas, employed through the other-indicative meaning, it offers a motivation to investigate the Eternal One, and therefore is transformed into true love.³²

Similarly, Nursi gives further examples of strong feelings of anxiety (about the future), ambition (for possessions and rank), obstinacy (on trivial, fleeting, transient things) and suchlike.³³ They are important qualities with which to understand the Divine Names and Attributes, and are all included in the human soul. These inward subtle faculties were not given to man to be employed through their self-referential meaning. If so, they would be considered along with the worldly engagements and

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 554.

³⁰ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 49.

³¹ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 182.

³² Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 49.

³³ *Ibid.*

cause calamities similar to those passionate love can cause.³⁴ In other words, man cannot satisfy those subtle faculties, since he is surrounded by impotence and poverty. On the other hand, if those subtle faculties are considered through their other-indicative meaning, they will be employed to obtain Divine knowledge.³⁵

5.3. CONCEPT OF 'I-NESS' (*ANĀNIYAH*) IN BEDIÜZZAMAN SAİD NURSI

Nursi makes a distinction between the 'I' (*anā*) and 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*).³⁶ They are interconnected terms; however, there is an important difference between them through which Divine qualities would be discussed and understood in detail.

If the 'I' (*anā*) and 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*) are considered through their self-referential meanings, then they have negative values.³⁷ On the other hand, considered through their other-indicative meaning they are both positive concepts because they lead to Divine knowledge.³⁸ The distinction between their negative aspects will be clarified immediately following discussion of the concepts of the 'I' (*anā*) and 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*) considered through their other-indicative meaning. They are the keys to unlock the talisman of the universe and the hidden treasures of the Creator of the universe.³⁹

The difference between the 'I' (*anā*) and 'I' (*anāniyah*) can be discussed using examples from Nursi's works, with some cross-referencing. Man becomes aware of the world of the Divine Names through the 'I' (*anā*).⁴⁰ On the other hand, he sees the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 50.

³⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 555.

³⁷ Ibid., 557.

³⁸ Ibid., 555.

³⁹ Ibid., 554.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

world of the Divine Attributes through ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*).⁴¹ The Name of Beauty (*al-jamīl*), and the Attributes of Beauty (*ṣifāt al-jamāliyyah*), might be considered one of the best examples to indicate the difference between the ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). Man can see numerous reflections of the Name of Beauty (*al-jamīl*), on himself as well as on things in the universe, through his consciousness. On the other hand, things in the universe can only reflect the Divine Names unconsciously. Man can notice the manifestation of the Name of Beauty (*al-jamīl*) through the ‘I’ (*anā*), which is related to the world of the Divine Names in the visible world. On the other hand, being a conscious mirror of the Attributes of Beauty (*ṣifāt al-jamāliyyah*) is only achieved through ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). No other creature or being in the universe can reflect the Attributes of Beauty (*ṣifāt al-jamāliyyah*) but the human being. The concept of ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*) is related to the invisible worlds and qualities rather than to the visible world. In other words, the Name of Beauty (*al-jamīl*) can be presented on the visible mirrors. However, the Attributes of Beauty (*ṣifāt al-jamāliyyah*) cannot be seen on the visible realms, since it is an abstract concept.⁴² Man is a mirror such that he can reflect the world of the Divine Attributes beside the world of the Divine Names. Therefore, it seems that Man is a conscious beauty-maker (not absolute but relative) or the mirror of the Attributes of Beauty (*ṣifāt al-jamāliyyah*) only through ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*).

To assume that man owns such names and attributes, and is not a mirror for reflecting the Divine Names and Attributes, leads to the negative aspect of the ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). In such a case, he also claims that man and the things in the universe are not such mirrors to reflect the Divine Qualities, but own those qualities

⁴¹ Ibid., 555.

⁴² Ibid., 352.

themselves.⁴³ Therefore there is no connection between the universe and the Divine knowledge.

Among the entire creation, the main distinction man enjoys is that he is a comprehensive mirror for reflecting the Divine Qualities. Nursi examines man's distinctiveness in three ways:

The First Way: Through its impotence, weakness, poverty, and need, my life acts as a mirror to the power, strength, wealth, and mercy of the Creator of life.
The Second Way is acting as a mirror to the universal and comprehensive attributes and acts of my Creator through such meanings in my own life as partial knowledge, will, hearing and sight ...
The Third Way is acting as a mirror to the Divine Names, inscriptions and manifestations of which are present in my life ...⁴⁴

These three ways, mentioned above, are only achieved through the concept of the 'I' (*anā*) and the 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*). The third way is related to the visible world and is realised through the concept of 'I' (*anā*). However, the second way is connected with the invisible or unseen (*ghayb*) – the world of the Divine Attributes is only achieved by the concept of the 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*). The first way is only achieved through being a conscious mirror, which is related to both the 'I' (*anā*) and the 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*). Nursi writes that man can obtain the Divine knowledge in these three ways.⁴⁵ They will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Nursi further clarifies the difference between the Name of Beauty (*al-jamīl*) and the Attributes of Beauty (*ṣifāt al-jamāliyah*) or the concept of the 'I' (*anā*) and I-ness (*anāniyah*) when he writes:

⁴³ Ibid., 555.

⁴⁴ Nursi, *The Rays*, 2004, 81–82.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 81–82.

God Almighty has given to man by way of a Trust, such a key, called the 'I', that it opens all the doors of the world; He has given him an enigmatic 'I-ness' with which he may discover the hidden treasures of the Creator of the universe.⁴⁶

Examples are numerous, but the logic is the same. Nursi indicates the same difference between the worlds of the Divine Names and Attributes in one of his other works. He makes a clear distinction between them and gives the example of the Name of the All-Glorious Creator (*al-khāliq*). There are endless degrees of manifestation of this Name on different things in the universe, including man himself. However, again, only man can be a mirror to the Attribute of the Glorious Creator (*al-khāliq*) through 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*) and consciousness.⁴⁷ This is why man is called the vicegerent of God in the world. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Jami also points to the same matter.⁴⁸ (This subject will be further discussed under a separate heading, 'perfect man' (*al-insān al-kāmil*).) Nursi also explains the major differences between the world of the Names and Attributes in conjunction with the Divine knowledge. He writes that, on condition you leave the whole universe behind you, from the door of creativity you may reach the limits of the Name of Creator and draw close to the sphere of attributes.⁴⁹

There is a certain distinction between the two worlds. The world of the Divine Names is concrete and tangible; however, the world of the Divine attributes is more abstract and delicate. It is necessary to leave behind the world of the Divine Names during the spiritual journey to start journeying in the world of Divine Attributes. Therefore, Nursi writes that the 'I' (*anā*) and 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*) are

⁴⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 558.

⁴⁷ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 555.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 2, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 342.

an index of wonders pertaining to the Divine Names; a scale for measuring the Divine Attributes; a balance of the worlds within the universe; a list of the mighty world; a map of the cosmos; a summary of the vast book of the universe; a bunch of keys with which to open the hidden treasures of Divine power; and a most excellent pattern of the perfections scattered over beings and attached to time.⁵⁰

For Nursi, then, man is the most comprehensive mirror for reflecting all the Divine qualities.⁵¹ Turner writes that ‘comprehensive’ means “he becomes not only a place of demonstration (*mazhar*) for those Names, but a willing and purposeful demonstrator (*muzhir*) of them”.⁵² He only needs to notice his position in the universe and before God, and then he can realise the reality of his self (*nafs*).

5.4. THE NATURE OF THE ‘I’ ANĀ

According to Nursi, he who succeeds in purifying his self (*nafs*) succeeds only through understanding the impotence and poverty of the ‘I’ (*anā*). If the ‘I’ (*anā*) is not understood correctly, and its impotence and poverty are ignored, man considers the creatures in terms only of their benefit to himself. Even though the ‘I’ (*anā*) is simply a reflection in the mirror, it tends to assume that that reflection is a reality and hence is captured by negative feelings such as pride, begrudgement, and hatred.⁵³ Furthermore, if man is illuminated by belief and recognises himself as impotent and poor before God, and also if he frees himself from bodily pleasures and directs himself to the pleasures of the heart (*qalb*) and the spirit (*rūh*), he will be a purified spirit (*rūh*).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 141.

⁵¹ See ‘The Eleventh Word’ in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005.

⁵² Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 175.

⁵³ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 254.

⁵⁴ Gülen, ‘Enaniyet veya Egoizm’, *Sizinti*, 27/316 (2005).

Nursi further explains the nature of the ‘I’ (*anā*) as follows:

the ‘I’ (*anā*) is mirror-like, and, like a unit of measurement and tool for discovery, it has an indicative meaning; having no meaning in itself, it shows the meaning of others... Rather, it is a sort of scale or measure, like a thermometer or barometer that indicates the degrees and amounts of things; it is a measure that makes known the absolute, all-encompassing and limitless Attributes of the Necessary Being.⁵⁵

The mirror-like ‘I’ (*anā*) is likened to a thermometer or a barometer: the thermometer indicates the degrees of heat but it is not heat itself, and the barometer indicates pressure, but again, it is not pressure itself. They are just measures and indicators.⁵⁶ In conclusion, there is a certain difference between the Divine Qualities and man’s (relative) qualities. The ‘I’ (*anā*) is a measure that makes known the absolute concepts or limitless Attributes of the Necessary Being.

5.5. UNDERSTANDING THE DIVINE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES THROUGH THE ‘I’ (*ANĀ*) AND THE ‘I-NESS’ (*ANĀNIYAH*)

Every action, potential or capability in man, according to Nursi, is an indication of a Name or an Attribute of God, and these Names and Attributes can be discovered only through the ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). The aim of man is to know, through these measures (small samples of Attributes such as partial knowledge, power and will), the absolute Attributes and sacred qualities of the All-Glorious Creator.

For example, Nursi writes, through partial power, knowledge, wisdom and will, man can make a house in a well-ordered fashion, just as God creates the Universe as a Palace (House) which functions with great harmony. Names and Attributes such as

⁵⁵ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 555.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

All-Powerful, All-Knowing and All-Wise are all greater than man's partial power, knowledge and wisdom to the extent that the universe is greater than a man's house.⁵⁷

Nursi gives another example. The Divine Name 'All-Compassionate' has a manifestation in every step and circle of life, and its manifestation at each level is different. If plants and trees, which are not conscious, are considered, it can be concluded that their reflection of God's compassion is through their fruits, which are beneficial for both man and plants themselves. Another example of the reflection of compassion on a different level of life can be derived from animals: "the hen too, will sacrifice its life for its chicks, throwing itself at a dog. And it will remain hungry and give them to eat. That is to say, it receives such pleasure in its duty that it makes preferable the pains of hunger and pangs of death."⁵⁸ Animals, just like plants, are not conscious but can reflect the Divine Names at a certain level. For each man the level of reflection will vary, ultimately indicating the all-encompassing and infinite nature of the Names and Attributes of God.

There are some limitations and complications in attempting to understand the true nature of the Attributes of God through an analogy. As Nursi writes, "Since an absolute and all-encompassing thing has no limits or end, neither may a shape be given to it, nor may a form be conferred on it, nor may it be determined; what its quiddity is may not be comprehended".⁵⁹ This is when it becomes necessary **for man** to have an imaginary, fictive line as a reference plane. While we are trying to understand the attributes of Almighty God, such as knowledge and power, and Names such as All-Wise and All-Compassionate, which are limitless, the 'I' (*anā*) concept

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 170–171.

⁵⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 554.

draws this imaginary, fictitious line and helps us to understand the true nature of the Names and Attributes. In Nursi's words:

the 'I' (*anā*) imagines in itself a fictitious dominicality, ownership, power, and knowledge: it draws a line. By doing this it places an imaginary limit on the all-encompassing Attributes, saying, 'Up to here, mine, after that, His'; it makes a division. With the tiny units of measurement in itself, it slowly understands the true nature of the Attributes.⁶⁰

Nursi illustrates another interesting, but easy to grasp, logical path for discussing further the transformation of knowledge about the universe or man himself into the knowledge of God. He writes:

it is impossible for a being who gives light to be without light, who gives existence to be non-existent, and who makes the existence of something necessary to be unnecessary in existence. It is also inconceivable for a being who bestows knowledge to be without knowledge, who grants consciousness to be without consciousness.⁶¹

According to this logic, if man possesses some attributes, this means that these attributes are manifestations of the One who is the ultimate and only owner of the reality and truth of those attributes.

5.6. TWO ASPECTS OF THE 'I' (*ANĀ*)

According to Nursi, the 'I' (*anā*) is "an *alīf* from the book of the character of mankind",⁶² and has two faces. The first face, looking towards good and existence, is apparent if the 'I' (*anā*) is considered with its other-indicative meaning. The other

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 254.

⁶² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 555.

face, looking towards evil and going towards non-existence, is dominant if the ‘I’ (*anā*) is considered with its self-referential meaning.⁶³

5.6.1. Other-Indicative Interpretation of the ‘I’ (*Anā*)

As was discussed above, the self (*nafs*) is mirror-like, and the ‘I’ (*anā*) is the reflection in the mirror; in other words, it is the reflection of the Divine Names and Attributes in the mirror-like self (*nafs*). It can be compared to a unit of measurement and to a tool for discovery. It has an indicative meaning; having no meaning in itself, it shows the meaning of others.⁶⁴ Nursi considers the ‘I’ (*anā*) together with other (both spiritual and bodily) faculties of man, and writes: “It is a conscious strand from the thick rope of the human being, a fine thread from the raiment of the essence of humanity.”⁶⁵ The functioning of the ‘I’ (*anā*) as other-indicative is a determining factor for all other faculties. This face “looks towards good and existence. With this face it is only capable of receiving favour; it accepts what is given, itself it cannot create. This face is not active; it does not have the ability to create.”⁶⁶

The real nature of the ‘I’ (*anā*) is only indicative, like a scale or measure.

Furthermore, it can also be said that the ‘I’ (*anā*) is only an image in the mirror. The image of the sun in the mirror indicates the existence and characteristics of the sun, but is far away from the reality of it. For example, the image of the sun in the mirror only possesses limited heat or a limited capacity to enlighten in accordance with the capacity of the mirror. Just as in this example, the Attributes and Names of God are reflected in the mirror-like self (*nafs*) and the image in this mirror is the ‘I’ (*anā*). It is very important to recall again that the ‘I’ (*anā*) is like a thermometer or barometer,

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

which indicates temperature or pressure without there being heat or pressure in it – it is only indicative. The ‘I’ (*Anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*) also indicate all the Divine Names and Attributes, but cannot own any of the Names and Attributes at any level.

Understanding of the ‘I’ (*anā*) -concept as an indicative tool, a sort of scale, gives the individual the perspective through which the unity in the universe can be appreciated. Such an individual can adjust his position in the face of every situation, and when he looks “through the telescope of his (*anā*)”,

he sees what the universe is and what duties it is performing. And when he obtains information about the universe, he sees that his (*anā*) confirms it. This knowledge will remain as light and wisdom for him, and will not be transformed into darkness and futility.⁶⁷

Through this imaginary line or fictive reference, the Attributes of God should be realised. However, at this point, “when the ‘I’ (*anā*) fulfils its duty in this way”, it “abandons its imaginary dominicality and supposed ownership, which are the units of measurement”.⁶⁸ It should abandon this imaginary ownership completely to be in line with its true nature. Turner writes that this is the core idea of “purification of the self at the heart of the Qur’ān in accordance with Nursian understanding of spirituality”.⁶⁹

Once this transformation is completed, the individual can realise “that the aim of humanity and duty of human beings is to be moulded by God-given ethics and good character”.⁷⁰ He or she also finds a place of recourse, Nursi writes, and is assured of an eternal joy, a perpetual happiness.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 555–556.

⁶⁹ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 183.

⁷⁰ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 556.

⁷¹ Ibid., 555.

5.6.2. Self-Referential Interpretation of the 'I' (*Anā*)

Nursi writes that if the 'I' (*anā*) considers itself in respect of its self-referential meaning, which looks towards evil and tends towards non-existence; it has the power to destroy.⁷² When man does good, he is able to do so only to the extent of his own power and strength, but when man commits evil and destruction, then evil overwhelms and man's destruction spreads. For example, unbelief, which is the absence of affirmation, destroys the arts and letters in the cosmic text, which indicates its Artist and mentions its Creator. Unbelief destroys the relation between the thing and its Creator and throws creation into non-existence.⁷³

On the other hand, "forgetting the wisdom of its creation and abandoning the duty of its nature, the 'I' (*anā*) views itself solely in the light of its nominal and apparent meaning, if it believes that it owns itself", and sees itself as carrying no meaning other than its own. "It regards its existence as necessary and essential, that is, it writes that it exists in itself and of itself. It falsely assumes that the 'I' (*anā*) owns its own life and is the real master in its sphere of disposal. It supposes it to be a constant reality." This standpoint was highlighted in Feuerbach's claim that "God is nothing else than the projected personality of man".⁷⁴

According to Nursi, if the 'I' (*anā*) cannot conceive the nature of itself, further negative steps develop, such as expanding and taking over control of the other faculties. As was explained in Chapter 4, the plant and animal spheres have a tendency to invade the others.⁷⁵ This operation is carried out by the 'I' (*anā*). These

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 556.

⁷⁴ See also 'The Twenty-Third Word', in Ibid., 329–230.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 4, p. 174.

tendencies of the plant and animal spheres (souls) unite with the ‘I’ (*anā*) to interpret everything in accordance with their own benefit only.⁷⁶ All other faculties then either cannot function as they should or else malfunction. The ‘I’ (*anā*) is not only unable to behave consciously and sincerely as the ‘vicegerent of God’, but also fails to fulfil the ‘trust’.⁷⁷ As underlined before, such a man is said to be at the level of evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*). Later, the pure the ‘I’ (*anā*) is strengthened by racism and nationalism, and gaining this support the ‘I’ (*anā*) even dares to contest and challenge the commands of God. Thus the man who writes “I own myself” must believe and say, “Everything owns itself.”⁷⁸ This is to open the way of *shirk*.⁷⁹

5.7. THE RELATION BETWEEN ANĀ AND SCIENCE

If the ‘I’ (*anā*) works properly, according to Nursi, it should be working with its other-indicative meaning. That is, the ‘I’ (*anā*) considers itself to be a reflection of the Divine Names and Attributes.⁸⁰ Thus, man penetrates the reality of the universe and its duties, and so he realises through the telescope of the ‘I’ (*anā*) that everything in the universe is a manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes. Man considers all scientific knowledge as verifying Divine Oneness.⁸¹ Nursi recounts an interesting anecdote from when he lived in Kastamonu. A group of high-school students came to him saying, “Tell us about our Creator; our teachers do not speak of God.” He replied, “All the sciences you study continuously speak of God and make known the Creator, each with its own particular tongue.”⁸²

⁷⁶ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 556.

⁷⁷ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 183.

⁷⁸ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 556.

⁷⁹ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 185.

⁸⁰ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 556.

⁸¹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 557.

⁸² Nursi, *The Rays*, 2010, 234.

Furthermore, the other-indicative ‘I’ (*anā*), considers the universe as a book, and if scientific knowledge comes from any branch of knowledge such as physics or astronomy the ‘I’ (*anā*) confirms that knowledge, so that the knowledge will remain as light and wisdom,⁸³ and will not be transformed into darkness and futility.

