

***Katre Uluslararası İnsan Arařtırmaları Dergisi –
Katre International Human Studies Journal***
ISSN: 2146-8117 e-ISSN: 2148-6220
June / Haziran 2021, 11: 121-136

**The Human 'I' as the Key to Ma'rifatullah and Knowing
Oneself: Nursi's Treatise of Human 'I'**

*Ma'rifatullahı ve Kendini Bilmeye Bir Anahtar Olan İnsan Ene'si:
Nursi'nin Ene Risalesi*

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Article Information / Makale Bilgisi

Article Types / Makale Türü: Research Article / Arařtırma Makalesi

Submitted / Geliř Tarihi: 11 January / Ocak 2021

Accepted / Kabul Tarihi: 11 June / Haziran 2021

Published / Yayın Tarihi: 30 June / Haziran 2021

Pub Date Season / Yayın Sezonu: June /Haziran

Issue / Sayı: 11 Pages / Sayfa: 121-136

Cite as / Atıf: Ayub, Sheikh Javaid. "The Human 'I' as the Key to Ma'rifatullah and Knowing Oneself: Nursi's Treatise of Human 'I' [*Ma'rifatullahı ve Kendini Bilmeye Bir Anahtar Olan İnsan Ene'si: Nursi'nin Ene Risalesi*]". *Katre Uluslararası İnsan Arařtırmaları Dergisi – Katre International Human Studies Journal* 11 (June / Haziran 2021), 121-136.

<https://doi.org/10.53427/katre.860409>

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The Human 'I' as the Key to *Ma'rifatullah* and Knowing Oneself: Nursi's Treatise of Human 'I'

Abstract: Nursi describes human I as a key to open the hidden treasures of the cosmos; but 'I' is also a double-edged sword, an *Alif*; one face pointing towards materialism and the other towards God. When man turns towards materialism and becomes his own master, the real essence of I is lost. When human I gets corrupted, Nursi believes that the corruption of human I reduces the value of Allah's bounties. But, on the other hand, 'I' is the source of all knowledge; therefore, it is necessary to know the nature and existence of the 'I'. There cannot be any other way to know the true nature of the I, except through the 'I' itself. The study aims to comprehend the true nature of the human 'I' based on Nursi's perspective. It also makes a differentiation between Nafs, Ruh and the human I, as the terms are loosely used interchangeably. For Nursi, the Divine Names are a source of Ma'rifatullah, but these Names themselves manifest through human I. This statement brings human I and Asma ul-Husna in close conformity with Ma'rifatullah. The paper tries to explore this relationship between Asma ul-Husna, Ma'rifatullah and the human I. This study, which has the features of a qualitative research, used the text analysis method.

Key Words: Philosophy of Islam, Knowing thyself, Ego, Nafs, The Divine Names, Ma'rifatullah

Ma'rifetullahı ve Kendini Bilmeye Bir Anahtar Olan İnsan Ene'si: Nursi'nin Ene Risalesi

Öz: Nursi, insan Ene'sinin, kozmosun gizli hazinelerini açmak için bir anahtar olduğunu bildirir; ama "Ene" aynı zamanda iki ucu keskin bir bıçaktır; bir yüzü materyalizme, diğeri Allah'a dönük bir Eliftir. İnsan materyalizme dönüp kendi efendisi olduğunda, Enenin gerçek özü kaybolur. Nursi, insanın Ene'si bozulduğunda, Allah'ın nimetlerinin değerini düşürdüğüne inanır. Fakat diğeri taraftan Nursi'ye göre Ene tüm bilginin kaynağıdır; bu sebeple, Ene'nin mahiyetini ve varlığını bilmek gerekir. Nursi'nin belirttiği gibi, Ene'nin kendisi dışında, Ene'nin gerçek mahiyetini bilmenin başka yolu yoktur. Bu çalışmainsan Ene'sinin gerçek tabiatını Nursi'nin perspektifinden anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma ayrıca, birbirinin yerine gevşek bir şekilde kullanılabilen Nefis, Ruh ve insan Ene'si arasında da bir ayrım yapar. Nursi'ye göre, İlahi İsimler mâ'rifetullahın bir kaynağıdır, ancak bu İsimler insan Ene'si aracılığıyla tezahür eder. Bu ifade, insan Ene'sini ve Esmâ ül-Hüsna'yı mâ'rifetullah ile yakın uyum içine getirir. Makale Esmâ ül-Hüsna, Ma'rifetullah ve insan Ene'si arasındaki bu ilişkiyi ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Nitel araştırma özelliğini taşıyan bu çalışma metin analizi yöntemini kullanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Felsefesi, Kendini Bilme, Ene, Nefis, İlahî İsimler, Ma'rifetullah.