On the other hand, if its nature is not understood and the ‘I’ (*anā*) considers itself with its self-referential meaning, then sciences, in respect of the Divine Names and Attributes, do not lead people to the Divine Creator of the universe.⁸⁴ According to Nursi, one of the reasons God created the universe like a huge palace was to display His Own Perfection in His fine arts.⁸⁵ Comprehending those arts in respect of the Divine Names is only achieved by the ‘I’ (*anā*) through other-indicative meaning. In that case, man can enter into relation with the universe and God. Without realising the function of the ‘I’ (*anā*), comprehending the reality of the universe is not possible. According to Nursi, the Qur’ān reads the universe in the vast mosque of creation⁸⁶ and the Qur’ān is the comprehensive book, which introduces God by interpreting the universe in the correct way.

For Nursi, every single science depends on one of the Divine Names or Attributes. For example, if the universe is examined by one of the sciences, mathematics, it will be seen that every single detail in the universe is fine-tuned in accordance with mathematics. According to Nursi, this knowledge should lead to a certain level of understanding of the Divine Name All-Determiner.⁸⁷ Examples could be multiplied.

⁸³ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 557.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 133.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁷ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 643.

According to Nursi, all sciences, if not analysed by the other-indicative ‘I’ (*anā*), investigate a huge palace,⁸⁸ but with a focus on only the door and the outer walls. Nursi described this effort as investigating the reality of the universe through self-referential meaning. Understanding the comprehensiveness of the palace is only possible by reading the cosmic text by means of the other-indicative ‘I’ (*anā*) and the Qur’ān, and by following the path of the Prophet.⁸⁹ This is why Nursi writes “for while being apparently open, the doors of the universe are in fact closed”.⁹⁰

Furthermore, the beauty and perfection of the Divine arts are not restricted to the bodily senses. Man also has inner faculties with which to relate and decipher the Divine arts. This means that if those sciences cannot be confirmed by the ‘I’ (*anā*), as discussed above, all information turns to darkness and futility.⁹¹

5.8. THREE MAIN DRIVES OF MAN IN RELATION TO ‘I’ (ANĀ) AND ‘I-NESS’ (ANĀNIYAH)

Nursi discusses the elevation and the degeneration of the human ‘I’ (*anā*) through three main drives in man’s soul.⁹² According to Nursi, man has three main powers (*quwwa*), namely: the power of animal appetites (*al-quwwah al-shahawiya al-bahimīya*), the power of animal passion or repulsion (*al-quwwah al-ghadabiyah*), and the power of intellect (*al-quwwah al-‘aqliya*).⁹³ They are not restricted. Each of these is supposed to be exercised in moderation, or in what Nursi calls ‘the middle way’ (*wasat*),⁹⁴ a concept possibly influenced by Aristotle’s ‘golden mean’.⁹⁵ Each of these

⁸⁸ Ibid., 557.

⁸⁹ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 180.

⁹⁰ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005.

⁹¹ Ibid., 557.

⁹² Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 188.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Said Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness : The Inimitability of the Quran’s Conciseness* (Istanbul: Sözlür, 2007), 23.

three drives or ‘powers’, if not exercised in moderation, will either be used too little, in which case they are said to be in a state of deficiency (*nuqsān*)⁹⁶ which leads to negligence (*tafrīt*),⁹⁷ or too much, in which case they are said to be in a state of excess⁹⁸ (*ifrāt*). When the powers are used deficiently or excessively, disharmony or disequilibrium is the result. Moderate or ‘middle-way’ (*wasat*) use of these powers results in equilibrium. These three powers are, as stated above, the power of animal appetites (*al-quwwah al-shahawiyah al-bahīmiya*),⁹⁹ the power of repulsion (*al-quwwah al-ghaḍabiyya*), and the power of intellect (*al-quwwah al-‘aqliya*).¹⁰⁰

As underlined above, such drives and abilities are not restricted, so they all tend to reach their own (limitless) potential. All these drives are closely related to the different compartments of self (*nafs*) and the inward subtle faculties. According to Nursi, these drives are given to man to enable him to maintain his life. These three unrestricted abilities of man will be examined in further detail in order to discuss the balanced (moderated), excessive and deficient states.

The first drive is ‘the power of animal appetite’ (*al-quwwah al-shahawiyah*), which is supposed to turn, by moderation, into the ‘power of attraction’. The deficient state of the power of animal appetites is considered to be lassitude (*khumud*) and lack of enthusiasm (*‘adam al-ishtiyāq*);¹⁰¹ in that condition, man does not have any appetite even for legitimate things. Its excessive condition is called depravity and dissolution

⁹⁵ Aristotle and Roger Crisp, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

⁹⁶ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 188.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Aristotle and Crisp, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.

⁹⁹ Thomas and Anton C. Pegis, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1945).

¹⁰⁰ Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness : The Inimitability of the Quran’s Conciseness*, 29.

¹⁰¹ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 189.

(*fajr*),¹⁰² which means to desire whatever is encountered, whether lawful or unlawful. The middle way is called uprightness. The man who is in that condition desires what is licit and shuns what is illicit. Such a man considers virtue and has an appetite only for legitimate things, not for the illegitimate.¹⁰³

The second drive is anger or the power of passion/repulsion (*al-quwwah al-ghadabiyya*), which can be experienced as two vices, that of excess and that of deficiency.¹⁰⁴ Deficient and excessive levels are called cowardice (*jabānah*)¹⁰⁵ and rage respectively (*tahawwur*).¹⁰⁶ However, it is given to man for anger to be moderated so that it turns into the ‘power of repulsion’, rather than tyranny. In the deficient state man is scared by anything and everything, and in the excessive state man is not scared even by the things that can harm and threaten his life. All despotisms (*istibdād*), tyrannies (*ẓulm*) and cruelties in history have resulted from the excessive state of this drive. The middle way for this drive is called sacred courage, in which man lives for the worldly laws and the laws of the hereafter and does not engage in illegal actions.¹⁰⁷

The third drive is the power of intellect (*al-quwwah al-‘aqliyya*); it is given to man so that he can distinguish between good and evil. This drive turns into the ‘power of intellect’ in a society through moderation. The deficient condition of this drive is foolishness (*ghabāwah*) and idiocy (*balada*),¹⁰⁸ in which man cannot understand the nature of things or distinguish good and evil. On the other hand, the excessive state

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Thomas and Pegis, Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle and Crisp, Nicomachean Ethics, 1107.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Nursi, Signs of Miraculousness : The Inimitability of the Quran’s Conciseness, 30.

¹⁰⁸ Turner, The Qur’an Revealed, 188.

leads to deception and trickery (*jarbazah*),¹⁰⁹ in which man uses the intellect to promote wrong as right. The middle way for this drive is wisdom, in which man avoids heresy and labels right as right and wrong as wrong.¹¹⁰ The Qur’ān also mentions the importance of wisdom and states: “and he to whom wisdom is granted received indeed a benefit overflowing.”¹¹¹

In *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, the meaning of the verse “Show us the straightway”¹¹² reminds us of the perfectly balanced conditions of these drives of man.¹¹³ As was underlined above, the balanced condition for these three drives are uprightness, sacred courage and wisdom (*ḥikmah*). Nursi defines justice as a combination of the balanced conditions of those drives.¹¹⁴ Religious rules or laws define the borders for man and society and show him the true path; however, man’s nature is not restricted by God, and it is up to man to moderate his drives to attain true happiness, both in this world and the hereafter.¹¹⁵

Nursi’s selected three drives might also help in further understanding the three compartments of self (*nafs*). For example, the first drive (*al-quwwah al-shahawiyyah al-bahīmiya*) can be matched with the plant soul. The power of repulsion (*al-quwwah al-ghaḍabiya*) can be matched with the animal soul. The third drive, the power of intellect (*al-quwwah al-‘aqliyah*), can be matched with the human soul. As was discussed in Chapter 4,¹¹⁶ Nursi suggests an additional compartment of self (*nafs*) for

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The Qur’ān (2: 269).

¹¹² The Qur’ān (1: 5).

¹¹³ Nursi, Signs of Miraculousness : The Inimitability of the Quran’s Conciseness, 30.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ali, The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary (95: 6).

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 4, p. 167.

the classic categorisation of self: the belief soul (*al-nafs al-īmānī*).¹¹⁷ This fourth compartment is actually a fourth meaning that emerges through all the other three compartments. If all three drives are moderated so as to lead to uprightness, sacred courage and wisdom, then all three compartments of the self (*nafs*) lead to a fourth meaning, the belief soul (*al-nafs al-īmānī*). In other words, this fourth compartment is made to emerge through employing the first three compartments with respect to their other-indicative meaning.

Aristotle's categorisation of self, which discusses the three compartments, provides an interpretation of these three compartments of self (*nafs*) through their self-referential meanings.¹¹⁸ Nursi, by proposing to look into the same compartments with their other-indicative meaning, defines the emergence of a fourth compartment. It can only be achieved by understanding the true reality of the 'I' (*anā*); in that case, the 'I' (*anā*) proclaims its imaginary ownership and attributes those qualities to God.¹¹⁹ Such an approach is unique and revolutionary, as it works with the given definitions, but puts them into perspective.

As was mentioned above, non-limited drives and abilities cause a dynamic and changeable structure, and self (*nafs*) can be directed to either good or evil. There are numerous possibilities for man, varying from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high.¹²⁰ Each drive has three conditions, making the total number of conditions nine. Of these nine conditions, only three can lead to justice and the other six lead to injustice. The Qur'ān calls these first three 'the straight way'.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri : Seedbed of the Light*, 289.

¹¹⁸ Aristotle and Crisp, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.

¹¹⁹ Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed*, 189.

¹²⁰ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (95: 4–5).

¹²¹ Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness : The Inimitability of the Quran's Conciseness*, 30.

5.9. TWO LINES OF THOUGHT IN THE HISTORY OF MAN

Nursi classifies Western philosophy into two accounts. In the first account, it takes its inspiration from true Christianity.¹²² Nursi does not criticise this account. However, in the second account he addresses materialist philosophy. According to Nursi, the universe is a cosmic text to be read. Materialist philosophy reads this cosmic text through its self-referential meaning only.¹²³ Nursi suggests another interpretation, other-indicative meaning, and makes a comparison between the two accounts. Nursi criticises the materialist philosophy, since its interpretation of the universe is inadequate for defining the ultimate purpose of the creation because it is limited to the physical realm for the production of its arguments.¹²⁴ In other words, the main concern for such philosophy is the material aspect of the universe rather than the immaterial. This approach directs the main focus to scientific progression, or to the positive sciences. All progression is achieved in a horizontal plane rather than a vertical. Tillich describes it as the lost dimension.¹²⁵ He considers this horizontal progress to be a kind of alienation.¹²⁶ In the Nursian systematic discussion method of interpreting the universe, self-referential meaning is represented by the horizontal dimension and Divine knowledge is related to the vertical dimension. As a result, Nursi agrees with Tillich that materialist philosophy has driven mankind to vice and misguidance.¹²⁷ Nursi suggests engaging with the universe through its other-indicative meaning to regain the lost dimension.¹²⁸

¹²² Nursi, *The Gleams*, 162.

¹²³ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 146–147.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Tillich and Church, *The Essential Tillich : An Anthology of the Writings of Paul Tillich*, 1.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Nursi, *The Gleams*, 162.

¹²⁸ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 557.

Nursi considers mainstream lines of thought in human history to be rooted in either prophethood and religion or in materialist philosophy in its various forms.¹²⁹ According to Nursi, whenever the line of philosophy has joined the line of prophethood to bring the two lines of thought into agreement, humanity has experienced progress and harmony. However, when the lines have become separated, all good and bliss has stayed with the line of prophethood and religion, leaving the line of philosophy in darkness and misguidance.¹³⁰

5.9.1. Line of Prophethood and Religion

According to Nursi, the line of prophethood and religion has always been related to the drives of man being moderated so as to lead society to the straight path.¹³¹ Understanding the face of 'I' (*anā*), which looks towards good and existence,¹³² is represented by this line. Honest judges, and great rulers and presidents, have been developed by the 'power of repulsion'. Also, by moderating the drive of lust to the 'power of attraction', this line of thought has promoted people of good character and modest and beautiful manner, people both generous and gracious. Finally, by the 'power of intellect' this line of thought has resulted in the emergence of Prophets, Messengers and Saints.¹³³

5.9.2. Line of Materialist Philosophy in Its Various Forms

In the materialistic interpretation of philosophy, the face of 'I' (*anā*) looks towards evil and non-existence.¹³⁴ It does not obey the line of religion but spreads idolatrous

¹²⁹ Ibid., 558.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 557.

¹³³ Ibid., 558.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 557.

ideas and heresy.¹³⁵ According to Nursi, this line of thought is dependent on the excessive and deficient conditions of the drives and abilities of man. In the branch of the drive of intellect, this line of thought relies on the light of the intellect only; thus it produces atheism, materialism and naturalism.¹³⁶ According to Nursi, all these trends of thought are far from bringing happiness and peace to society and individuals. As regards the second branch, which is the drive to anger, this line of thought essentially takes the excessive condition of anger, so the tyrannies of Nimrod, Pharaoh and Shaddad are promoted. As regards the last branch, which is the drive of lust, this line of thought builds lives and societies solely on satisfying bodily pleasures, which ultimately results in nurturing and bearing goddesses, idols, and those who claim divinity.¹³⁷

5.9.3. The Reality of Man in the Two Lines of Thought

According to Nursi, those who follow the line of materialist philosophy cannot understand the reality of man because they have tethered themselves to the self-referential meaning of the human being only.¹³⁸ In time, materialistic satisfactions become the main motivation, but this situation is not sustainable as man is impotent and poor. By contrast, the realisation of man's true nature is only possible through a true interpretation of 'I' (*anā*). If the nature of 'I' (*anā*) is recognised as being impotent and poor and being only an image, then man can regulate his position vis-à-vis God and can connect with the reality of the rest of the creation through his impotence and poverty.¹³⁹ Nursi also states that pleasure in the knowledge of God is greater than worldly pleasures.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 558.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 559.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 558.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

People who follow the line of prophethood and religion can manage to hold their three main drives and others in the middle way.¹⁴⁰ They interpret creation in its true meaning and understand the reality of man's position before God and consider themselves to be worshipers and servants of God. According to Nursi, affirmation of Divine Unity is a cure through which spiritual pleasure may be found. In a situation where man realises that he is impotent and poor and has countless needs, affirming the existence of God saves his spirit from troubling sadness. Nursi further describes the psychology of such a man as follows:

On the one hand it finds a place of recourse, a source of help, through which is opened to it the door of a treasury of mercy that will guarantee all it needs, while on the other it finds a point of support and strength, for the phrase makes known to its Creator and True Object of Worship, Who possesses an absolute power that will secure it from the evil of all its Enemies; it shows it its master, and who it is that owns it. Through pointing this out, the phrase (There is no god but God) saves the heart from utter desolation and the spirit from aching sorrow; it ensures an eternal joy, a perpetual happiness.¹⁴¹

5.9.3.1. First Example

Nursi states that the line of prophethood and religion follows the instruction “Be distinguished by God-given morals and turn towards God Almighty with humility recognizing your impotence, poverty, and defectiveness, and so be a slave in His presence”.¹⁴² Following these instructions and relying on the mercy of the All-Compassionate One is in line with the interpretation of ‘I’ (*anā*) with its other-indicative meaning.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 558.

¹⁴¹ Said Nursi, *The Letters*, trans. Şükran Vahide, vol. 2 (London: Truestar, 2005), 265–266.

¹⁴² Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 564.

On the other hand, the line of materialist philosophy follows the instruction which writes, “Try to imitate the Necessarily Existent One”¹⁴³ to achieve perfection.¹⁴⁴ Of course, if ‘I’ (*anā*) considers all the fictive abilities real and misinterprets its nature, and does not realise that it is only a unit of measurement and an image in the mirror, then without realising its impotence and poverty it will try to imitate God. Nursi states that achieving perfection is, of course, not possible by imitating God, because that is not the nature and reality of man.

5.9.3.2. Second Example

The line of prophethood interprets the universe and creation in such a way that they become evidence of the Divine Unity. Realisation of this Unity and harmony in the universe is also reflected in social life as mutual assistance and generosity. In contrast, the line of philosophy, through the self-referential interpretation of ‘I’ (*anā*), claims that it is every creature for itself in the universe and that there is no unity or harmony. Of course, this is reflected in society in terms of interpreting life as conflict and as the promotion of individualism and pragmatism.¹⁴⁵

5.9.3.3. Third Example

The line of prophethood claims that “If a thing has unity, it must proceed from only one”, and that “Since each thing in itself and all things collectively have unity, they therefore must be the creation of one single being”;¹⁴⁶ while the line of philosophy claims that “From one, one proceeds”, meaning, “From one person, only one single thing can proceed. Everything else proceeds from him by means of intermediaries.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed*, 187.

¹⁴⁵ See Nursi and Vahide, ‘The Thirtieth Word’, in Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 564.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

As was discussed in Section 5.5,¹⁴⁸ the Divine Names and Attributes are manifested in the whole universe, but the level of manifestation is different. According to Nursi, this is already evidence of the Divine Unity. He uses the metaphor of the sun and mirrors to further explain his logic. The sun, which is only one, can be seen in numerous mirrors in different forms and at different levels at the same time. This in no way violates its unity and Oneness.¹⁴⁹ Just like the sun in the example, Nursi also discusses how the manifestations of the Divine Names and Attributes of God are apparent in the universe and are evidence of the Divine Oneness and Unity. Operation of such logic is possible through the other-indicative interpretation of ‘I’ (*anā*).

If ‘I’ (*anā*) is considered in its self-referential meaning, then it claims to be independent and claims that all creatures are independent as well. This is only possible by considering that the reflections in the mirror are real and that there is not a united source. If the example of a sun and mirrors is recalled in this case, it can be said that ‘I’ (*anā*) does not accept the existence of the sun in the sky, but has to accept that all the reflections of the sun in the numerous mirrors are real and unique. Through this logic, the line of philosophy attributes to God the title of ‘Prime Mover’.

Nursi concludes that the line of philosophy denies one, but on the other hand has to accept innumerable impossibilities all at once, while the line of prophethood realises and enjoys the harmony and mutual benefit in the universe.¹⁵⁰

5.9.3.4. Fourth Example

Nursi states that, via recognition of ‘I’ (*anā*) with its other-indicative meaning by the line of prophethood and religion, it can be concluded that everything is a word from

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 5, p. 231.

¹⁴⁹ Nursi, *The Letters*, 2005, 2: 265–266.

¹⁵⁰ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 564–565.

the cosmic text, which ultimately leads to knowledge of God. Once this logic is employed, then all creatures are seen to have numerous supplementary duties and tasks related to the universe and God.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, followers of the line of philosophy through the self-referential meaning of 'I' (*anā*) value and acknowledge creatures in accordance with their benefit to themselves only.¹⁵²

The relation between creatures and man once 'I' (*anā*) is considered in its self-referential meaning has been discussed in Section 5.5.¹⁵³

5.10 CONCLUSION

5.10.1. A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE WESTERN AND NURSIAN APPROACHES TO THE CONCEPT OF SELF AND *EGO*

One of the areas this study has focused on is the concept of self (*nafs*) and its major faculties such as heart (*qalb*), human intellect ('*aql*) and spirit (*rūh*). Human intellect ('*Aql*) is among the controversial subjects which have been discussed throughout history. Human intellect ('*aql*) and heart (*qalb*) are always considered together in Islamic literature. However, in Western thought heart (*qalb*) and human intellect ('*aql*) are considered two separate entities. In other words, the meaning of human intellect ('*aql*), in Western literature is not the same as it is ('*aql*) in Islamic literature. Human intellect ('*aql*) in both schools of thought is the same thing in respect of its self-referential aspect. Human intellect ('*aql*), in the West, is utilised only for worldly engagements; however, through its other-indicative meaning it has the potential to reach out to Divine knowledge as well. At this point, there are no complementary arguments to bridge the discussions in these two different schools of thoughts. Epistemological discussions and the differences between two epistemologies are not

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ See Chapter 5, p. 231.

the main concern of this study. However, it is necessary to make such a comparison, or to discuss the cornerstones of both epistemologies, to reveal the differences between certain definitions of major concepts such as creation, human intellect (*'aql*), self (*nafs*) and heart (*qalb*). The ultimate aim is to find common ground so as to discuss both literatures at the same level. As was emphasised above, the crucial point of the discussion is the different interpretations of the universe and the purpose of creation.

Western thought focuses mainly on the material aspect of things rather than on their immaterial side while producing and evaluating data. This does not mean that there is no room for the immaterial aspect of things. There are many scholars in the West who have talked about metaphysics. However, these discussions have not been accorded their due place and are considered extreme elaborations and abstract notions.

By contrast, in Islamic literature both material and immaterial aspects are taken into consideration. As was discussed in the chapter on Sufism, Ghazzālī discusses the major concepts, human intellect (*'aql*), self (*nafs*), and heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*rūḥ*), through their two aspects.¹⁵⁴ Under the first, he discusses them through material facets, in other words, through their worldly meaning. However, under the second, the immaterial qualities or relation with the Concept of God are examined.¹⁵⁵ Thus it can be seen that the concept of human intellect (*'aql*) is considered together with the concept of heart (*qalb*) in Islamic literature. This aspect of the human intellect (*'aql*) and the other faculties are considered in the circle of heart (*qalb*). This is the major difference between Western and Islamic thought.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 2, p. 102.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter 2, p. 105.

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter 2, p. 105.

These two interpretations of existence lead to two different conclusions. Through the self-referential meaning of existence, man always places himself at the very centre of the universe.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, the driving force in this quest has been man's own benefit rather than the reality of things.¹⁵⁸ However, in the second aspect, through the other-indicative meaning of existence¹⁵⁹ man has the objectivity that is required for understanding the reality of the things in the universe and beyond. In a sense he relates everything to everything else, realises the harmony in the universe, and does not violate the rights or the values of creation.

As was mentioned in the Introduction, in attempting to discuss concepts like God in relation to self, or self in relation to God in Western or Islamic literature, having common ground would be extremely useful. Nursi's discourse provides that common ground. Let us try to further clarify how his discourse provides such ground by examining a number of specific cases.

The first example is Freud's formulation *id-ego-superego* as a means of understanding the reality of self. The original Freudian formulation of *id-ego-superego* can be examined through self-referential meaning only, since there is no room for deity in Freud's system. *Ego* is the negotiator¹⁶⁰ between *id* and *superego*, so it can be matched with the material aspect of the mind 'aql (as Freud said). On the other hand, Freud's *id*, the child portion of man,¹⁶¹ is similar to the self-referential meaning of plant and animal soul in Nursi's discourse. The third notion in Freud's

¹⁵⁷ See p. 5, and for further explanation W. T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 555.

¹⁶⁰ See p. 5.

¹⁶¹ See p. 5.

formulation is *superego*, which is analogous to morals and ethics in social life.¹⁶²

These represent the ultimate purpose of life in the Freudian understanding. In other words, Freud's discussion about the self is not relevant to the concept of God at all.¹⁶³

Possibly, Freud's formulation of the psyche can be related to the Divine concept indicating Divine qualities or Attributes.

Even though these concepts are not connected with the Divine knowledge, they can be discussed in context through their other-indicative meaning. Nursian discourse, by highlighting the two facets (self-referential and other-indicative meanings) of any of these notions, adds new dimensions.¹⁶⁴

If things are considered through their other-indicative meaning, their limited attributes will be reflections of Absoluteness. This connection is realised via the concept of 'I' (*anā*) in Nursi. If Freud's formulation of *id-ego-superego* were to be considered through their other-indicative meanings, then each of the Freudian notions *id-ego-superego* and their relations with the compartments of the soul, namely plant, animal and human soul, would be related to the concept of God. Thus it can be concluded that Freud's ideas about the self were right but that their interpretations were wrong; therefore, Freud achieved a deficient understanding of the reality of self.

One of Freud's most famous examples is the relation between a horse and its rider as a means of helping us to understand the relation between the *ego* and the *id*.¹⁶⁵ It might be helpful to point to the deficiency of Freud's theory and also to see the possible contribution of the new dimension, other-indicative meaning, to the

¹⁶² See p. 5.

¹⁶³ See pp. 5–14. For further explanation see: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter 5, p. 233.

¹⁶⁵ Introduction, p. 8. To see further explanation: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 15.

discussion. Freud likens the horse to the *id* and the rider to the *ego*. The *id* has tendencies to worldly satisfactions and the *ego* legitimises its tendencies.¹⁶⁶ However, if this relation were considered via the other-indicative meaning, the relation between *id* and *ego* would be evaluated in a different way. *Id* would be considered the second aspect of the plant and animal soul. In that case, *id* and *ego* would become tools to taste the bounties in the universe, as was discussed in Chapter 4.¹⁶⁷ The Nursian understanding of the plant and animal souls is exactly in agreement with the second aspect of the Freudian *id*. Nursi writes that every single faculty is a tool for introducing the God concept. Every faculty collects data from the universe, then human intellect '*aql*' interprets them through their other-indicative meaning to attain Divine knowledge. Considering things through their other-indicative meaning is a complementary part of the true interpretation of the universe. In other words, the self-referential meaning is a necessary first step to grasp the best-fitted conclusion through the other-indicative meaning. It might be visualised that there are two circles within the circle. The interior circle is the interpretation of things through their self-referential meaning only; however, the exterior one is the interpretation of things through their other-indicative meaning. The exterior circle already incorporates or embraces the knowledge in the interior. This method represents a key contribution by Nursi¹⁶⁸ to establishing a better understanding of concepts that are widely discussed in the West as well as in Islamic literature. In the following parts of this chapter, this will be discussed by means of several examples.

According to Freud, *ego* is the reason or mind and the negotiator between the *id* and the *superego*. This main characteristic of the *ego* might be considered the human soul,

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter 4, p. 172.

¹⁶⁸ Nursi, *The Rays*, 2004, 123–198; see also 'The Seventh Ray' in Nursi, *The Rays*, 2010, 116–201, and 'The Eleventh Ray' in: *ibid.*, 234–237.

or *'aql* in Aristotelian philosophy. However, it is not the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) as described in the Qur'ān. It is necessary to discuss the *ego*, human intellect (*'aql*), human soul and self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) together to see the differences and similarities between them. After this, it should be clear whether human intellect (*'aql*) is *ego* or not. Both Nursi and Al-Ghazzālī discuss the concept of human intellect (*'aql*) in two accounts; the first is its material aspect, which is occupied with worldly matters, and the second is occupied with abstract knowledge including concepts such as Divinity. If the two aspects are balanced and considered together, this human intellect (*'aql*) might be matched with the concept of self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) in the Qur'ān. Self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) constantly watches the balance between the world and the hereafter according to Qur'ānic exegesis, as was discussed in Chapter 1. Such a man consciously strives to be better before God and also tries to understand the concept of God to attain Divine knowledge. As a result, there is a correspondence between Freudian *ego* and the material aspect of human intellect (*'aql*) or the human intellect (*'aql*) considered through self-referential meaning only and Aristotle's human soul. Furthermore, there is also another similarity between the self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and the human intellect (*'aql*), the *ego* and the human soul if they are all considered through their other-indicative meanings.

Now, the relation between the *ego* and the concept of 'I' (*anā*) in Nursi can be further discussed. If the *ego* is considered through its self-referential meaning, human intellect (*'aql*) is the most functional part of it – it is the negotiator between the *id* and the *superego*. On the other hand, the *ego* should be more comprehensive than human intellect (*'aql*) since it affects every single tool in the self besides human intellect (*'aql*). All in all, Freud's idea of the *ego* seems quite similar to Nursi's idea of the self-referential meaning of 'I' (*anā*). Just like the *ego*, the self-referential 'I' (*anā*) assumes that it has freedom and that there is no limitation to prevent its actions. However, according to Nursi the power of the self-referential aspect of 'I' (*anā*) is limited in its own power and strength in positive actions; but, in negative actions, it is

more effective than its own power, so that unbelief is such ungratefulness that it ignores the purpose of creation through absence of affirmation.¹⁶⁹ The *ego* views itself and the other things solely in the light of its nominal and apparent meaning. As has been seen, there is no connection between this aspect of ‘I’ (*anā*) or *ego* and the God concept.¹⁷⁰

Thus, Freud’s *ego* and Nursi’s self-referential meaning of ‘I’ (*anā*) are the same. Both Freud’s *ego* and Nursi’s self-referential meaning of ‘I’ (*anā*) expand and take control of other faculties in the name of bodily pleasures, the plant and animal souls, which have a tendency to invade the others.¹⁷¹ This operation is carried out both by Freud’s *ego* and by the self-referential aspect of ‘I’ (*anā*). These tendencies of the plant and animal spheres (souls) unite with ‘I’ (*anā*) to interpret everything in accordance with their own benefit alone. All the other faculties’ connections with the Divine concept are cut off by the *ego*/‘I’ (*anā*).

On the other hand, if the *ego* is considered through its other-indicative meaning, it will serve as a key to unlock the talisman of the universe and Divine qualities, as was discussed in the early part of this chapter.

Jung further discussed Freud’s discourse about the concept of self. The big difference between Jung and Freud is that there is space for deity in Jung’s works. He thinks that it is necessary to discuss concepts like self and *ego* in conjunction with the Divine knowledge. There are two important concepts, self and the *ego*–self relation, in Jung’s discourse, and it is not possible to say that Jung discusses these concepts through self-referential meaning only.

¹⁶⁹ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 336.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 556.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

As was discussed above, the Nursian method of interpretation of the universe is complementary to the Western interpretation. However, it is necessary to further clarify this complementarity. When data are produced through the self-referential meaning of things, some important dimensions are lost since there is a limitation to such a viewpoint. They are materialistic conclusions that cannot grasp the ultimate purpose of creation. For example, if an apple is considered through its self-referential meaning only, the knowledge of the apple is limited to some specific materialistic findings such as those relating to its vitamins, nutrition, its colour and smell, and so on. Such limitations prevent man from seeing other dimensions, such as the art or the engineering behind it. Thinkers like Jung and many others who have an eye for the immaterial aspects of things sometimes fell into the same mistake. However, there remain some important arguments in their works which can contribute to our discussion.

It is necessary here to emphasise Nursi's position on philosophical discussions. He was an open-minded person in evaluating any discussion. He does not address Christianity and its services to the Western world, but the materialistic interpretation of philosophy which has no room for deity.¹⁷² He also promotes the idea of supporting the line of prophecy by the line of philosophy.

To elaborate further, Jung's discussion of, for instance, the relation between the *ego* and the self, and the *ego*'s effect on the self, might be reconsidered through the Nursian other-indicative meaning. Jung introduces the self as a supreme psychic authority and the centre of the unconscious and conscious. However, the *ego* is

¹⁷² Nursi, *The Gleams*, 162.

subordinate and the centre of the conscious.¹⁷³ In other words, Jung considers that the self is objective as a supreme psychic authority, whereas the *ego* is also subordinate and subjective. However, strangely, the *ego* can still burst its limits and Jung cannot explain why and how it does this.¹⁷⁴ It can, however, be explained by the Nursian method. According to Nursi, evil-commanding (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) employs the inward and outward faculties of the self (*nafs*) through its self-referential meaning only, so that the lower part of the self (*nafs*), the plant and animal soul, takes control of the other faculties. Therefore, the *ego* becomes capable of transgressing its proper limits.¹⁷⁵

However, if the inward and outward faculties are employed through the other-indicative meaning, the self reaches the level of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*).¹⁷⁶ In this case, self has the power to take control of all faculties as supreme psychic authority. Self (*nafs*) achieves this goal **by employing** the three compartments, namely plant, animal and human soul, in respect of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*) or the belief soul (*al-nafs al-īmānī*). In other words, if the *ego* is employed through the other-indicative meaning, the positive aspect of ‘I’ (*anā*), the *ego* does not challenge or conflict with the self (*nafs*), which acts as a supreme psychic authority. In Islamic terminology this self is described as the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*). This *ego* is usually controlled by the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*). The tranquillity of the soul (*nafs*) is only valid if all the subtle faculties are employed through other-indicative meanings. However, when an individual changes the employment of the inward and outward faculties from other-indicative to

¹⁷³ See p. 5.

¹⁷⁴ See p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter 4, p. 174.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 4, p. 214.

self-referential meaning, the balance immediately disappears and reverses against the self (*nafs*).

According to Jung, the self is affected through alternations between two important states, inflation and alienation. This is realised by accompanying the identification of the *ego* with the self. These two states have been discussed in the Introduction.¹⁷⁷ The state of inflation was described as “a state in which something small (the *ego*) has arrogated to itself the qualities of something larger (the self) and hence is blown up beyond the limits of its proper size”.¹⁷⁸ This description might be associated with the concept of *ẓulm-u nafs* in the Qur’ān. Izutsu discusses the concept of *ẓulm-u nafs* in detail, and describes it as “to act in such a way as to transgress the proper limit and encroach upon the right of injustice in the sense of going beyond one’s own bounds and doing what one has no right to the transgressing of the proper limit (much or little)”.¹⁷⁹ In both descriptions, there is the action of the transgressing of the proper limit. In other words, the notion of inflation is considered as the equivalent of ‘wrongdoing’ (*ẓulm-u nafs*) in the Qur’ān, or vice versa. This equivalence provides an opportunity to discuss the concept of inflation along with the concept of ‘wrongdoing’ (*ẓulm-u nafs*).

Jung further discusses the notion of inflation along with the notion of alienation. There is an alternation of two states, inflation and alienation. Inflation causes the notion of alienation.¹⁸⁰ Izutsu interprets the Qur’ānic term *ẓulm-u nafs* as ‘wrongdoing’ and the word *ẓālim* as ‘wrong-doer’.¹⁸¹ It might be said that the wrong interpretation of Freudian *ego* or Nursian *anā* and their relations with the other

¹⁷⁷ See p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ See p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter 1, p. 61.

¹⁸⁰ See p. 5.

¹⁸¹ See Chapter 1, p. 61.

faculties of the self (*nafs*) or its compartments is *ẓulm-u nafs*, wrongdoing. Nursi further describes the misconception of the *nafs* as employing the inward and outward faculties through worldly engagements only. His definition of the misconception of the self (*nafs*) is equal to the definition of *ẓulm-u nafs* in the Qur'ān by Izutsu. On the other hand, if the interpretation of the Nursian 'I' (*anā*) or *ego* is considered through the other-indicative meaning, Nursi writes that the value of each faculty will be increased a thousandfold.¹⁸² Then it becomes a mirror for reflecting Divine qualities. This employment of the faculties might be considered equivalent to the Qur'ānic tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*). In fact, Izutsu's interpretation and Nursi's discourse are in the same line, but Nursi gives further specific descriptions for the modern man who endeavours to follow the path of the Qur'ān.

In conclusion, the state of self is depicted through the relations between *ego* and self or *nafs* and *anā*. As a result of this relation, the self (*nafs*) is realised in a negative or positive way, in other words, through self-referential meaning or other-indicative meaning. In that case, the second interpretation of the different states of the *nafs* in the Qur'ān appears. Evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*) also indicate different states of self (*nafs*).¹⁸³ These different Qur'ānic selves (*nafs*) are discussed in two accounts. In the first account, the discussion is related to the compartments of self (*nafs*). However, the second depicts the different state of the self (*nafs*) before God.

The discussions of Freud's and Jung's *ego*–self relations in conjunction with the Nursian interpretation of things through their other-indicative meaning have provided a clear understanding of the concepts of self (*nafs*). It may be said that the self (*nafs*)

¹⁸² See Chapter 4, p. 158.

¹⁸³ See Chapter, 1, p. 52.

has been discussed either through self-referential meaning or other-indicative meaning. When the other-indicative aspect of the self was ignored, the main focus of the discussion was diverted to the self-referential meaning of the self only.¹⁸⁴ This is why the motivations of some ancient philosophers, such as the sophists, were more practical and economic, rather than psychological, moral and divine. Their main focus was on the best way of living, rather than on finding out the reality of the self.¹⁸⁵ Protagoras' famous saying that "man is the measure of all things"¹⁸⁶ might be understood in respect of the self-referential interpretation of the self. If it were considered through the other-indicative meaning, man would be considered an index of the universe and the key to unlocking Divine Qualities.¹⁸⁷ However, the school of sophism departed from the path of exploring the secrets of the self. Instead, their pathway of thought ultimately led to scepticism and subjectivism.

Nursi writes that "the key of the world is in man's hand and it is attached to his self (*nafs*)".¹⁸⁸ As was discussed above, the truly interpreted *anā* or the *ego* through its other-indicative meaning is the key.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, the self (*nafs*) should also be understood through its other-indicative meaning. If the self and the *ego* are considered in relation to the concept of God, this means that man and the universe are both cosmic texts for introducing the Divine concept through the reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes. The *ego* becomes a key to realise these reflections, since it is a conscious mirror with which to understand the talisman of the universe.¹⁹⁰ In fact, although the *ego* is one of the faculties of self (*nafs*), if considered through

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter 4, p. 170.

¹⁸⁵ See p. 5.

¹⁸⁶ See p. 5.

¹⁸⁷ See Chapter 4, p. 172.

¹⁸⁸ Nursi, *The Words*, 2005, 554.

¹⁸⁹ See Chapter, 5, p. 234.

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 5, p. 230.

false interpretation it has the potential to take control of the others. This is why Jung describes the self as an inner deity.¹⁹¹ However, it is a reflection of one of the Divine qualities only. They are not separate entities according to Ibn ‘Arabī, Ghazzālī and Nursi.

According to Jung, this inner deity is the meeting point with God, and development of the inner deity is the path to understanding the Divine concept.¹⁹² However, Nursian understanding of the ‘I’ (*anā*) as a reflection of the Deity is only a starting-point on the spiritual journey.¹⁹³ In the beginning, the individual assumes that those qualities belong to him. However, during the journey he realises that they are not real but only fictive lines indicating the concept of Absoluteness. In the final step he declares: “His is the sovereignty and to Him is due all praise; His is the judgement and to Him will you all be brought back.”¹⁹⁴ He considers himself as the reflection of the Divine Names and Attributes. Nursi employs a parable to denote this relation between God and man: that of the sun and its reflection on the mirror. He considers man’s bodily aspect, plant and animal soul, as the glass mirror which reflects the Divine Names. However, the reflections on it belong to the sun as its manifestations of His Attributes.

5.10.2. SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN ACCORDANCE WITH IBN ‘ARABĪ AND BEDIÜZZAMAN SAĪD NURSI

Like Bediüzzaman Saīd Nursi, Ibn ‘Arabī also uses the mirror metaphor to discuss man’s position before God. Ibn ‘Arabī explains the mirror metaphor at the beginning of his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. He writes that God creates the universe as a mirror and man as

¹⁹¹ See p. 5.

¹⁹² See p. 5.

¹⁹³ See Chapter, 5, p. 234.