Introduction

Said Nuri was born in 1878¹ and died on 23rd March 1960. He lived in one of the most significant periods of human history. He saw the two world wars, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the secular Republic of Turkey. He lived through colonization and decolonization of Muslim lands, saw rise, and fall of different ideologies. He became witness to the onslaught of modernization, westernization, and secularization in Muslims lands, especially in Turkey. These experiences were influential in shaping his socio-political and religious thoughts. Nursi attributed the decline of the Muslim world to the weakening of its faith and concentrated all his energy on reviving it. Although Nursi has provided explanations pertaining to the political and economic aspects of the decline, he strongly stated that the root cause of all problems was the lack of and deviation from faith. To him, it was not the state that collapsed rather it was the people. So, rebuilding and reconstruction must come from below. The reconstruction of people's lives became the base and the goal for the Nur Movement. Said Nursi did try in the early years ('Old Said period' as he called it) to revive Islam and society by means of politics, but once he realized that the state in Ataturk's new Turkey was going to be a secular one, he abandoned political and social activism and decided to revive the faith of the individuals, hence chose a bottom-top approach for socio-political change. The years that saw the transition of Turkey from Empire to Republic, also saw the transition of Said Nursi from 'Old Said' to 'New Said' (Nursi, 2010, p. 8).

Faith for Nursi was not a blind one. He was for knowing God through the signs of God and these signs include the *âyat-i anfus* (internal signs), *âyat-i samawat* (heavenly signs) and *âyat-i Qur'an* (Qur'anic signs, namely verses). For Nursi, the Divine Names are manifested in the created realm of the cosmos, hence knowing the cosmic world brings one close to knowing the God. Therefore, knowledge can be defined as the outcome of the encounter

¹ Some of the biographers have mentioned the year as 1877, for example see Ramazan Balci (2009), Bediuzzaman Said Nursi 'wonder of the age'.

between human mind and its environment. If so, then the pedagogy for encountering the environment needs to be defined and drafted. Said Nursi provides us with that pedagogy. For Said Nursi, the epistemological framework to encounter, understand and interpret the created Qur'an (the cosmos) is the belief in God. Nursi believed that there are two holy books man must read- *the revealed Book* (the Qur'an) and *the created book* (the Cosmos) (Nursi, 2015d, p. 484). To him the source of knowledge is 'I' (man's ego), which Nursi believes, was a Trust² given by Almighty Allah to the humans. This ego is the key to unlock the hidden treasures of the cosmos to reach to the Creator (Nursi, 2015d, p. 558). He believes, as Markham and Pirim (2011, p. 30-31) puts it that "unless humans were provided with skills of comprehension, speech, seeing, hearing, and all capacities for understanding, it would not be possible for them to grasp Divine attributes and the ways they operate in the cosmos". Nursi places huge emphasis on reading the created Book for knowing the *Gaib ul-Gayob (unseen of the unseen)*. For him, the first revealed verse *Iqra* (read) does not mean only to read the words of God from the revealed Book, but also the words of God as made manifested in the created realm. Nursi believed that in the command to 'read' there was also the command to interpret. However, the created Book can be read from two different and diametrically opposed hermeneutical positions, that are *mana-i ismi* (self-referential) and *mana-i harfi* (other-indicative). Simply stated, either one interprets the cosmic verses as indicating none other than their own existence or interpreting them as signs pointing to the Creator (Turner, 2009, p. 67-70). Nursi places huge stress on knowing the Creator through His creation. So, any attempt to understand the created world must be an attempt to reach to the Creator. His *Risale-i Nur* contains many passages that instruct to employ the 'other-indicative' frame to understand the Creator³. This 'other-indicative' frame, believes Markham, guides one to pass from cause to the source of the cause (Markham and Pirim, 2011, p. 35).

² He is referring to the Qur'anic Verse 'We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it being afraid thereof. But man assumed it; indeed, he is most unjust, most foolish'. *Al Qur'an*, Chapter 33, Verse, 72.

³ For instance, see the Twelfth Word in *The Words*, 2015, pp. 143-149, The Third Ray in *The Rays*, 2015.

1. Nursian Pedagogy of Encountering the Created Qur'an:

Human beings are concept bearing creatures who approach and accumulate knowledge through concepts. When these concepts are arranged coherently, a perspective about reality is born. But this perspective or frame is itself based on some accumulated knowledge as human mind proceeds from known to unknown. Knowledge, as Hume believes, is accumulated through senses, thus senses are primary and the mind secondary. Rationalists, on the other hand, have put mind first and experience second. Kant, however, tried to balance the two extremes by stating that all knowledge is undoubtedly experimental, but it does not follow that it necessarily arises from experience (Kant, 2007, p. 37). Through his terminology of *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge, Kant tries to form a bridge between empiricists and rationalists. In Islamic worldview, *aql*, (mind), senses and *qalb* (heart) are the source of knowledge.

Knowledge is social in the sense that humans are born into them. For theists, the center of their worldview is God, while for atheists it is anything other than God. Both worldviews can be received by people just as they receive their languages, customs, and traditions. The epistemology of science cannot be concerned with the anatomy of that knowledge rather it has to deal with the mental frameworks of the scientists engaged in scientific activities (Açıkgeç, 2014, p. 30). These frameworks have a sociological origin; therefore, sociology of science is as important an area as science itself. The purpose of the epistemology of science expands to the area of tracing the mental frameworks and worldviews held by the scientific community while engaging itself in any scientific activity (Açıkgeç, 2014, p. 60). Thomas Kuhn (2012, pp. 111-134) states that history of science must take into consideration not only the scientific truths of the times, but also the frameworks which run parallel to the facts and adds that in fact the scientific truths emerge in proportionate to that worldview.

Broadly speaking we have two gigantic worldviews to understand and interpret the cosmic world and its phenomenology: The secular worldview (*mana-i ismi*) and the *tawhidi* worldview (*mana-i harfi*). In the secular worldview, the phenomena and the reality are pursued according to the perceptions and consciousness of an individual, but what

consciousness actually is and how it works, and what is it composed of, are the questions the answers of which are still pending. Further, it explains 'what' of the reality, and the factual truths, but do not go beyond to trace the transcendental truths. The secular phenomenology puts human self at the center of our understanding, but the understanding through 'self' needs to be preceded by the understanding of 'self' itself (Aydın, 2019, p. 91). If phenomenology is all about experiencing through 'self', it means, all experienced knowledge will depend on the perception of the 'self'. If 'self' is perceived wrongly, as secular worldview in fact does, we will have wrong experience, hence wrong understanding of the reality. Humans are the crown of the creation, created in the best mould and are bestowed with the best potentialities to lead a meaningful and purposeful life. Meaninglessness occurs through objectification of everything including humans themselves. When humans are objectified, the purpose of their life, their being and their existence are completely lost, the life goes astray and is clutched in the whirlpool of meaninglessness and nihilism. Humans start looking on their selves and the cosmos through objectified lenses, hence cannot reach to the transcendental truth. They cannot realize that the Cosmos, *The Alem-i Shahadah* is made up of symbols and *ayat* reflecting and indicating someone else. That someone is Allah and Allah alone- All-Wise, All-Knowing, a Mastermind behind the creation of the entire cosmos, the Humans, and the Angels. This *mana-i ismi* approach is faulty and it takes meaning and purpose from the life, hence cannot be trusted to lead a good life.