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter 5, p. 234.

the polish. However, at the end of the purification process man can also see God as a mirror to the universe and to himself. While interpreting the *ḥadīth* “A believer [*al-mu'min*] is a mirror for a believer”, Ibn ‘Arabī writes that the first Believer (*al-mu'min*) refers to God and resembles the fundamentals of his mirror metaphor. Thus the *ḥadīth* can be understood as ‘man is the mirror of God’ or ‘God is the mirror of man’. In this context, man can never know the reality of himself unless he knows God through the Divine names and Attributes.¹⁹⁵

According to Arabi, the notion of annihilation (*fanā*) is not considered as freeing man from bodily life; instead, it is considered as abandoning the idea of existence. At the end of the spiritual journey, the ultimate position is understanding the reality of the existence of God only, namely eternity (*al-baqā*). At the beginning of the spiritual journey, man has the idea of his existence and says, ‘I exist.’ Through the end of the journey and the purification process, as a result of training, man says, ‘I exist by God.’ However, at the end of the journey man confirms that ‘God exists’ and the idea of man’s existence is only an indication of the reality of the ‘existence of God’. The idea of existence, compared to the existence of the Absolute and Necessary-Being of God, is only an illusion for man. However, this illusion, coupled with a relativistic approach, gives man an opportunity to understand the existence of God.¹⁹⁶ A simplified diagram of the spiritual journey is shown in Figure 4.

¹⁹⁵ Demirli, *Islam Metafiziginde Tanrı ve İnsan: İbn Ul-Arabi ve Vahdet-i Vucud Gelenegi* [God and Man in the Metaphysics of Islam: Ibn Al-Arabi and Institution of Unity of Existence], 156.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

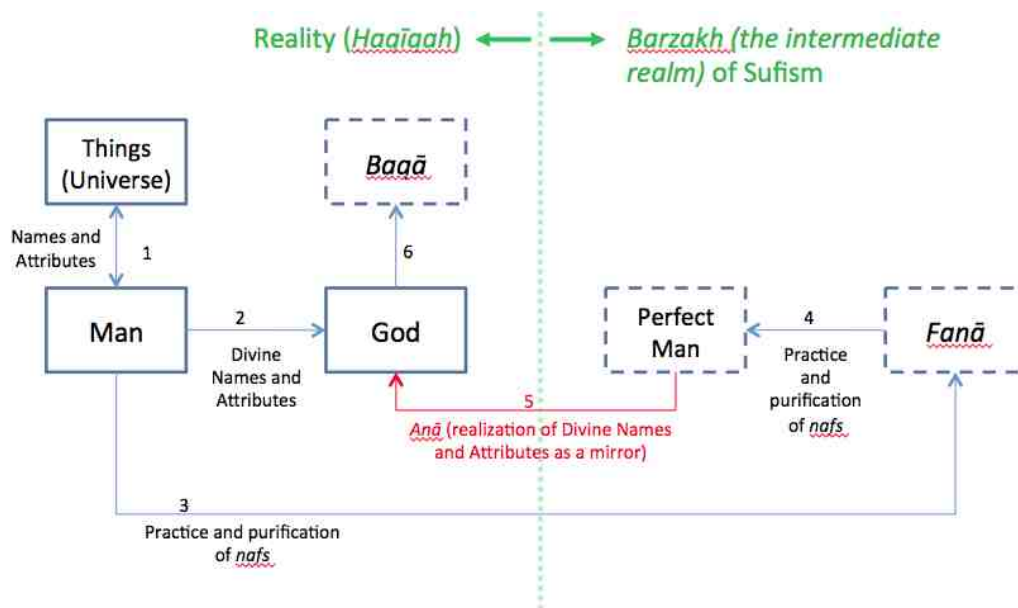


Figure 4: Simplified diagram of the spiritual journey according to classical Sufism (2)

In the path defined by the classical Sufi scholars and Ibn ‘Arabī as a means of achieving certain belief, man can only realise his mirror-like nature after abandoning the idea of existence (*al-fanā*). This ultimately leads to the development of traditions such as Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and Unity of Witnessing (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). In both traditions, the existence of matter and man are not realised, because their existence is evaluated from ‘the intermediate world’ (*Barzakh*) of Sufism. Furthermore, both traditions try to understand the Domain of Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) from ‘the intermediate world’ (*Barzakh*) of Sufism, and say “There is no existent but God” and downgrade the reality of beings to the level of imagination.¹⁹⁷ Such a statement or understanding would not violate the existence of the Divine Names such as Existent, One and Single. However, the statement that “There is no existent but

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 283.

God” would violate the manifestations of the Divine Names such as Merciful, Provider, Subduer, Compeller and Creator, and would also claim that these names are hypothetical. Bediüzzaman writes that “those names are realities like the name of Existent, they cannot be shadows; they are essential, not secondary”.¹⁹⁸

On this topic Bediüzzaman writes:

Thus, the Companions and great interpreters of the law and Imams of the Family of the Prophet said: “The reality of things is constant”; Almighty God has a manifestation through all His names in actuality. Through His creativity, all things have an accidental existence. For sure, in relation to the Necessarily Existent’s existence their existence is an extremely weak and unstable shadow, but it is not imagination, it is not fancy. Almighty God gives existence through His name of Creator and He continues that existence.¹⁹⁹

A simplified diagram of the path to certain belief as defined by Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi is shown in Figure 5.

¹⁹⁸ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 105.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

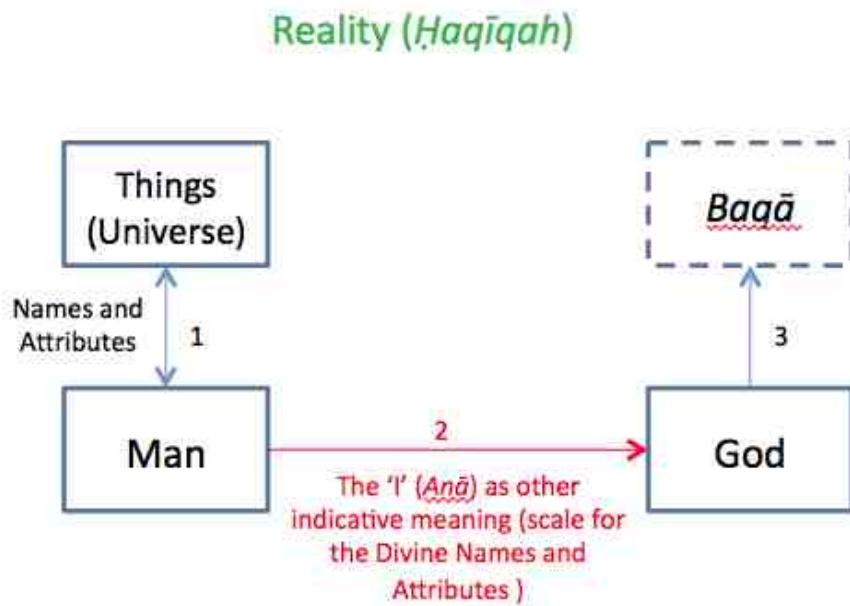


Figure 5: Simplified diagram of the path defined by Saïd Nursi

The main difference between the two paths for achieving certain belief is the presence of ‘the intermediate world’ (*Barzakh*) of Sufism. In the path defined by Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi, man does not need to enter ‘the intermediate world’ (*Barzakh*) of Sufism because he can realise his mirror-like nature through ‘I’ (*anā*), which acts as a scale for the Divine Names and Attributes. Therefore, the concept of the ‘I’ (*anā*) leads to direct understanding of the Divine Attributes.²⁰⁰ The nature of ‘I’ (*anā*) in the writings of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

²⁰⁰ Nursi, Kaynaklı, İndeksli Risale-I Nur Külliyyati: Isârâtü’l-İcâz, Mesnevî-I Nuriya, Barla Lâhikası, Kastamonu Lâhikası, Emirdağ Lâhikası, Tarihçe Hayat ... ve Diğerleri., 2: 1297.

It has already been stated that all the Divine Names and Attributes have a manifestation in actuality and that man can realise these manifestations in the Domain of Reality. The path defined by Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi is not only shorter, but also provides more in terms of Knowledge of God. To find Eternity (*al-baqā'*) through this path, man should use both human intellect (*'aql*) and heart (*qalb*).

In discussing the nature of the differences between the paths defined by great saints, Nursi uses the example of an adorned flower, a living droplet enamored of the Moon, and a translucent atom, which looks to the Sun:

Each of these possesses consciousness and some perfection, and each has a yearning for that perfection. Together with indicating many truths, these three things also allude to the spiritual voyaging of the soul, the mind, and the heart. They also correspond to three levels of those who investigate reality.²⁰¹

The flower represents intellectual thought, the droplet represents the path of sainthood (Sufism and *ṭarīqah*), and the translucent atom represents the path of prophethood. Nursi indicates that any man who follows any of these paths can find reality and realise Eternity (*al-baqā'*).

The path of the droplet is defined in Figure 3.1 and the path of the translucent atom and the flower in Figure 3.2. On the path to eternity (*'al-baqā'*), the flower (the man who follows intellectual thought) appears and reflects the Sun's light only through its colours (man's abilities), and this flower cannot realise the truth of the Sun unless it directs its attention away from itself and its soil to the Sun in the sky. Nursi talks to the heart (*qalb*) of such a man and writes that he should abandon 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*) and purify his self (*nafs*) to realise reality.

²⁰¹ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 105.

On the other hand, the translucent atom “possesses no color that he should appear through it. And he does not recognise other things that he should turn towards them. He has a sheer purity by which he holds the Sun’s image directly in the pupil of his eye.”²⁰² It might be argued here that holding “the Sun’s image directly in the pupil of his eye” refers to the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*). Thus the translucent atom can see the Sun, no matter what its form or state.

The translucent atom in this analogy represents a man who follows the path of prophethood or the method described by the *Risale-i Nur* collection and the works of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi. Therefore, it can be stated that the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*) is very important and central to the works of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi.

While Bediüzzaman was initially bewildered as to whom to follow to build the grounds for certain belief, he decided to follow the Qur’ān only (the path of prophethood).²⁰³ Instead of following the paths of sainthood or intellectual thought, Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi chose to follow the path of prophethood. At that time there were no comprehensive examples of the path of prophethood. The *Risale-i Nur* collection defines and sets the dynamics of this path for the twenty-first century. It is very important to realise that Nursi’s selection of such a path is related not only to the realisation of reality and certain belief but also to defining a path accessible to every individual. Furthermore, the path defined in *Risale-i Nur* would lead to a wider understanding of reality since it is direct and does not require any intermediary.

²⁰² Ibid., 330; See also: ‘The Twenty-Fourth Word’ in: Nursi, *The Words*, 2005.

²⁰³ Nursi, *The Letters*, 1994, 330.

5.10.3. AL-INSĀN AL-KĀMIL – PERFECT MAN IN RESPECT OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

Saīd Nursi considers Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of thought in the circle of the certain level of the knowledge of God (*al-haqq al-yaqīn*). On the other hand, Nursi has also a serious criticism of Ibn ‘Arabī’s path and his idea of Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). This will also be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Bediüzzaman Saīd Nursi made several comments about the concept of Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). In the Ninetieth Flash, Nursi writes that if a man has “extremely strong and elevated belief”, it (Unity of Being [*waḥdat al-wujūd*]) “becomes a pleasurable, luminous, acceptable level, like with those resembling Muḥyiddin al-Arabi. However, there is the possibility of falling into abysses, entering materiality, and becoming submerged in causes.”²⁰⁴

Both Nursi and Ibn ‘Arabī employ the same terminology when they discuss the relationship between man and the universe in respect of Divine knowledge. They both call Man the microcosm (*al-‘ālam-i ṣaghīr*) and the universe the macrocosm (*al-‘ālam-i kabīr*),²⁰⁵ and consider them to be cosmic texts for introducing the Divine Names and Attributes. In fact, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, the whole of the universe, including man, is nothing other than the manifestation or theophany of God’s Names.²⁰⁶ Cinar states that man can represent each and every component of the universe, which is why he is considered the Great world (*al-‘ālam al-akbar*) by Mawlana. In reality, man is a microcosm, which can reflect the macrocosm. Man is the only creature in the universe that has the manifestations of all Divine Names and Attributes.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Makki and Neyli, Ibn Arabi Mudafaasi.

²⁰⁵ Chittick, The Self-Disclosure of God Principles of Ibn Al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology, 12.

²⁰⁶ Chittick, ‘The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī’, 10.

²⁰⁷ <http://www.dem.org.tr/ded/11/DED11mak3.pdf> (last accessed 26 May 2011).

Ibn ‘Arabī considers all sciences, such as the positive and social sciences, to be different aspects of the Divine Knowledge. Thus, all sciences indicate the Divine Unity in the cosmos.²⁰⁸ As is highlighted in this chapter, Nursi further discusses the process of realising the Divine Unity in detail through other-indicative meaning.²⁰⁹

Ibn ‘Arabī also considers the ‘perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as one of the most important aspects of the Divine purpose of creation because man is a unique mirror. As was discussed in the chapter on Sufism, Jami builds the idea of the ‘perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) on an understanding of the theory of Divine Names and Attributes. He examines a verse from the Qur’ān which declares that Allah created man with His two hands. Jami interprets “two hands” as two categories of the Divine Quality in Sufism: the Attributes of Beauty (*jamāl*) and those of Majesty (*jalāl*). According to Jami, this approach explains the perfection of the human being, since there is no mirror to reflect both the Attributes of Beauty (*jamāl*) and those of Majesty (*jalāl*) in the universe other than man.

Nursi also discusses the concept of the ‘perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) through the Divine Qualities. However, his categorisation is divided into two branches as the world of the Names and the world of the Attributes. As was discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, Nursi makes a certain distinction between them. Briefly, the world of the Names is related to the visible realm (*al-ālam al-shahādah*), whereas the world of Attributes is related to the unseen (*ghayb* or *malakūt*). Two hands might be understood as both worlds, Names and Attributes. Nursi further discusses the Names and Attributes of God through the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). The

²⁰⁸ Medkur et al., *Ibn Arabi Anisina : Makaleler*, 8.

²⁰⁹ See Chapter 5, p. 234.

concept of ‘I’ (*anā*) is a key to the world of the Names, which are reflected in the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*). ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*) is related to the world of the Attributes, which is the second aspect of the visible world (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*) according to Nursi. Man achieves Divine knowledge and the perfect form through the journey in the worlds of Names and Attributes.

Man should realise his reality of the self through the true nature of ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). Nursi further writes that the Perfection of God can be seen on the mirror of man’s poverty. Notions such as imperfection and impotence point to God’s Perfection.²¹⁰ The golden meaning of all tools is balanced and in perfect harmony through the truly interpreted ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). Human intellect (‘*aql*’) plays a critical role in this process through *tafakkur* – reflection as a means of reading the universe – and also the human self (*nafs*) as a cosmic text. Heart (*qalb*) is another dynamic tool that has an effect on the process of becoming ‘the perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*). The human intellect (‘*aql*’), which considers both the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*) and the invisible/unseen realm (*al-‘ālam al-ghayb*), reads the other aspects of the *qalb* and produces the Divine knowledge. The last quality of man’s path is *shafkat*, one of the highest Divine qualities with which to understand the God concept.

Nursi’s understanding of ‘the perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is realised by ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*) through four notions, impotence (‘*ajz*’), poverty (*faqr*), compassion (*shafaqah*) and reflection (*tafakkur*). The man who achieves this goal becomes an index of the universe in respect of both material and spiritual worlds (‘*ālamūn*’). This means that man can journey in the seen and the unseen worlds to

²¹⁰ See Chapter 4, p. 190.

achieve a better understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes (*al-asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*).²¹¹

According to Ibn 'Arabī and Jī'li, the things in the universe stand on three notions, God's self (*Dhāt*), the Divine Names, and the Attributes. The realities of things are these three 'infinite notions', which are reflected on the 'finite things' continuously.²¹² Man is the only mirror to reflect all the Divine Qualities. According to Ibn 'Arabī, there are five realms. The first is Absolute Unseen (*al-'ālam al-lahūt*), which belongs to God's Self (*Dhāt*) and is known by God only. The fifth is 'the perfect man' (*al-insān al-kāmil*), which reflects the first realm, Absolute Unseen (*al-'ālam al-lāhūt*). Man also reflects the Divine Names and Attributes. Ghazzālī discusses the reality of human beings through four major faculties, self (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūh*) and human intellect (*'aql*). He further writes that there is another faculty, which has the meaning of the four, but he does not name it. Nursi discusses the concept of 'I' (*anā*) as one of the aspects of the numerous aspects of the 'Trust'. In the end, it decides the ultimate states of the inward and outward subtle faculties of the self (*nafs*). Nursi, Ghazzālī and Ibn 'Arabī emphasise the same meaning; therefore, *anā* in Nursi might be considered the reflection of the Absolute Unseen (*'ālam al-lāhūt*).

²¹¹ Hakki, *Lubbu'l-Lubb [The Kernel of the Kernel]*, 52.

²¹² Medkur et al., *Ibn Arabi Anisina : Makaleler*, 45.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to provide a synthesis of Western and Islamic thought on the concept of self and its relationship with the concept of God. The aim of this study might be explained through an allegory which is often employed by Sufis to describe how different paths develop while trying to understand the talisman of the universe. It is about several people, in a dark room, who try to recognise an elephant only by touching it. One of them touches the elephant's foot, another its trunk, another its tail, etc. Because none of them is able to comprehend the totality of the elephant, each supposes that the elephant is limited to what they have already experienced or found. Their comments would not possess balance and proportionality as regards the reality of the elephant. Similarly, thinkers from a variety of backgrounds have touched on the topic of this study and have made precious contributions to the argument over the centuries. This study has also aimed to make a contribution to the topic, not only by making connections, but also through in-depth theological and philosophical discussion of the secrets of the self.

Western thought has focused on the human intellect (*'aql*) rather than on the Divine revelation as a means of establishing the reality of things. While searching for the reality of things, man has always placed himself at the centre of everything. Most of the time, the driving force in this quest has been man's own benefit rather than the reality and purpose of things, which in most cases has been a secondary or complementary goal. Divine revelation, on the other hand, provides man with the objectivity that is required to understand the reality of things in the universe and beyond. In a sense, it relates everything (as it is) to everything else and does not violate the rights or the values of things for the sake of other things. As a matter of fact, there is no problem in using the intellectual mind intensively, but, to understand any concept from God's point of view, knowledge of the Divine Message is essential.

This study recognises that there is no complementary match between these two notions, which were produced via different epistemologies in Western and Islamic literatures. According to Izutsu, it is a misconception to try to clarify what words such as ‘self’, ‘ego’, ‘I’, ‘*nafs*’, ‘*anā*’, ‘*anāniyah*’, etc. mean by investigating their equivalent words in different languages. Therefore, Izutsu developed a specific method, incorporating seven principles, of discerning the real meaning of any word in another language. Thus, employing ‘equivalent words’ was not applied in the framework of this thesis, in order to protect the research from distortion.

Nursi has developed a method of discussion based on self-referential and other-indicative meanings, which have been extensively discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 to make a clear distinction between Western and Islamic literatures. According to Nursi, the main difference between materialist philosophy and Islamic thought is their reference points in understanding or interpreting things in the universe. Nursi writes that things in the universe can be considered in two different ways: in accordance with their self-referential meaning, or in accordance with their other-indicative meaning. According to Nursi, self-referential meaning is related to the material aspect of things. The knowledge produced about the creation through self-referential meaning would be limited to things’ functions and their materialistic relationship with their environment only. By contrast, the other-indicative meaning of things is occupied with the immaterial aspect of creation as well. It ultimately leads to certain knowledge about the concept of God.

The two methods of interpretation, self-referential meaning and other-indicative meaning, are not incompatible: there is a close relation between the two. Using the data produced by the materialistic method is an important step in attaining abstract knowledge, which is related to the immaterial aspect of things. In other words, employing the method of other-indicative meaning involves nothing other than investigating the concept of God through materialistic data. That is why Nursi further writes that since the time of the Prophet Adam there are two lines of thought, the line

of Prophethood and the line of Philosophy. Whenever the line of Philosophy has joined the line of Prophethood humanity has experienced progress and harmony, and whenever it has not, disharmony. Nursi appreciates the achievements and methods of philosophy only on condition that if it considers things through their other-indicative meaning as well. This guidance creates the assurance that the reality of things will not be violated for the sake of the short-term benefits or desires of man.