In the Twenty Third Flash, Nursi attacks the very foundations of the atheistic and naturalistic ideologies and shows by his lucid arguments that these ideologies and philosophies are based on superstitions, hence are non-scientific. Nursi argues that their method of encountering and exploring the cosmos is fraudulent as it makes people to believe in causes or natural process, hence makes them myopic. They do not move beyond the physical realm and believe that what is apparent has either come into being by its own or has been the effect of some causes or they claim that it is all natural and nature necessitates and creates it. Nursi attacks these basic principles of the secular worldview and disproves them one by one. Nursi concludes that this *mana-i ismi* approach cannot lead humanity to reality, hence is not helpful in

solving the day-to-day problems of humanity. Through this approach, believes Nursi, neither the purpose of the human creation can be known, nor the purpose of the cosmos. So, humans following this approach will go astray, get confused and will fall in a whirlpool where from they cannot escape (Nursi, 2015a, p. 232-253).

In contrast to the secular worldview, a *tawhidi* worldview places God at the center and therefore locates dominicality of Allah behind every cosmological phenomenon. *Tawhidi* worldview does not only stop on knowing the physical realm, the answers of which are still pending, but also moves beyond the factual truths to reach to the transcendental ones. Humans are not only physical beings but also spiritual, emotional, and psychological beings. Objectification of humans has rendered them physical beings only. Instead, when the cosmic world is read through *mana-i harfi* approach, Allah manifests everywhere as the Qur'an mentions *All that is in the heavens and all that is in the Earth extols Allah's Glory* (Qur'an 59:1; 61:1;62:1;64:1). The most exciting thing about these Qur'anic verses is that they all are concluded at *Asma ul-Husna* like All-Wise, All- Knowing, Sovereign etc, thus clearly establish relationship between *âlam-i shahadah* and the *Asma ul-Husna* (Divine Names). This *mana-i harfi* approach is therefore a clear guide for a meaningful and fulfilling life, and the most important thing is to learn the language of *mana-i harfi* to decode the meaning of the experienced phenomena. The *mana-i harfi* approach provides us two essential things: one is the belief in Allah, which makes the believers accountable and answerable. As humans are created in the God's image, hence they will learn to be compassionate, Rahîm, 'Alîm, Rahman and will manifest God's attributes on the Earth. The second is the knowledge which not only puts humans on the seat of *khalifah*, but also helps to answer satisfactorily all existential questions of life. This approach makes mankind to reach to the level of *ihsan* as Allah is seen everywhere through His created Qur'an, the *Qur'an-i Kabir*. Nursi explains that this world is well ordered and well measured, wisely, and artistically fashioned. No cause, no natural happening can explain this artistry. The only correct explanation, therefore, is that this cosmos is a book written, a mirror, which reflects the author of the book. So, what is important is the *mana-i harfi* approach which

Nursi believes is the only reliable and correct approach to read the created Qur'an.