As was emphasised above, the differentiator between those two lines of thought is the interpretation of existence. In other words, self-referential meaning, which is represented by philosophy, is occupied only with the material aspect of the universe; it interprets creation on its own account and writes ‘How beautiful it is’ but not ‘How beautifully it has been made’. On the other hand, the line of prophecy is interested in the second aspect of the things, which is occupied with the Divine concept *marifah* and considers creation in its other-indicative meaning. These lines of thought, which might be represented by Western and Islamic literatures, normally speak different languages on the topic of self, owing to differences in their concerns. Nursi provides a common ground by arguing that what they talk about are two different aspects of a single reality. As was emphasised above, Nursi achieves this through his method of investigation based on the other-indicative meaning set beside the self-referential meaning. This approach provides not only a common ground but also a path to a systematic method of discussion that can bridge the gap between Western and Islamic literatures.

Through the materialist approach, the self-referential interpretation of the existence, even man, the perfect creature in the universe, cannot understand himself. In a sense, he limits himself to a domain with no connections to the Divine, while all his faculties are designed for establishing such a connection. He can never ask the question ‘why?’, but instead asks the question ‘how?’. According to Nursi, man can unravel the secrets about himself and the universe by using the mind in the way established by the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah*. In reality, the function of mind is to reach out to the

abstract knowledge through using the knowledge of the things in the universe or scientific data. Therefore, the mind considers the universe as a cosmic text. Thus it reaches out to the ultimate knowledge of reality, or, in other words, the knowledge of God in abstract form through this path.

Ghazali follows a similar approach in discussing the major elements of man such as self (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), human intellect (*'aql*), etc. His arguments are based on those concepts' material aspects, 'the visible world' (*al-'ālam al-mulk wa'l-shahādah*), and their immaterial aspect, 'the world of dominion' (*al-'ālam al-malakūt*). However, in his discourse material and immaterial aspects do not intersect and exist as two independent entities. On the other hand, for Nursi these two entities are interrelated.

The concept of self has also taken its own share from this approach or method of understanding. In the line of philosophy, the ultimate wisdom of the creation is limited by its worldly value and duration. Then, of course, it is not possible to infer a meaning or wisdom from a puzzle-like picture when several crucial pieces are missing. Since the time of Aristotle, the self has been considered as having three compartments, namely plant, animal and human soul. Classical Islamic philosophy (*kalām*) has embraced the same categorisation, with slight differences. This is not greatly surprising, since the investigatory method is the same materialistic method of science, which investigates the concept of self through its self-referential meaning only. The Qur'ān also makes its own categorisation in order to elaborate the subject: evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*). The different categorisations by the Qur'ān and materialist philosophy indicate some incompatibility between the two categorisations. Such an ambiguity proposes that it is not possible to discuss the concept of self and *nafs* by means of cross-referencing both literatures, Islamic and materialist philosophy. Nursi, for the first time, brought another dimension to the discussion of concepts such as self and *nafs* by employing both literatures. This

tangible method of discussion provides an opportunity to shed light on the concept by employing both the Qur'ānic and the materialistic philosophy at the same time.

Nursi calls the new dimension of the self belief soul (*al-nafs al-imanī*). He did not add a new compartment to the self, but brought a new interpretation of each existing compartment. What this new interpretation introduced is nothing other than the second aspect of each compartment of the self, their immaterial aspect or their interpretation in accordance with their other-indicative meaning. Nursi believes that if the method of materialist philosophy were to have been employed in order to understand the knowledge of God, humanity would have achieved luminous periods in history.

Nursi's new method of investigating through both self-referential meaning and other-indicative meaning makes huge contributions to the concept of self. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the Qur'ān mentions three different levels of the *nafs*: evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) and tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*). This Qur'ānic categorisation of self (*nafs*) has been discussed together with Nursi's perspective of self-referential meaning and other-indicative meaning in Chapters 4 and 5.

Evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) employs inward and outward faculties of the self, through their self-referential meaning or in respect of worldly aspects. This employment brings out such a man as aims at worldly pleasures only and is alienated from his reality of self (*nafs*). Worldly engagement of the subtle faculties of the self (*nafs*) can be matched with the Freudian *id*, since it also aims at satisfaction of bodily pleasures. The *id* has an inclination to take over the control of the other faculties. There is a great similarity in between the *id* and the evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), and both of them allow no space or room for the Divine knowledge.

According to Izutsu's method of semantic analysis, a term can be understood by explaining its negative form or antonym. Similarly, the employment or engagement of man's faculties in opposition to evil-commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) might be considered as tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*). To employ all the inward and outward faculties of man to obtain Divine knowledge, or to employ all the faculties in accordance with their other-indicative meaning, is a path to achieving tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*). This is also the basis of the Nursian method of personal purification.

There is an interesting contrast between the Nursian understanding of tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*) and the Freudian *superego*. According to Freud, the ultimate purpose of the human being is to achieve realisation of the human soul, in other words, to be a perfect individual who has no reference to the concept of God. Like that of the other materialists, it is an interpretation of the human soul through its self-referential meaning only.

The last category of the Qur'ānic classification of the *nafs* is self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*). Qur'ānic swearing on self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*), which is a conscious action, already indicates that the term has some resemblance to *aql* (reason/mind). As was broadly discussed in Chapter 1, self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*) always questions itself and is critical for purification of the self. It considers man's actions in respect of both worldly life and the hereafter.

According to Nursi, the perfect path to follow for purification of self (*nafs*) is to employ each subtle faculty in relation to the Divine Knowledge or through its other-indicative meaning. In other words, purification of the self (*nafs*) is achieved by balancing the compartments of *nafs*, which Aristotle calls the golden mean. However, there is a major difference between Nursi's and Aristotle's understandings of the golden mean. According to Aristotle, the golden mean is achieved through the self-referential interpretation of man's faculties. According to Nursi, perfect balance or the

golden mean is only achieved by employing all the subtle faculties through their other-indicative meaning.

One original area of this research, which has not been studied before, is the analysis of the concepts of self and *ego* in accordance with their other-indicative meanings. Jung's contribution to the subject, the relation between *ego* and self, is significant, but still not complete. Through the Nursian perspective, the reality of both concepts, self and *ego*, might be understood much more clearly. Jung cannot explain the relations between *ego* and self. *Ego*, which is subordinate and subjective, is the centre of consciousness only before or against the self, which is the objective and supreme psychic authority, the centre of the unconscious and the conscious. Strangely, however, *ego* can still burst its bounds and stretch over the self. This situation can be explained by the Nursian understanding. Nursi asserts that if human beings were to be interpreted through their self-referential meaning only, the subtle faculties would be occupied in respect of worldly engagements, and as a result the lower part of the self, the plant and animal souls, would take over control of the other faculties and ultimately rule the totality of man or his self. Therefore, the *ego* becomes capable of transgressing its proper limits. On the other hand, if the inward and outward faculties, three compartments of self, are interpreted through the other-indicative meaning and directed to their ultimate satisfaction, the Divine Knowledge (*marifah*), the self reaches the level of tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*). In this case, self becomes a supreme psychic authority. Self can achieve this target, if the inward and outward subtle faculties, including plant and animal souls, are employed through their other-indicative meaning, or belief soul (*al-nafs īmānī*). In other words, if the *ego* is employed through the other-indicative meaning rather than the self-referential meaning only, it might be said that this *ego* would be equal to the positive aspect of 'I' (*anā*). This *ego* is usually controlled by tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭ'mainnah*). However, this tranquil soul (*nafs*) is not valid if inward and outward subtle faculties are not occupied with their other-indicative meanings. In short, Jung's theoretical relations are only valid when the *ego* is interpreted through its other-indicative

meaning rather than its self-referential meaning. Otherwise, the balance immediately disappears and reverses against the self (*nafs*).

Following all the discussions about the interpretations of existence through its self-referential and other-indicative meanings, it is easier to understand why the motivations of some ancient philosophers such as the sophists were more practical than psychological, moral and divine. Their main focus was the material aspect of the universe rather than the immaterial. In other words, the self-referential interpretation of existence formed their method of investigation. As a result, the school of sophism departed from the path exploring the secrets of the self (*nafs*). Instead, their pathway of thought ultimately led to scepticism and subjectivism. Protagoras' famous saying "Man is the measure of all things" might be enough to summarise their thought. By contrast, in the Nursian interpretation of existence the universe, including human beings, is considered through its other-indicative meaning; then man becomes an index of the universe and the key to unlocking Divine Qualities.

According to Nursi, the true meaning of the universe and self (*nafs*) is realised through the other-indicative interpretation of existence. In such a case, man and the universe become a cosmic text to introduce the Divine concept through the reflections of the Divine Names and Attributes. Nursi further discusses the certain knowledge through the relation between self (*nafs*) and 'I' (*anā*). Nursi considers the 'I' (*anā*) to be the key to the talisman of the universe and also to the necessary worlds. But this key is attached to man's self (*nafs*).

Nursi's concept of 'I' (*anā*) is a unique tool, which he uses to provide valuable insights regarding some popular arguments. As was discussed in the Introduction, in attempting to discuss concepts such as God in relation to self (*nafs*), or self (*nafs*) in relation to God, some modern-day thinkers, like Paul Tillich and Martin Buber, realise the limitations of the human mind, understanding and experience. Although they realise such limitations, instead of developing a comprehensive solution or an

explanation of the phenomena, Martin Buber moves towards mysticism and develops terms like “inborn Thou” and “glimpse of eternity” to express or highlight concepts which are beyond our grasp. Tillich, similarly, uses the interpretation of symbols to open up different levels of reality and awareness. This kind of approach, which is lacking the tools or guidance of Divine Revelation, again leaves individuals with very limited knowledge and with a very complicated system of thought.

By contrast, Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi not only realises these limitations, but also describes them in detail in relation to the concept of God. According to him, self (*nafs*), self-affirmation and self-interpretation are concepts that cannot be discussed if their essence and reality are isolated from the concept of God. In developing his argument, Nursi established true and logical links, which can be operated by individuals in different situations.

As was discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the thoughts of certain scholars in the history of Islam are similar to those of Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi. Understanding of the concept of belief in Ibn Arabi also depends on consideration of the knowledge of the universe through Divine Revelation. All Ibn Arabi’s theories are built on this consideration of this knowledge. As a matter of fact, Nursi declares this trend through a statement in his works, and writes: “Belief in God is creation’s highest aim and most sublime result, and humanity’s most exalted rank is the knowledge of Him. The most radiant happiness and sweetest bounty for man and jinn is love of God contained within knowledge of God ...”

Nursi considers the concepts of self (*nafs*) and ‘I’ (*anā*) together. He uses the mirror metaphor to explain the nature and function of each of the two notions. According to Nursi, the Divine Names and Attributes are reflected in the self (*nafs*), and self (*nafs*) is the mirror that holds the image. ‘I’ (*anā*) is the image in the mirror like self (*nafs*). It is unique and subjective rather than objective. If the image ‘I’ (*anā*) is considered under the aspect of other-indicative meaning, then it leads to an understanding of the

Divine Names and Attributes. However, if it is considered under the aspect of self-referential meaning, ‘I’ (*anā*) denies being an image but claims to have and be the source of all the Names and Attributes.

Like Jung, Nursi agrees that as a starting-point for the spiritual journey, or to obtain Divine Knowledge, one could assume that one owns the qualities at the beginning. During the journey he realises that they are not real, but only fictive lines to indicate the concept of Absoluteness. In the final step he declares: “His is the sovereignty and to Him is due all praise; His is the judgment and to Him will you all be brought back.” He considers himself as the reflection of the Divine Names and Attributes. Nursi employs a parable to denote this relation between God and man: the sun and its reflection on the mirror. He considers man’s bodily aspects, plant and animal souls, as the glass mirror, which reflects the Divine Names.

A similar analogy is seen in Sufism. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the famous statement that “he who knows his self (*nafs*) knows his God” also helps us to understand the relation between God and man. It also emphasises the importance of a true understanding of man himself for attaining knowledge of God. Bediüzzaman Saïd Nursi considers the self (*nafs*) to be the comprehensive mirror of the Divine Names and Attributes, and ‘I’ (*anā*) as the tool for understanding and reflecting on them.

Ibn Arabi and Ghazali do not mention the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*) in their works. Ghazali discusses the spiritual aspect of man through four elements, namely heart (*qalb*), spirit (*rūh*), self (*nafs*) and human intellect (‘*aql*). But when he talks about the totality of the human being he also mentions the fifth subtle faculty, which concludes the other four. Even though Ghazali discovered the existence and affection of this subtle faculty, he could not name it. Ibn Arabi emphasises the comprehensive nature of man in attaining the Divine Knowledge, so he introduces man as the mirror of five realms (*ḥaḍārāt al-khamsah*), which are *al-ghayb al-muṭlaq* (Absolute Unseen), *al-‘ālam al-*

jabarūt (the realm of the Transcendental Manifestation of Divine Attributes and Names), *al-‘ālam al-malakūt* (the world of dominion), *al-shuhūd al-muṭlaq* (the Corporeal or Visible realm), and *al-insān al-kāmil* (Perfect Man). He further writes that there is nothing or no one other than man, who is the mirror to *al-ghayb al-muṭlaq* (the Absolute Unseen). However, he does not give further details about the reflection. It might be said that both Ibn Arabi and Ghazali imply the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*).

As a matter of fact, Nursi was the first Muslim scholar to discuss the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*). In Chapter 5, the differences between the concept of *fana* and ‘I’ (*anā*) were discussed in detail. The major difference is the presence of the intermediate realm (*Barzakh*) of Sufism as a means of achieving certain belief. In the path defined by Nursi, there is no need to enter the intermediate realm (*Barzakh*) of Sufism. The concept of *fana* is related to the world of the Divine Names; however, ‘I’ (*anā*) is related to the World of the Divine Attributes rather than to Names. In classical Sufi understanding of the Divine Knowledge, the world of the Divine Names is the first stage in the spiritual journey before the world of the Divine Attributes. The spiritual voyager who is supposed to complete progression in the world of the Divine Names can then start to progress in the world of the Divine Attributes. The world of the Names is reflected by the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shadāh*). However, the world of the Divine Attributes is related to the inward spiritual faculties rather than to the outward faculties. The Nursian purification process is achieved through *wijdān* (conscience) and its four main components, namely spiritual intellect (*fu’ād, laṭīfa-i Rabbaniyah*), willpower (*irādah*), consciousness (*zihn*) and the power of perceptiveness (*his*). Man can realise his mirror-like nature through ‘I’ (*anā*), which acts as a scale for the Divine Names and Attributes. Therefore, the concept of the ‘I’ (*anā*) leads to an understanding of the Divine Attributes directly. The purification method through the intermediate realm (*Barzakh*) of Sufism is much more complex, and longer, than the Nursian method. Especially for modern man, current conditions are not suitable for following the classical path. However, the Nursian method is valid

and applicable for modern man as a means whereby he can fulfil his potential to be a ‘perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

There is consensus on the definition of ‘the perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) between the major Sufi streams. They consider the ‘perfect man’ as one of the most important aspects of the Divine purpose of creation, since it has a unique position as a mirror for reflecting all the Divine Names and Attributes at the same time on the same mirror. Jami argues that there is no mirror for reflecting both the Attributes of Beauty (*jamāl*) and those of Majesty (*jalāl*) in the universe other than man.

Nursi also discusses the concept of ‘the perfect man’ (*al-insān al-kāmil*) through the Divine Qualities. However, his categorisation is divided into two branches, the world of the Names and the world of the Attributes. Nursi makes a certain distinction between them: the world of the Names is related to the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*), whereas the world of Attributes is related to the invisible, unseen realm (*ghayb* or *malakūt*). Nursi further discusses the Names and Attributes of God through the concept of ‘I’ (*anā*) and ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*). The concept of *anā* provides a key to the world of the Names, which are reflected in the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*). ‘I-ness’ (*anāniyah*) is related to the world of the Attributes, which is the second aspect of the visible realm (*al-‘ālam al-shahādah*) according to Nursi. Man achieves Divine knowledge and the perfect form through journeying in the worlds of Names and Attributes.

In conclusion, as has been shown via several examples, the Nursian method of discussion, self-referential meaning and the other-indicative interpretation of existence, is applicable to both Western and Islamic literatures. As a result, scientific methodology can only be built upon either a self-referential interpretation of existence or an other-indicative interpretation. Using this point of view, religious–non-religious or secular–non-secular, all studies might be discussed on similar grounds. Nursi’s take on man himself and his potentiality is also developed via the same method of

discussion. If 'I' (*anā*), which is a key for unravelling the secrets of man himself and the universe, is considered from the aspect of other-indicative meaning, it leads to an understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes. However, if it is considered from the aspect of self-referential meaning, then 'I' (*anā*) denies being a measure but claims to have real existence and to be the source of all the Names and Attributes. Nursi's understanding of *al-insān al-kāmil* is realised by 'I' (*anā*) and 'I-ness' (*anāniyah*). A man who achieves this goal becomes an index of the universe in respect of both material and spiritual worlds (*'ālamūn*). This means that man can journey in the seen and the unseen worlds to achieve a better understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes (*al-asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*).