2. *Nafs, Ruh* and the Human I

'I' is an entity with both existence and essence. But its existence is not demonstrable or tangible, rather it is a formless, shapeless measurement. Aydın (2019, p. 95) believes that 'I' has no real existence and the perception of 'I' as real existence is just an illusion. But human 'I' is a reality and realities sometimes do exist without demonstrable existences. 'I' is the part of a larger canvas called *nafs* which can be taken to mean whole human personality, with all the necessary faculties (psycho-spiritual) along with *ruh*. *Nafs* is basically (in the Qur'anic terminology), a single living entity which is manifested in the shape of a body (with all its features and faculties) possessing a Spirit, namely, *ruh* (with all its features). The Qur'an uses the word *nafs* at 295 different places and by it the complete whole of what is called as human is meant. For example, the Qur'an mentions: '*And be aware of the Day, when no one shall avail another, when ransom shall be accepted from no one, when no one's intercession will profit anyone, when there shall be no help from any quarter*' (Qur'an, 2:123). In the same chapter, the Qur'an mentions: '*Allah does not lay a responsibility on anyone beyond his capacity*' (Qur'an, 2:286). *Nafs* is used to differentiate between a living being and a nonliving being. The Qur'an also mentions: '*Everyone (every nafs) is bound to taste death and you shall receive your full reward on the Day of Resurrection*'. (Qur'an, 3:185; 21:35). *Nafs* is also used to mean the single entity, the single being from where the human race begun. In another verse, Qur'an states that '*O people! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single being (from a single nafs) and out of it created its mate; and out of the two spread many men and women*' (Qur'an, 4:1; 39:6). In Surah Maidah, Allah ordained for the Children of Israel in these words, 'he who slays a human being unless it be (in punishment) for murder or for spreading mischief on the Earth shall be as if he had slain all mankind; and he who saves a life shall be if he had given life to all mankind (Qur'an, 5: 32). Allah swears by human *nafs* and by Himself for perfectly proportioning it. This perfect proportion may be of body and *ruh*, of obedience and disobedience, of faculties to perform good or evil, as Allah mentions that He imbued human *nafs* with (the consciousness of) its evil and its piety. Allah states that

man is aware of himself, even though he might make up excuses (Qur'an, 75:14-15). Allah makes a final note then by saying that 'He who purifies it will prosper (Qur'an, 91:9). Nursi also makes a difference between human soul and the human 'I' by stating that man's compound ignorance and self-oppression traits belong to the lowest level of the soul rather than the 'I'. Soul can be purified, hence manifests itself in various states; *nafs-ul- ammarah* (the evil commanding soul) (Qur'an,12:53), *nafs-ul-lawwamah* (the blaming soul) (Qur'an, 75:2) and *nafs-al-mutmainnah* (the tranquil soul) (Qur'an, 89:28). According to Nursi, *nafs-ul-ammarah* is transformed into *nafs-ul-mutmainnah*, but it can also happen in a reverse direction (Nursi, 2015b, p. 280). It is to be emphasized that these are mere states of Nafs rather than its stages.

Ruh is used at 23 different places for different meanings. Sometimes it is used for what was blown inside Adam and before which angels were ordered to prostrate (Qur'an, 15: 29; 37:72) and sometimes it is used for Gabriel (Qur'an, 2:87,253; 16:102; 40:15). *Ruh* is what brings life into existence; life is both biological and spiritual. Just as the *Ruh* animates a body, so too the revelation brings life to a nation. Yet, do animals not have body and spirit? If so, what makes humans different from animals? The scholars of the Qur'an believe that the human spirit is perhaps the most elevated of all God's creations. This superiority is not quantitative rather qualitative, and its quality lies in its proximity to Allah (Turner, 2013, p. 150). Simply stating, the *Nafs* in animals lacks the consciousness and the 'I', so the urge to unlock the talisman of their selves and the world around them. The human *Nafs*, therefore, is bestowed with the faculty to know its own existence, nature, and purpose; it has faculty to comprehend the reality beyond the physical realms. For Nursi, this conscious part is human 'I' and this 'I' makes humans know themselves and their Creator. Humans are 'historical beings' in the sense they make history by exerting themselves on the environment by knowing as well as changing it by knowledge. Humans have been created in the nest of the mould and the model. They have been bestowed all the necessary faculties and skills to comprehend the Divine attributes. As Markham puts it, 'in absence of these necessary attributes and the faculties it would not be possible for humans to grasp Divine attributes and the ways they operate in the cosmos' (Markham and Pirim, 2011, p. 30-31). Nursi, however, believes that two important aims are basically very