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Appendix 1 **Qurānic Verses According to Typology of *Nafs***

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 9/M	Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves , and realise [it] not!	self or person
2: 44/M	Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget [To practise it] yourselves , and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?	self or person
2: 48/M	Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped [from outside].	self or person
2: 48/M	Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped [from outside].	self or person
2: 54/M	And remember Moses said to his people: "O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So turn [in repentance] to your Maker, and slay yourselves [the wrong-doers]; that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker." Then He turned towards you [in forgiveness]: For He is Oft- Returning, Most Merciful.	self or person
2: 54/M	And remember Moses said to his people: "O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So turn [in repentance] to your Maker, and slay yourselves [the wrong-doers]; that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker." Then He turned towards you [in forgiveness]: For He is Oft- Returning, Most Merciful.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 57/M	And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails, saying: "Eat of the good things We have provided for you: " [But they rebelled]; to us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls .	self or person
2: 72/M	Remember ye slew a man and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime: But Allah was to bring forth what ye did hide.	self or person
2: 84/M	And remember We took your covenant [to this effect]: Shed no blood amongst you, nor turn out your own people from your homes: and this ye solemnly ratified, and to this ye can bear witness.	self or person
2: 85/M	After this it is ye, the same people, who slay among yourselves , and banish a party of you from their homes; assist [Their enemies] against them, in guilt and rancour; and if they come to you as captives, ye ransom them, though it was not lawful for you to banish them. Then is it only a part of the Book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest? but what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? – and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.	self or person
2: 87/M	We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers. We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear [Signs] and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you a messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? – Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 90/M	Miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls , in that they deny [the revelation] which Allah has sent down, in insolent envy that Allah of His Grace should send it to any of His servants He pleases: Thus have they drawn on themselves Wrath upon Wrath. And humiliating is the punishment of those who reject Faith.	self or person
2: 102/M	They followed what the evil ones gave out [falsely] against the power of Solomon: the blasphemers Were, not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men Magic, and such things as came down at Babylon to the angels Harut and Marut. But neither of these taught anyone [Such things] without saying: "We are only for trial; so do not blaspheme." They learned from them the means to sow discord between man and wife. But they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's permission. And they learned what harmed them, not what profited them. And they knew that the buyers of [magic] would have no share in the happiness of the Hereafter. And vile was the price for which they did sell their souls , if they but knew!	self or person
2: 109/M	Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could Turn you [people] back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy , after the Truth hath become Manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook, Till Allah accomplish His purpose; for Allah Hath power over all things.	self or person
2: 110/M	And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity: And whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees Well all that ye do.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 123/M	Then guard yourselves against a-Day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall compensation be accepted from her nor shall intercession profit her nor shall anyone be helped [from outside].	self or person
2: 123/M	Then guard yourselves against a-Day when one soul shall not avail another , nor shall compensation be accepted from her nor shall intercession profit her nor shall anyone be helped [from outside].	self or person
2: 130/M	And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose and surrendered pure in this world: And he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the Righteous.	self or person
2: 187/M	Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves ; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah Hath ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast Till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques. Those are Limits [set by] Allah: Approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint.	self or person
2: 207/M	And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah: And Allah is full of kindness to [His] devotees.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 223/M	Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand; and fear Allah. And know that ye are to meet Him [in the Hereafter], and give [these] good tidings to those who believe.	self or person
2: 228/M	Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. Nor is it lawful for them to hide what Allah Hath created in their wombs, if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation. And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree [of advantage] over them. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.	self or person
2: 231/M	When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their [‘Iddat], either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to injure them, [or] to take undue advantage; if any one does that; He wrongs his own soul . Do not treat Allah’s Signs as a jest, but solemnly rehearse Allah’s favours on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well acquainted with all things.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 233/M	<p>The mothers shall give such to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.</p> <p>No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be Treated unfairly on account of her child. Nor father on account of his child, an heir shall be chargeable in the same way. If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster–mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay [the mother] what ye offered, on equitable terms. But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what ye do.</p>	self or person
2: 234/M	<p>If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days: When they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner. And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.</p>	self or person
2: 235/M	<p>There is no blame on you if ye make an offer of betrothal or hold it in your hearts. Allah knows that ye cherish them in your hearts: But do not make a secret contract with them except in terms honourable, nor resolve on the tie of marriage till the term prescribed is fulfilled. And know that Allah Knoweth what is in your hearts, and take heed of Him; and know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing.</p>	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 235	There is no blame on you if ye make an offer of betrothal or hold it in your hearts . Allah knows that ye cherish them in your hearts: But do not make a secret contract with them except in terms honourable, nor resolve on the tie of marriage till the term prescribed is fulfilled. And know that Allah Knoweth what is in your hearts , and take heed of Him; and know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing.	self or person
2: 240/M	Those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance and residence; but if they leave [The residence], there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves , provided it is reasonable. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.	self or person
2: 265/M	And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls , is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not Heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it. Allah seeth well whatever ye do.	self or person
2: 272/M	It is not required of thee [O Messenger], to set them on the right path, but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls , and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not Be dealt with unjustly.	self or person
2: 281/K	And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
2: 284/M	To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah Calleth you to account for it. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth, for Allah hath power over all things.	self or person
2: 286/M	On no soul doth Allah Place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. [Pray:] "Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden Like that which Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector; Help us against those who stand against faith."	self or person
3: 25/M	But how [will they fare] when we gather them together against a day about which there is no doubt, and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without [favour or] injustice?	self or person
3: 28/M	Let not the believers Take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by way of precaution, that ye may Guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you [To remember] Himself ; for the final goal is to Allah.	Allah
3: 30/M	"On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil. But Allah cautions you [To remember] Himself. And Allah	Allah

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	is full of kindness to those that serve Him."	
3: 30/M	"On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil. But Allah cautions you [To remember] Himself . And Allah is full of kindness to those that serve Him."	
3: 61/M	If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after [full] knowledge Hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together, – our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves : Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!"	self or person
3: 61	If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after [full] knowledge Hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together, – our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves : Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!"	self or person
3: 69/M	It is the wish of a section of the People of the Book to lead you astray. But they shall lead astray [Not you], but themselves , and they do not perceive!	self or person
3: 93/M	All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel Made unlawful for itself , before the Law [of Moses] was revealed. Say: "Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth."	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
3: 117/M	What they spend in the life of this [material] world May be likened to a wind which brings a nipping frost: It strikes and destroys the harvest of men who have wronged their own souls : it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong themselves.	self or person
3: 117/M	What they spend in the life of this [material] world May be likened to a wind which brings a nipping frost: It strikes and destroys the harvest of men who have wronged their own souls: it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong themselves .	self or person
3: 135/M	And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls , earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins, – and who can forgive sins except Allah? – and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in [the wrong] they have done.	self or person
3: 145/M	Nor can a soul die except by Allah’s leave, the term being fixed as by writing. If any do desire a reward in this life, We shall give it to him; and if any do desire a reward in the Hereafter, We shall give it to him. And swiftly shall We reward those that [serve us with] gratitude.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
3: 154/M	<p>After [the excitement] of the distress, He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber, while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, Moved by wrong suspicions of Allah – suspicions due to ignorance. They said: “What affair is this of ours?” Say thou: "Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah’s.” They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee. They say [to themselves]: “If we had had anything to do with this affair, We should not have been in the slaughter here.” Say: “Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death”; but [all this was] that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts. For Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.</p>	self or person
3: 154	<p>After [the excitement] of the distress, He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber, while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, Moved by wrong suspicions of Allah – suspicions due to ignorance. They said: "What affair is this of ours?" Say thou: "Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah’s." They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee. They say [to themselves]: “If we had had anything to do with this affair, We should not have been in the slaughter here.” Say: “Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death”; but [all this was] that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts. For Allah knoweth well the</p>	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	secrets of your hearts.	
3: 161/M	No prophet could [ever] be false to his trust. If any person is so false, He shall, on the Day of Judgment, restore what he misappropriated; then shall every soul receive its due, – whatever it earned, – and none shall be dealt with unjustly.	self or person
3: 164/M	Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a messenger from among themselves , rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error.	self or person
3: 165/M	What! When a single disaster smites you, although ye smote [your enemies] with one twice as great, do ye say? – “Whence is this?” Say [to them]: “It is from yourselves : For Allah hath power over all things.”	self or person
3: 168/M	[They are] the ones that say, [of their brethren slain], while they themselves sit [at ease]: “If only they had listened to us they would not have been slain.” Say: “Avert death from your own selves , if ye speak the truth.”	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
3: 178/M	Let not the Unbelievers think that our respite to them is good for themselves : We grant them respite that they may grow in their iniquity: But they will have a shameful punishment.	self or person
3: 185/M	Every soul shall have a taste of death: And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object [of Life]: For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.	self or person
3: 186/M	Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves ; and ye shall certainly Hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil, – then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.	self or person
4: 1/M	O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person , created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered [like seeds] countless men and women; – reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual [rights], and [reverence] the wombs [That bore you]: for Allah ever watches over you.	self or person
4: 4/M	And give the women [on marriage] their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure , remit any part of it to you, Take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.	self or person
4: 29/M	O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you Traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill [or destroy] yourselves : for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful!	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
4: 49/M	Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who claim sanctity for themselves ? Nay – but Allah Doth sanctify whom He pleaseth. But never will they fail to receive justice in the least little thing.	self or person
4: 63/M	Those men, – Allah knows what is in their hearts; so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls .	self or person
4: 64/M	We sent not a messenger, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves , come unto thee and asked Allah’s forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful.	self or person
4: 65/M	But no, by the Lord, they can have no [real] Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.	self or person
4: 66/M	If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives or to leave their homes, very few of them would have done it: But if they had done what they were [actually] told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone farthest to strengthen their [faith];	self or person
4: 79/M	Whatever good, [O man!] happens to thee, is from Allah; but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy [own] soul . and We have sent thee as a messenger to [instruct] mankind. And enough is Allah for a witness.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
4: 84/M	Then fight in Allah’s cause – Thou art held responsible only for thysself – and rouse the believers. It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the Unbelievers; for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment.	self or person
4: 95/M	Not equal are those believers who sit [at home] and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons . Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit [at home]. Unto all [in Faith] Hath Allah promised good: But those who strive and fight Hath He distinguished above those who sit [at home] by a special reward, –	self or person
4: 95	Not equal are those believers who sit [at home] and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons . Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit [at home]. Unto all [in Faith] Hath Allah promised good: But those who strive and fight Hath He distinguished above those who sit [at home] by a special reward, –	self or person
4: 97/M	When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: “In what [plight] Were ye?” They reply: “Weak and oppressed Were we in the earth.” They say: “Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away [From evil]?” Such men will find their abode in Hell, – What an evil refuge! –	self or person
4: 107/M	Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls ; for	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and crime:	
4: 110/M	If any one does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.	self or person
4: 111/M	And if any one earns sin. he earns it against His own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.	self or person
4: 113/M	But for the Grace of Allah to thee and his Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray. But [in fact] they will only Lead their own souls astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least. For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou Knewest not [before]: And great is the Grace of Allah unto thee.	self or person
4: 135/M	O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves , or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be [against] rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts [of your hearts], lest ye swerve, and if ye distort [justice] or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.	self or person
5: 25/M	He said: "O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother: So separate us from this rebellious people!"	self or person
5: 30/M	The (selfish) soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother: He murdered him, and became (himself) one of the lost ones.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
5: 32/M	<p>On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: And if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our Apostles with Clear Signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.</p>	self or person
5: 32/M	<p>On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: And if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our Apostles with Clear Signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.</p>	self or person
5: 45/M	<p>We ordained therein for them: “Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal.” But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) wrongdoers.</p>	self or person
5: 45/M	<p>We ordained therein for them: "Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal." But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are</p>	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	(no better than) wrongdoers.	
5: 52/M	Those in whose hearts is a disease – thou seest how eagerly they run about amongst them, saying: “We do fear lest a change of fortune bring us disaster.” Ah! Perhaps Allah will give (thee) victory, or a decision according to His Will. Then will they repent of the thoughts, which they secretly harboured in their hearts.	self or person
5: 70/M	We took the Covenant of the Children of Israel and sent them apostles. Every time there came to them an apostle with what they themselves desired not – some (of these) they called impostors, and some they (go so far as to) slay.	self or person
5: 80/M	Thou seest many of them turning in friendship to the Unbelievers. Evil indeed are (the works) which their souls have sent forward before them (with the result), that Allah’s wrath is on them, and in torment will they abide.	self or person
5: 105/M	O ye who believe! Guard your own souls : If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is to Allah: It is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do.	self or person
5: 116/M	And behold! Allah will say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst say unto men, ‘Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah’?” He will say: “Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	knowest what is in my heart , though I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden.”	
5: 116/M	And behold! Allah will say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst say unto men, ‘Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah’?” He will say: “Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine . For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden.”	Allah
6: 12/K	Say: "To whom belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth?" Say: "To Allah. He hath inscribed for Himself [the rule of] Mercy. That He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt whatever. It is they who have lost their own souls, that will not believe.	Allah
6: 12/K	Say: "To whom belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth?" Say: "To Allah. He hath inscribed for Himself [the rule of] Mercy. That He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt whatever. It is they who have lost their own souls , that will not believe.	self or person
6: 20/K	Those to whom We have given the Book know this as they know their own sons. Those who have lost their own souls refuse therefore to believe.	self or person
6: 24/K	Behold! how they lie against their own souls ! But the [lie]	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	which they invented will leave them in the lurch.	
6: 26/K	Others they keep away from it, and themselves they keep away; but they only destroy their own souls , and they perceive it not.	self or person
6: 54/K	When those come to thee who believe in Our signs, Say: "Peace be on you: Your Lord hath inscribed for Himself [the rule of] mercy: verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented, and amend [his conduct], lo! He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.	Allah
6: 70/K	Leave alone those who take their religion to be mere play and amusement, and are deceived by the life of this world. But proclaim [to them] this [truth]: that every soul delivers itself to ruin by its own acts: it will find for itself no protector or intercessor except Allah: if it offered every ransom, [or reparation], none will be accepted: such is [the end of] those who deliver themselves to ruin by their own acts: they will have for drink [only] boiling water, and for punishment, one most grievous: for they persisted in rejecting Allah.	self or person
6: 93/K	Who can be more wicked than one who inventeth a lie against Allah, or saith, "I have received inspiration", when he hath received none, or [again] who saith, "I can reveal the like of what Allah hath revealed"? If thou couldst but see how the wicked [do fare] in the flood of confusion at death! – the angels stretch forth their hands, saying], "Yield up your souls : this day shall ye receive your reward, – a penalty of shame, for that ye used to tell lies against Allah, and	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	scornfully to reject of His signs!"	
6: 98/K	It is He Who hath produced you from a single person : here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure: We detail Our signs for people who understand.	self or person
6: 104/K	"Now have come to you, from your Lord, proofs [to open your eyes]: if any will see, it will be for [the good of] his own soul ; if any will be blind, it will be to his own [harm]: I am not [here] to watch over your doings."	self or person
6: 123/K	Thus have We placed leaders in every town, its wicked men, to plot [and burrow] therein: but they only plot against their own souls , and they perceive it not.	self or person
6: 130/K	"O ye assembly of Jinns and men! came there not unto you messengers from amongst you, setting forth unto you My signs, and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say: "We bear witness against ourselves ." It was the life of this world that deceived them. So against themselves will they bear witness that they rejected Faith.	jinn and human
6: 130/K	"O ye assembly of Jinns and men! came there not unto you messengers from amongst you, setting forth unto you My signs, and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say: "We bear witness against ourselves." It was the life of this world that deceived them. So against themselves will they bear witness that they rejected Faith.	jinn and human

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
6: 151/K	Say: "Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath [really] prohibited you from": Join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want; – We provide sustenance for you and for them; – come not nigh to shameful deeds. Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.	self or person
6: 152/K	And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength; give measure and weight with [full] justice; – no burden do We place on any soul , but that which it can bear; – whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfil the covenant of Allah: thus doth He command you, that ye may remember.	self or person
6: 158/K	Are they waiting to see if the angels come to them, or thy Lord [Himself], or certain of the signs of thy Lord! the day that certain of the signs of thy Lord do come, no good will it do to a soul to believe in them then if it believed not before nor earned righteousness through its faith. Say: "Wait ye: we too are waiting."	self or person
6: 164	Say: "Shall I seek for [my] Cherisher other than Allah, when He is the Cherisher of all things [that exist]? Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards Allah: He will tell you the truth of the things wherein ye disputed."	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
7: 9/K	Those whose scale will be light, will be their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated Our signs.	self or person
7: 23/K	They said: “Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls : If thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.”	self or person
7: 37/K	Who is more unjust than one who invents a lie against Allah or rejects His Signs? For such, their portion appointed must reach them from the Book [of decrees]: until, when our messengers [of death] arrive and take their souls, they say: "Where are the things that ye used to invoke besides Allah?" They will reply, "They have left us in the lurch." And they will bear witness against themselves, that they had rejected Allah.	self or person
7: 42/K	But those who believe and work righteousness, – no burden do We place on any soul , but that which it can bear, – they will be Companions of the Garden, therein to dwell [for ever].	self or person
7: 53/K	Do they just wait for the final fulfilment of the event? On the day the event is finally fulfilled, those who disregarded it before will say: “The messengers of our Lord did indeed bring true [tidings]. Have we no intercessors now to intercede on our behalf? Or could we be sent back? then should we behave differently from our behaviour in the past.” In fact they will have lost their souls , and the things they invented will leave them in the lurch.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
7: 160/K	And remember it was said to them: “Dwell in this town and eat therein as ye wish, but say the word of humility and enter the gate in a posture of humility: We shall forgive you your faults; We shall increase [the portion of] those who do good.”	self or person
7: 172/K	When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves , [saying]: "Am I not your Lord [who cherishes and sustains you]?"– They said: "Yea! We do testify!" [This], lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: "Of this we were never mindful" ...	self or person
7: 177/K	Evil as an example are people who reject Our signs and wrong their own souls .	self or person
7: 188/K	Say: “I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as Allah willeth. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith.”	self or person
7: 189/K	It is He Who created you from a single person , and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her [in love]. When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about [unnoticed]. When she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah their Lord, [saying]: “If Thou givest us a goodly child, we vow we shall [ever] be grateful.”	self or person
7: 192/K	No aid can they give them, nor can they aid themselves !	Aliha
7: 197/K	“But those ye call upon besides Him, are unable to help you, and indeed to help themselves .”	Aliha

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
7: 205/K	And do thou [O reader!] Bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy [very] soul , with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.	self or person
8: 53/M	“Because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their [own] souls : and verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth [all things].”	self or person
8: 72/M	Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the Faith, with their property and their persons , in the cause of Allah, as well as those who gave [them] asylum and aid, – these are [all] friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but came not into exile, ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance. And [remember] Allah seeth all that ye do.	self or person
9: 17/M	It is not for such as join gods with Allah, to visit or maintain the mosques of Allah while they witness against their own souls to infidelity. The works of such bear no fruit: In Fire shall they dwell.	self or person
9: 20/M	Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allah’s cause, with their goods and their persons , have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are the people who will achieve [salvation].	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
9: 35/M	On the Day when heat will be produced out of that [wealth] in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, their flanks, and their backs. – "This is the [treasure] which ye buried for yourselves : taste ye, then, the [treasures] ye buried!"	self or person
9: 36/M	The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve [in a year] – so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are sacred: that is the straight usage. So wrong not yourselves therein, and fight the Pagans all together as they fight you all together. But know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves .	self or person
9: 41/M	Go ye forth, [whether equipped] lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons , in the cause of Allah. That is best for you, if ye [but] knew.	self or person
9: 42/M	If there had been immediate gain [in sight], and the journey easy, they would [all] without doubt have followed thee, but the distance was long, [and weighed] on them. They would indeed swear by Allah, "If we only could, we should certainly have come out with you": They would destroy their own souls ; for Allah doth know that they are certainly lying.	self or person
9: 44/M	Those who believe in Allah and the Last Day ask thee for no exemption from fighting with their goods and persons. And Allah knoweth well those who do their duty.	self or person
9: 55/M	Let not their wealth nor their [following in] sons dazzle thee: in reality Allah's plan is to punish them with these things in this life, and that their souls may perish in their [very] denial	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	of Allah.	
9: 70/M	Hath not the story reached them of those before them? – the People of Noah, and ‘Ad, and Thamud; the People of Abraham, the men of Midian, and the cities overthrown. To them came their messengers with clear signs. It is not Allah Who wrongs them, but they wrong their own souls.	self or person
9: 81/M	Those who were left behind [in the Tabuk expedition] rejoiced in their inaction behind the back of the Messenger of Allah: they hated to strive and fight, with their goods and their persons , in the cause of Allah: they said, “Go not forth in the heat.” Say, “The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat.” If only they could understand!	self or person
9: 85/M	Nor let their wealth nor their [following in] sons dazzle thee: Allah’s plan is to punish them with these things in this world, and that their souls may perish in their [very] denial of Allah.	self or person
9: 88/M	But the Messenger, and those who believe with him, strive and fight with their wealth and their persons : for them are [all] good things: and it is they who will prosper.	self or person
9: 111/M	Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs [in return] is the garden [of Paradise]: they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur’an: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
9: 118/M	[He turned in mercy also] to the three who were left behind; [they felt guilty] to such a degree that the earth seemed constrained to them, for all its spaciousness, and their [very] souls seemed straitened to them, – and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah [and no refuge] but to Himself. Then He turned to them, that they might repent: for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.	self or person
9: 120/M	It was not fitting for the people of Medina and the Bedouin Arabs of the neighbourhood, to refuse to follow Allah’s Messenger, nor to prefer their own lives to his: because nothing could they suffer or do, but was reckoned to their credit as a deed of righteousness, – whether they suffered thirst, or fatigue, or hunger, in the cause of Allah, or trod paths to raise the ire of the Unbelievers, or received any injury whatever from an enemy: for Allah suffereth not the reward to be lost of those who do good; –	self or person
9: 120/M	It was not fitting for the people of Medina and the Bedouin Arabs of the neighbourhood, to refuse to follow Allah’s Messenger, nor to prefer their own lives to his: because nothing could they suffer or do, but was reckoned to their credit as a deed of righteousness, – whether they suffered thirst, or fatigue, or hunger, in the cause of Allah, or trod paths to raise the ire of the Unbelievers, or received any injury whatever from an enemy: for Allah suffereth not the reward to be lost of those who do good; –	self or person
9: 128/K	Now hath come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves : it grieves him that ye should perish: ardently	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	anxious is he over you: to the Believers is he most kind and merciful.	
10: 15/K	But when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed unto them, those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, Say: "Bring us a reading other than this, or change this." Say: "It is not for me, of my own accord , to change it: I follow naught but what is revealed unto me: if I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the penalty of a Great Day [to come]."	self or person
10: 23/K	But when he delivereth them, behold! they transgress insolently through the earth in defiance of right! O mankind! your insolence is against your own souls , – an enjoyment of the life of the present: in the end, to Us is your return, and We shall show you the truth of all that ye did.	self or person
10: 30/K	There will every soul prove [the fruits of] the deeds it sent before: they will be brought back to Allah their rightful Lord, and their invented falsehoods will leave them in the lurch.	self or person
10: 44/K	Verily Allah will not deal unjustly with man in aught: It is man that wrongs his own soul.	self or person
10: 49/K	Say: "I have no power over any harm or profit to myself except as Allah willeth. To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor [an hour] can they advance [it in anticipation]."	self or person
10: 54/K	Every soul that hath sinned, if it possessed all that is on earth, would fain give it in ransom: They would declare [their] repentance when they see the penalty: but the judgment between them will be with justice, and no wrong	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	will be done unto them.	
10: 100/K	No soul can believe, except by the will of Allah, and He will place doubt [or obscurity] on those who will not understand.	self or person
10: 108/K	Say: "O ye men! Now Truth hath reached you from your Lord! those who receive guidance, do so for the good of their own souls ; those who stray, do so to their own loss: and I am not [set] over you to arrange your affairs."	self or person
11: 21/K	They are the ones who have lost their own souls : and the [fancies] they invented have left them in the lurch!	self or person
11: 31/K	"I tell you not that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor do I know what is hidden, nor claim I to be an angel. Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise that Allah will not grant them [all] that is good: Allah knoweth best what is in their souls : I should, if I did, indeed be a wrong-doer."	self or person
11: 101/K	It was not We that wronged them: They wronged their own souls : the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decree of thy Lord: Nor did they add aught [to their lot] but perdition!	self or person
11: 105/K	The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except by His leave: of those [gathered] some will be wretched and some will be blessed.	self or person
12: 18/K	They stained his shirt with false blood. He said: "Nay, but your minds have made up a tale [that may pass] with you, [for me] patience is most fitting: Against that which ye assert, it is Allah [alone] Whose help can be sought."	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
12: 23/K	But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his [true] self : she fastened the doors, and said: “Now come, thou [dear one]!” He said: “Allah forbid! truly [thy husband] is my lord! he made my sojourn agreeable! truly to no good come those who do wrong!”	self or person
12: 26/K	He said: “It was she that sought to seduce me – from my [true] self .” And one of her household saw [this] and bore witness, [thus]: – “If it be that his shirt is rent from the front, then is her tale true, and he is a liar!”	self or person
12: 30/K	Ladies said in the City: “The wife of the [great] ‘Aziz is seeking to seduce her slave from his [true] self : Truly hath he inspired her with violent love: we see she is evidently going astray.”	self or person
12: 32/K	She said: “There before you is the man about whom ye did blame me! I did seek to seduce him from his [true] self but he did firmly save himself guiltless! ... and now, if he doth not my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and [what is more] be of the company of the vilest!”	self or person
12: 51/K	[The king] said [to the ladies]: “What was your affair when ye did seek to seduce Joseph from his [true] self ?” The ladies said: “Allah preserve us! no evil know we against him!” Said the ‘Aziz’s wife: “Now is the truth manifest [to all]: it was I who sought to seduce him from his [true] self: He is indeed of those who are [ever] true [and virtuous].	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
12: 51/K	[The king] said [to the ladies]: “What was your affair when ye did seek to seduce Joseph from his [true] self?” The ladies said: “Allah preserve us! no evil know we against him!” Said the ‘Aziz’s wife: “Now is the truth manifest [to all]: it was I who sought to seduce him from his [true] self : He is indeed of those who are [ever] true [and virtuous].	self or person
12: 53/K	“Nor do I absolve my own self [of blame]: the [human] soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oftforgiving, Most Merciful.”	self or person
12: 53/K	“Nor do I absolve my own self [of blame]: the [human] soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oftforgiving, Most Merciful.”	self or person
12: 54/K	So the king said: “Bring him unto me; I will take him specially to serve about my own person .” Therefore when he had spoken to him, he said: “Be assured this day, thou art, before our own presence, with rank firmly established, and fidelity fully proved!	self or person
12: 68/K	And when they entered in the manner their father had enjoined, it did not profit them in the least against [the plan of] Allah: It was but a necessity of Jacob’s soul, which he discharged. For he was, by our instruction, full of knowledge [and experience]: but most men know not.	self or person
12: 77/K	They said: “If he steals, there was a brother of his who did steal before [him].” But these things did Joseph keep locked in his heart, revealing not the secrets to them. He [simply] said [to himself]: “Ye are the worse situated; and Allah knoweth best the truth of what ye assert!”	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
12: 83/K	Jacob said: “Nay, but ye have yourselves contrived a story [good enough] for you. So patience is most fitting [for me]. Maybe Allah will bring them [back] all to me [in the end]. For He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom.”	self or person
13: 11/K	For each [such person] there are [angels] in succession, before and behind him: They guard him by command of Allah. Allah does not change a people’s lot unless they change what is in their hearts . But when [once] Allah willeth a people’s punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect.	self or person
13: 16/K	Say: “Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth?” Say: “[It is] Allah.” Say: “Do ye then take [for worship] protectors other than Him, such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves ?” Say: “Are the blind equal with those who see? Or the depths of darkness equal with light?” Or do they assign to Allah partners who have created [anything] as He has created, so that the creation seemed to them similar? Say: “Allah is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and Irresistible.”	self or person
13: 33/K	Is then He who standeth over every soul [and knoweth] all that it doth, [like any others]? And yet they ascribe partners to Allah. Say: “But name them! is it that ye will inform Him of something he knoweth not on earth, or is it [just] a show of words?” Nay! to those who believe not, their pretence seems pleasing, but they are kept back [thereby] from the path. And those whom Allah leaves to stray, no one can guide.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
13: 42/K	Those before them did [also] devise plots; but in all things the masterplanning is Allah's He knoweth the doings of every soul : and soon will the Unbelievers know who gets home in the end.	self or person
14: 22/K	And Satan will say when the matter is decided: "It was Allah Who gave you a promise of Truth: I too promised, but I failed in my promise to you. I had no authority over you except to call you but ye listened to me: then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls . I cannot listen to your cries, nor can ye listen to mine. I reject your former act in associating me with Allah. For wrong-doers there must be a grievous penalty."	self or person
14: 45/K	"And ye dwelt in the dwellings of men who wronged their own souls ; ye were clearly shown how We dealt with them; and We put forth [many] parables in your behoof!"	self or person
14: 51/K	That Allah may requite each soul according to its deserts; and verily Allah is swift in calling to account.	self or person
16: 7/K	And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not [otherwise] reach except with souls distressed: for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful,	self or person
16: 28/K	"[Namely] those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrong-doing to their own souls ." Then would they offer submission [with the pretence], "We did no evil [knowingly]." [The angels will reply], "Nay, but verily Allah knoweth all that ye did;	self or person
16: 33/K	Do the [ungodly] wait until the angels come to them, or there comes the Command of thy Lord [for their doom]? So did	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	those who went before them. But Allah wronged them not: nay, they wronged their own souls .	
16: 72/K	And Allah has made for you mates [and companions] of your own nature , and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren, and provided for you sustenance of the best: will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah's favours? –	self or person
16: 89/K	One day We shall raise from all Peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves : and We shall bring thee as a witness against these [thy people]: and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims.	self or person
16: 111/K	One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed [fully] for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.	self or person
16: 111/K	One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed [fully] for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.	self or person
16: 111/K	One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed [fully] for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.	self or person
16: 118/K	To the Jews We prohibited such things as We have mentioned to thee before: We did them no wrong, but they were used to doing wrong to themselves .	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
17: 7/K	If ye did well, ye did well for yourselves ; if ye did evil, [ye did it] against yourselves. So when the second of the warnings came to pass, [We permitted your enemies] to disfigure your faces, and to enter your Temple as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction all that fell into their power.	self or person
17: 14/K	[It will be said to him:] “Read thine [own] record: Sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee.”	self or person
17: 15/K	Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit: who goeth astray doth so to his own loss : No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another: nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent an messenger [to give warning].	self or person
17: 25/K	Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts : If ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again [in true penitence].	self or person
17: 33/M?	Nor take life – which Allah has made sacred – except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority [to demand qisas or to forgive]: but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped [by the Law].	self or person
18: 6/K	Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death, following after them, in grief, if they believe not in this Message.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
18: 28/M?	And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; no obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.	self or person
18: 35/K	He went into his garden in a state [of mind] unjust to his soul : He said, “I deem not that this will ever perish,	self or person
18: 51/K	I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor [even] their own creation : nor is it for helpers such as Me to take as lead [men] astray!	self or person
18: 74/K	Then they proceeded: until, when they met a young man, he slew him. Moses said: “Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none? Truly a foul [unheard of] thing hast thou done!”	self or person
18: 74/K	Then they proceeded: until, when they met a young man, he slew him. Moses said: “Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none ? Truly a foul [unheard of] thing hast thou done!”	self or person
20: 15/K	“Verily the Hour is coming – My design is to keep it hidden – for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its Endeavour.	self or person
20: 40/K	“Behold! thy sister goeth forth and saith, ‘shall I show you one who will nurse and rear the [child]?’ So We brought thee back to thy mother, that her eye might be cooled and she should not grieve. Then thou didst slay a man , but We saved thee from trouble, and We tried thee in various ways. Then	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	didst thou tarry a number of years with the people of Midian. Then didst thou come hither as ordained, O Moses!	
20: 41/K	“And I have prepared thee for Myself [for service].”	Allah
20: 67/K	So Moses conceived in his mind a [sort of] fear.	self or person
20: 96/K	He replied: “I saw what they saw not: so I took a handful [of dust] from the footprint of the Messenger, and threw it [into the calf]: thus did my soul suggest to me.”	self or person
21: 35/K	Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. to Us must ye return.	self or person
21: 43/K	Or have they gods that can guard them from Us? They have no power to aid themselves , nor can they be defended from Us.	Aliha
21: 47/K	We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least, and if there be [no more than] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it [to account]: and enough are We to take account.	self or person
21: 64/K	So they turned to themselves and said, “Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!”	self or person
21: 102/K	Not the slightest sound will they hear of Hell: what their souls desired, in that will they dwell.	self or person
23: 62/K	On no soul do We place a burden greater than it can bear: before Us is a record which clearly shows the truth: they will never be wronged.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
23: 103/K	But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls , in Hell will they abide.	self or person
24: 6	And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have [in support] no evidence but their own , – their solitary evidence [can be received] if they bear witness four times [with an oath] by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth;	self or person
24: 12	Why did not the believers – men and women – when ye heard of the affair, – put the best construction on it in their own minds and say, “This [charge] is an obvious lie”?	self or person
24: 61	It is no fault in the blind nor in one born lame, nor in one afflicted with illness, nor in yourselves , that ye should eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, or your mothers, or your brothers, or your sisters, or your father’s brothers or your father’s sisters, or your mother’s brothers, or your mother’s sisters, or in houses of which the keys are in your possession, or in the house of a sincere friend of yours: there is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately. But if ye enter houses, salute each other – a greeting of blessing and purity as from Allah. Thus does Allah make clear the signs to you: that ye may understand.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
24: 61	It is no fault in the blind nor in one born lame, nor in one afflicted with illness, nor in yourselves , that ye should eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, or your mothers, or your brothers, or your sisters, or your father's brothers or your father's sisters, or your mother's brothers, or your mother's sisters, or in houses of which the keys are in your possession, or in the house of a sincere friend of yours: there is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately. But if ye enter houses, salute each other – a greeting of blessing and purity as from Allah. Thus does Allah make clear the signs to you: that ye may understand.	self or person
25: 3	Yet have they taken, besides him, gods that can create nothing but are themselves created; that have no control of hurt or good to themselves ; nor can they control death nor life nor resurrection.	Aliha
25: 21	Such as fear not the meeting with Us [for Judgment] say: "Why are not the angels sent down to us, or [why] do we not see our Lord?" Indeed they have an arrogant conceit of themselves , and mighty is the insolence of their impiety!	self or person
25: 68	Those who invoke not, with Allah, any other god, nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred except for just cause, nor commit fornication; – and any that does this [not only] meets punishment.	self or person
26: 3	It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief, that they do not become Believers.	self or person
27: 14/K	And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof: so see what was	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	the end of those who acted corruptly!	
27: 40/K	Said one who had knowledge of the Book: “I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!” Then when [Solomon] saw it placed firmly before him, he said: “This is by the Grace of my Lord! – to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! and if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is [a gain] for his own soul ; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of all Needs, Supreme in Honour!”	self or person
27: 44/K	She was asked to enter the lofty Palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she [tucked up her skirts], uncovering her legs. He said: “This is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass.” She said: “O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul : I do [now] submit [in Islam], with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds.”	self or person
27: 92/K	And to rehearse the Qur’an: and if any accept guidance, they do it for the good of their own souls , and if any stray, say: “I am only a Warner.”	self or person
28: 16/K	He prayed: “O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul ! Do Thou then forgive me!” So [Allah] forgave him: for He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.	self or person
28: 19/K	Then, when he decided to lay hold of the man who was an enemy to both of them, that man said: “O Moses! Is it thy intention to slay me as thou slewest a man yesterday? Thy intention is none other than to become a powerful violent man in the land, and not to be one who sets things right!”	self or person
28: 33/K	He said: “O my Lord! I have slain a man among them , and I	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	fear lest they slay me.	
29: 6/K	And if any strive [with might and main], they do so for their own souls : for Allah is free of all needs from all creation.	self or person
29: 40/K	Each one of them We seized for his crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado [with showers of stones]; some were caught by a [mighty] Blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned [in the waters]: It was not Allah Who injured [or oppressed] them: ” They injured [and oppressed] their own souls .	self or person
29: 57	Every soul shall have a taste of death in the end to Us shall ye be brought back.	self or person
30: 8/K	Do they not reflect in their own minds ? Not but for just ends and for a term appointed, did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them: yet are there truly many among men who deny the meeting with their Lord [at the Resurrection]!	self or person
30: 9/K	Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? They were superior to them in strength: they tilled the soil and populated it in greater numbers than these have done: there came to them their messengers with Clear [Signs]. [Which they rejected, to their own destruction]: It was not Allah Who wronged them, but they wronged their own souls .	self or person
30: 21/K	And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves , that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your [hearts]: verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
30: 28/K	He does propound to you a similitude from your own [experience] : do ye have partners among those whom your right hands possess, to share as equals in the wealth We have bestowed on you? Do ye fear them as ye fear each other? Thus do we explain the Signs in detail to a people that understand.	self or person
30: 28/K	He does propound to you a similitude from your own [experience]: do ye have partners among those whom your right hands possess, to share as equals in the wealth We have bestowed on you? Do ye fear them as ye fear each other? Thus do we explain the Signs in detail to a people that understand.	self or person
30: 44/K	Those who reject Faith will suffer from that rejection: and those who work righteousness will spread their couch [of repose] for themselves [in heaven]:	self or person
31: 12/K	we bestowed [in the past] Wisdom on Luqman: “Show [thy] gratitude to Allah.” Any who is [so] grateful does so to the profit of his own soul : but if any is ungrateful, verily Allah is free of all wants, Worthy of all praise.	self or person
31: 28/M?	And your creation or your resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul : for Allah is He Who hears and sees [all things].	self or person
31: 34/K	Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah [alone]. It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs. Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn on the morrow: Nor does anyone know in what land he is to die. Verily with Allah is full knowledge and He is acquainted	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	[with all things].	
31: 34/K	Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah [alone]. It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs. Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn on the morrow: Nor does anyone know in what land he is to die. Verily with Allah is full knowledge and He is acquainted [with all things].	self or person
32: 13/K	If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance: but the Word from Me will come true, “I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together.”	self or person
32: 17/K	Now no person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden [in reserve] for them – as a reward for their [good] deeds.	self or person
32: 27/K	And do they not see that We do drive rain to parched soil [bare of herbage], and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and themselves ? Have they not the vision?	self or person
33: 6/M	The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves , and his wives are their mothers. Blood-relations among each other have closer personal ties, in the Decree of Allah. Than [the Brotherhood of] Believers and Muhajirs: nevertheless do ye what is just to your closest friends: such is the writing in the Decree [of Allah].	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
33: 37/M	Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favour: “Retain thou [in wedlock] thy wife, and fear Allah.” But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved [his marriage] with her, with the necessary [formality], We joined her in marriage to thee: in order that [in future] there may be no difficulty to the Believers in [the matter of] marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary [formality] [their marriage] with them. And Allah’s command must be fulfilled.	self or person
33: 50/M	O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers; and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee; and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated [from Makka] with thee; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her; – this only for thee, and not for the Believers [at large]; We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess; – in order that there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.	self or person
34: 19/K	But they said: “Our Lord! Place longer distances between our journeystages”: but they wronged themselves [therein]. At length We made them as a tale [that is told], and We	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	dispersed them all in scattered fragments. Verily in this are Signs for every [soul that is] patiently constant and grateful.	
34: 50/K	Say: "If I am astray, I only stray to the loss of my own soul : but if I receive guidance, it is because of the inspiration of my Lord to me: it is He Who hears all things, and is [ever] near."	self or person
35: 8/K	Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good, [equal to one who is rightly guided]? For Allah leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. So let not thy soul go out in [vainly] sighing after them: for Allah knows well all that they do!	self or person
35: 18/K	Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burdens if one heavily laden should call another to [bear] his load. Not the least portion of it can be carried [by the other]. Even though he be nearly related. Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord unseen and establish regular Prayer. And whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul; and the destination [of all] is to Allah.	self or person
35: 32/K	Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our Servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls ; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah's leave, foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace.	self or person
36: 36/K	Glory to Allah, Who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own [human] kind and [other] things of which they have no knowledge.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
36: 54/K	Then, on that Day, not a soul will be wronged in the least, and ye shall but be repaid the meeds of your past Deeds.	self or person
37: 113/K	We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are [some] that do right, and [some] that obviously do wrong, to their own souls .	self or person
39: 6/K	He created you [all] from a single person : then created, of like nature, his mate; and he sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs: He makes you, in the wombs of your mothers, in stages, one after another, in three veils of darkness. such is Allah, your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs [all] dominion. There is no god but He: then how are ye turned away [from your true Centre]?	self or person
39: 15/K	“Serve ye what ye will besides him.” Say: “Truly, those in loss are those who lose their own souls and their People on the Day of Judgment: Ah! that is indeed the [real and] evident Loss!	self or person
39: 41/K	Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in Truth, for [instructing] mankind. He, then, that receives guidance benefits his own soul: but he that strays injures his own soul . Nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs.	self or person
39: 42/K	It is Allah that takes the souls [of men] at death; and those that die not [He takes] during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back [from returning to life], but the rest He sends [to their bodies] for a term appointed verily in this are Signs for those who reflect.	self or person
39: 53/M	Say: “O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	all sins: for He is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful.	
39: 56/K	“Lest the soul should [then] say: ‘Ah! Woe is me! – In that I neglected [my duty] towards Allah, and was but among those who mocked!’ –	self or person
39: 70/K	And to every soul will be paid in full [the fruit] of its Deeds; and [Allah] knoweth best all that they do.	self or person
40: 10/K	The Unbelievers will be addressed: “Greater was the aversion of Allah to you than [is] your aversion to yourselves , seeing that ye were called to the Faith and ye used to refuse.”	self or person
40: 17/K	That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned; no injustice will there be that Day, for Allah is Swift in taking account.	self or person
41: 31/K	“We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter: therein shall ye have all that your souls shall desire; therein shall ye have all that ye ask for! –	self or person
41: 46/K	Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul : nor is thy Lord ever unjust [in the least] to His Servants.	self or person
41: 53/K	Soon will We show them our Signs in the [furthest] regions [of the earth], and in their own souls , until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?	self or person
42: 11/K	[He is] the Creator of the heavens and the earth: He has made for you pairs from among yourselves , and pairs among cattle: by this means does He multiply you: there is	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees [all things].	
42: 45/K	And thou wilt see them brought forward to the [Penalty], in a humble frame of mind because of [their] disgrace, [and] looking with a stealthy glance. And the Believers will say: “Those are indeed in loss, who have given to perdition their own selves and those belonging to them on the Day of Judgment. Behold! Truly the Wrong-doers are in a lasting Penalty!”	self or person
43: 71/K	To them will be passed round, dishes and goblets of gold: there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that their eyes could delight in: and ye shall abide therein [for eye].	self or person
45: 15/K	If any one does a righteous deed, it ensures to the benefit of his own soul ; if he does evil, it works against [his own soul]. In the end will ye [all] be brought back to your Lord.	self or person
45: 22/K	Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged.	self or person
47: 38/M	Behold, ye are those invited to spend [of your substance] in the Way of Allah: But among you are some that are niggardly. But any who are niggardly are so at the expense of their own souls . But Allah is free of all wants, and it is ye that are needy. If ye turn back [from the Path], He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you!	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
48: 10/M	Verily those who plight their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to Allah: the Hand of Allah is over their hands: then anyone who violates his oath, does so to the harm of his own soul , and anyone who fulfils what he has covenanted with Allah, – Allah will soon grant him a great Reward.	self or person
49: 11/M	O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the [latter] are better than the [former]: Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the [latter are better than the [former]: Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by [offensive] nicknames: Illseeming is a name connoting wickedness, [to be used of one] after he has believed: And those who do not desist are [indeed] doing wrong.	self or person
49: 15/M	Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah: Such are the sincere ones.	self or person
50: 16/K	It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than [his] jugular vein.	self or person
50: 21/K	And there will come forth every soul: with each will be an [angel] to drive, and an [angel] to bear witness.	self or person
51: 21/K	As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?	self or person
53: 23/K	These are nothing but names which ye have devised, – ye and your fathers, – for which Allah has sent down no authority [whatever]. They follow nothing but conjecture and	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
	what their own souls desire! – Even though there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord!	
53: 32/M	Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only [falling into] small faults, – verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness. He knows you well when He brings you out of the earth, And when ye are hidden in your mothers’ wombs. Therefore justify not yourselves : He knows best who it is that guards against evil.	self or person
57: 14/M	[Those without] will call out, “Were we not with you?” [The others] will reply, “True! but ye led yourselves into temptation; ye looked forward [to our ruin]; ye doubted [Allah’s Promise]; and [your false] desires deceived you; until there issued the Command of Allah. And the Deceiver deceived you in respect of Allah.	self or person
57: 22/M	No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence: That is truly easy for Allah:	self or person
58: 8/M	Turnest thou not thy sight towards those who were forbidden secret counsels yet revert to that which they were forbidden [to do]? And they hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to thee, they salute thee, not as Allah salutes thee, [but in crooked ways]: And they say to themselves, “Why does not Allah punish us for our words?” Enough for them is Hell: In it will they burn, and evil is that destination!	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
59: 9/M	But those who before them, had homes [in Medina] and had adopted the Faith, – show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the [latter], but give them preference over themselves , even though poverty was their [own lot]. And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, – they are the ones that achieve prosperity.	self or person
59: 9/M	But those who before them, had homes [in Medina] and had adopted the Faith, – show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the [latter], but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their [own lot]. And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls , – they are the ones that achieve prosperity.	self or person
59: 18/M	O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul look to what provision] He has sent forth for the morrow. Yea, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with [all] that ye do.	self or person
59: 19/M	And be ye not like those who forgot Allah; and He made them forget their own souls! Such are the rebellious transgressors!	self or person
61: 11/M	That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive [your utmost] in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if ye but knew!	self or person
63: 11/M	But to no soul will Allah grant respite when the time appointed [for it] has come; and Allah is well acquainted with [all] that ye do	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
64: 16/M	So fear Allah as much as ye can; listen and obey and spend in charity for the benefit of your own soul and those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, – they are the ones that achieve prosperity.	self or person
64: 16/M	So fear Allah as much as ye can; listen and obey and spend in charity for the benefit of your own soul and those saved from the covetousness of their own souls , – they are the ones that achieve prosperity.	self or person
65: 1/M	O Prophet! When ye do divorce women, divorce them at their prescribed periods, and count [accurately], their prescribed periods: And fear Allah your Lord: and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they [themselves] leave, except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness, those are limits set by Allah: and any who transgresses the limits of Allah, does verily wrong his [own] soul : thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation.	self or person
65: 7/M	Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.	self or person
66: 6/M	O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are [appointed] angels stern [and] severe, who flinch not [from executing] the Commands they receive from Allah, but do [precisely] what they are commanded.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
73: 20/M?	Thy Lord doth know that thou standest forth [to prayer] nigh two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night, and so doth a party of those with thee. But Allah doth appoint night and day in due measure He knoweth that ye are unable to keep count thereof. So He hath turned to you [in mercy]: read ye, therefore, of the Qur'an as much as may be easy for you. He knoweth that there may be [some] among you in ill-health; others travelling through the land, seeking of Allah's bounty; yet others fighting in Allah's Cause, read ye, therefore, as much of the Qur'an as may be easy [for you]; and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan. And whatever good ye send forth for your souls ye shall find it in Allah's Presence, – yea, better and greater, in Reward and seek ye the Grace of Allah: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.	self or person
74: 38/K	Every soul will be [held] in pledge for its deeds.	self or person
75: 2/K	And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit : [Eschew Evil].	soul
75: 14/K	Nay, man will be evidence against himself ,	self or person
79: 40/K	And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's [tribunal] and had restrained [their] soul from lower desires,	self or person
81: 7/K	When the souls are sorted out, [being joined, like with like];	self or person
81: 14/K	[Then] shall each soul know what it has put forward.	self or person
82: 5/K	[Then] shall each soul know what it hath sent forward and [what it hath] kept back.	self or person

Surah: verse K/M	Translation (Yusuf Ali)	Context and Comments
82: 19/K	[It will be] the Day when no soul shall have power [to do] aught for another: For the command, that Day, will be [wholly] with Allah.	self or person
82: 19/K	[It will be] the Day when no soul shall have power [to do] aught for another : For the command, that Day, will be [wholly] with Allah.	self or person
86: 4/K	There is no soul but has a protector over it.	self or person
89: 27/K	[To the righteous soul will be said:] "O [thou] soul, in [complete] rest and satisfaction!	soul
91: 7/K	By the Soul , and the proportion and order given to it;	soul

Appendix 2 Names and Attributes of God in Islām

Names in Transliterations	Meaning	Names in Transliterations	Meaning
<i>Allāh</i>	<i>The God.</i> The only one Almighty. He alone is worthy of worship.	<i>Al-Mubdī</i>	<i>The Originator.</i> He who creates all creatures initially without matter or model.
<i>Al-'Adl</i>	<i>The Just.</i> He who is Equitable.	<i>Al-Mughnī</i>	<i>The Enricher.</i> The Sufficer.
<i>Al-Ākhir</i>	<i>The Last.</i>	<i>Al-Muhaymin</i>	<i>The Guardian.</i> He who watches over and protects all things (Helper in Peril)
<i>al-'Afuw</i>	<i>The Pardoner.</i> He who pardons all who sincerely repents.	<i>Al-Muḥsī</i>	<i>The Appraiser.</i> He who knows the number of every single thing in existence, even to infinity.
<i>al-'Alīm</i>	<i>The Knower of All.</i> He who has full knowledge of all things.	<i>al-Mu'īd</i>	<i>The Restorer.</i> He who recreates His creatures after He has annihilated them.
<i>al-Aḥad</i>	<i>The One.</i> The only one.	<i>al-Mu'izz</i>	<i>The Bestower of Honours.</i> He who confers honour and dignity.
<i>al-Awwal</i>	<i>The First.</i>	<i>al-Mujīb</i>	<i>The Responder to</i>

			<i>Prayer.</i> He who grants the wishes who appeals to him.
<i>al-‘Azīz</i>	<i>The Mighty and Strong.</i>	<i>al-Mun‘īm</i>	<i>The Nourisher.</i> He who gives every creature its sustenance.
<i>al-‘Azīm</i>	<i>The Magnificent.</i> The Most High. He who is Most Splendid.	<i>al-Muqaddim</i>	<i>The Expediter.</i> He who brings forward whatever He wills (Forewarner).
<i>al-Badī’</i>	<i>The Incomparable.</i> He who is without model or match, and who brings into being worlds of amazing wonder.	<i>al-Muqsīt</i>	<i>The Equitable One.</i> He who does everything with proper balance and harmony.
<i>al-Bā’ith</i>	<i>The Resurrector.</i> He who brings the dead to life, and raises them from their tombs.	<i>al-Muqtadir</i>	<i>The Creator of All Power.</i> He who disposes at His will even of the strongest and mightiest of His creatures.
<i>al-Bāqī</i>	<i>The Everlasting One.</i> Eternal (in the future).	<i>al-Mumīt</i>	<i>The Taker of Life.</i> He who creates the death of a living creature.
<i>al-Bāri’</i>	<i>The Maker of Order (Skilled Worker).</i> O Evolver	<i>al-Muntaqīm</i>	<i>The Avenger.</i> He who justly inflicts upon wrongdoers the

	who created all things so that each whole and its parts are in perfect conformity and harmony.		punishment they deserve.
<i>al-Barr</i>	Source of all Goodness. He who treats His servants tolerantly, and whose goodness and kindness are very great indeed.	<i>al-Muṣawwir</i>	<i>The Shaper of Beauty.</i> He who designs all things, giving each its particular form and character (Sculptor).
<i>al-Baṣīr</i>	<i>The All-Seeing.</i> To those who invoke this Name one hundred times between the obligatory and customary prayers in Friday congregation, Allah grants esteem in the eyes of others.	<i>al-Muta'ālī</i>	<i>The Supreme One.</i> He is exalted in every respect, far beyond anything the mind could possibly attribute to His creatures.
<i>al-Bāsiṭ</i>	<i>The Reliever (Uncloser).</i> He who releases, letting things expand.	<i>al-Mutakabbir</i>	<i>The Majestic.</i> He who demonstrates His greatness in all things and in all ways.
<i>al-Bāṭin</i>	<i>The Hidden</i>	<i>al-Mudhill</i>	<i>The Humiliator.</i> He

	<i>One.</i> He who is hidden, concealed.		who degrades and abases.
<i>al-Dhārr</i>	<i>The Distresser.</i> The Creator of the Harmful. He who creates things that cause pain and injury.	<i>An-Nāfi'</i>	<i>The Creator of Good.</i> He who creates things that yields advantages and benefit.
<i>al-Fattāh</i>	<i>The Opener.</i> He who opens the solution to all problems and makes things easy.	<i>al-Nūr</i>	<i>The Light.</i> He who gives light to all the worlds, who illuminates the faces, minds and hearts of His servants.
<i>al-Ghaffār</i>	<i>The Forgiving.</i> He who is always ready to forgive.	<i>al-Qābiḍ</i>	<i>The Constrictor.</i> He who constricts and restricts.
<i>al-Ghafūr</i>	<i>The Forgiver and Hider of Faults.</i>	<i>al-Qādir</i>	<i>The All-Powerful.</i> He who is Able to do what He wills as He wills (Providence).
<i>al-Ghanī</i>	<i>The Rich One.</i> He who is infinitely rich and completely Independent.	<i>al-Qahhār</i>	<i>The Subduer.</i> He who dominates all things, and prevails upon them to do whatever He wills (Dominant).
<i>al-Hādī</i>	<i>The Guide.</i> He who provides guidance.	<i>al-Qawī</i>	<i>The Most Strong.</i> The Possessor of All Strength.
<i>al-Ḥāfiẓ</i>	<i>The Preserver.</i> He	<i>al-Qayyūm</i>	<i>The Self-Existing</i>

	who guards all creatures in every detail.		<i>One.</i> He who maintains the heavens, the earth, and everything that exists.
<i>al-Ḥayy</i>	<i>The Ever Living One.</i> The living who knows all things and whose strength is sufficient for everything.	<i>al-Quddūs</i>	<i>The Pure One.</i> He who is free from all errors.
<i>al-Ḥakīm</i>	<i>The Perfectly Wise.</i> He whose every command and action is pure wisdom.	<i>al-Rāfiʿ</i>	<i>The Exalter.</i> He who raises up.
<i>al-Ḥakam</i>	<i>The Judge.</i> He who judges and makes right prevails.	<i>al-Raḥīm</i>	<i>The All Compassionate.</i> He who acts with extreme kindness.
<i>al-ʿAlīyyu</i>	<i>The Highest. The Exalted.</i>	<i>al-Raḥmān</i>	<i>The All Merciful.</i> He who wills goodness and mercy for all His creatures.
<i>al-Ḥalīm</i>	<i>The Forbearing.</i> He who is Most Clement.	<i>al-Raqīb</i>	<i>The Watchful One.</i>
<i>al-Ḥamīd</i>	<i>The Praiseworthy.</i> All praise belongs to	<i>al-Rashīd</i>	<i>The Righteous Teacher.</i> He who moves all things in

	Him, and who alone do the tongues of all creation laud.		accordance with His eternal plan, bringing them without error and with order and wisdom to their ultimate destiny (Unerring).
<i>al-Ḥaqq</i>	<i>The Truth.</i> He who's being endures unchangingly.	<i>al-Ra'ūf</i>	<i>The Kind.</i> He who is very compassionate (Indulgent).
<i>al-Ḥasīb</i>	<i>The Accounter.</i> He who knows every detail.	<i>al-Razzāq</i>	<i>The Sustainer.</i> He who provides all things useful to His creatures.
<i>al-Jabbār</i>	<i>The Compelling.</i> He who repairs all broken thing, and completes that which is incomplete.	<i>as-Ṣabūr</i>	<i>The Patient One.</i> He who is characterised by infinite patience.
<i>al-Jalīl</i>	<i>The Glorious.</i> He who is Lord of Majesty and Grandeur.	<i>al-Salām</i>	<i>The Source of Peace.</i> He who frees His servants from all danger.
<i>al-Jāmi'</i>	<i>The Gatherer.</i> He who brings together what He wills, when He wills, where He wills.	<i>al-Ṣamad</i>	<i>The Eternal.</i> He who is the only recourse for the ending of need and the removal of affliction.

<i>al-Kabīr</i>	<i>The Greatest.</i> He who supremely great.	<i>al-Samī‘u</i>	<i>The Hearer of All.</i> Allah takes care of all the needs of those who invoke this glorious Name one hundred times.
<i>al-Karīm</i>	<i>The Generous.</i> He whose generosity is most abundant.	<i>al-Shāhid</i>	<i>The Witness.</i> He who is present everywhere and observes all things.
<i>al-Khabīr</i>	<i>The All Aware.</i> He who has the knowledge of inner and most secret aspects of all things.	<i>al-Shakūr</i>	<i>The Rewarder of Thankfulness.</i> He who gratefully rewards good deeds (Appreciator).
<i>al-Khāfid</i>	<i>The Abaser.</i> He who brings down, diminishes.	<i>al-Tawwāb</i>	<i>The Acceptor to Repentance.</i> He who is ever ready to accept repentance and to forgive sins (Relenting).
<i>al-Khāliq</i>	<i>The Creator.</i> He who brings from non-being into being, creating all things in such a way that He determines their existence and the conditions and events they are to	<i>al-Wakīl</i>	<i>The Trustee/Guardian.</i> He who manages the affairs of those who duly commit them to His charge, and who looks after them better than they could themselves.

	experience.		
<i>al-Laṭīf</i>	<i>The Subtle One.</i> He who knows the minutest subtleties of all things.	<i>al-Wālī</i>	<i>The Protecting Friend.</i> He who is a nearest friend to His good servants.
<i>al-Majīd</i>	<i>The Majestic One.</i> He whose glory is most great and most high.	<i>al-Wahhāb</i>	<i>The Giver of All.</i> He who constantly bestows blessings of every kind.
<i>al-Majīd</i>	<i>The Glorious.</i> He, whose dignity and glory are most great, and whose generosity and munificence are bountiful.	<i>al-Wāḥid</i>	<i>The Unique.</i> He who is Single, absolutely without partner or equal in His Essence, Attributes, Actions, Names and Decrees.
<i>al-Mālik</i>	<i>The Absolute Ruler.</i> The Ruler of the entire universe (King of Kings).	<i>al-Wājid</i>	<i>The Finder.</i> He who finds what He wishes when He wishes (Perceiving).
<i>Mālik-ul-Mulk</i>	<i>The Owner of All.</i> The King of the Kingdom.	<i>al-Wadūd</i>	<i>The Loving One.</i> He who loves His good servants, and bestows his compassion upon them.
<i>al-Māni'</i>	<i>The Preventer of Harm.</i> The Withholder.	<i>Al-Wālī</i>	<i>The Governor.</i> The Protecting Friend. He who administers this vast universe and all its passing

			phenomena.
<i>al-Mu'min</i>	<i>The Inspirer of Faith.</i> He who awakes the light of faith in our hearts.	<i>al-Wās'ī</i>	<i>The All Comprehending.</i> He who has limitless capacity and abundance.
<i>al-Matīn</i>	<i>The Firm.</i> He who is very steadfast.	<i>al-Wārith</i>	<i>The Inheritor of All.</i> He who is the Real Owner of all riches.
<i>Al-Muhyi</i>	<i>The Giver of Life.</i> He who confers life, gives vitality, revives.	<i>Az-Zāhir</i>	<i>The Manifest One.</i> He who is Evident.
<i>al-Mu'akhhir</i>	<i>The Delayer.</i> He who sets back or delays whatever He wills.	<i>Zul-Jalāli- Wal-Ikrām</i>	<i>The Lord of Majesty and Bounty.</i> He who possesses both greatness and gracious magnanimity.

Source: Hakan Gok, 'Saīd Nursi's Arguments for the Existence of God in Risāle-I Nur' (Doctoral, Durham University, 2015), 329, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/10994/>.