important in the designing of these faculties and their insertion in the human beings; the first aim is to make known to the humans the varieties of Allah's bounties and causing man to offer Him *Shukur* and *Zikir*. The second aim is to make known to the humans through these faculties, all the myriad forms through which the sacred *Asma ul-Husna* manifested in the world and to cause him to experience them. And outcome of this recognition and the experience is that humans come to believe in them (Nursi, 2015d, p. 139).

3. The Âyatul- Allah (Divine Signs), the Asma ul-Husna and the Human I

Broadly speaking, the *Âyatul Allah* is manifested in three important forms; *âyat-i anfus* (internal signs), *âyat-i samawat* (heavenly signs) and *âyat-i Qur'an* (Qur'anic signs, namely verses) (Qur'an, 41:53); the *âyat-i anfus* invite humans for self-introspection to recognize the Divine Wisdom that is involved in bringing into existence such a wonderful creation like human. They also call humans to identify their position in the world as the *Khalifat-ul-Allah* and ask them to perform their obligations for Allah. Man has been granted the 'Trust' of *Khilafah* which the *Samawat* (the heavens), *al-Ard* (the earth) and *al-Jibal* (mountains) refused to undertake (Qur'an, 33:72). In accepting the 'trust', man takes it up to himself to act as God's representative on the Earth. Nursi considers human 'I' as one of the important components of this Divine Trust. A trust is, as we know, a delegated thing over which an individual has power of disposal: but he is expected to use it according to the wishes of the giver of the trust rather than his own; but he also has a free will and by capacity of that free will and the power, he can go against the giver's wishes and use the trust in any manner he likes (Turner, 2009, p. 60). This means that propensity to refuse is only with humans and jinns. Iblis refused to bow before Adam, therefore, disobeyed the command of Allah and became the worst among the losers. Human 'I', states Nursi is like an Alif with two faces: the *mana-i harfi* and *mana-i ismi*. The *mana-i harfi* is the face of prophethood where the human 'I' knows itself and realizes that it serves one other than itself. It understands the fact that its essence has only an indicative meaning. This face of the human 'I' does not ascribe partners to Allah in His Being, in His Attributes and in His Powers (Nursi, The Words: 562). The other

face looks towards evil and regards 'I' as itself, pointing to none other than itself, has meaning in itself and believes that it exists for itself and of itself. 'I' takes the existence of itself as real, hence, the real master in its sphere of disposal (Nursi, 2015d, p. 562). When the 'I' takes this stand, it challenges the sovereignty of Allah and becomes a rebel. When this face of 'I' is followed, denial of Allah is proclaimed. I, therefore, becomes god itself or make someone else its god. When 'I' becomes the master itself, it is destined to go astray and run into all sorts of misguidance.

"God created man in the image of the Merciful"⁴ to perform His vicegerency on the Earth. In performing this essential and very hectic assignment, he is believed to reflect all Divine attributes so that these attributes get manifested. To render this duty, he has been provided with knowledge, will and the power to act on both. He has been provided the conscious self, the 'I' which if understood perfectly will lead humans to encompass the reality in the most perfect way. Human knowledge has two important sources; first it is acquired by human self itself, and the second, the source of human knowledge is revelation. The acquired knowledge is derived from the encounter of human self with its environment and this encounter happens with all the known dimensions of human self (rational, empirical, spiritual, and moral). Knowledge grows from already accumulated knowledge as humans are concept-bearing creatures; so, they are provided with concepts as well as the faculties to understand and develop those concepts. It is, indeed, the *Ilm* granted to Adam that Allah uses to justify Adam's vicegerency (Gok, 2016, p. 66). The Qur'an mentions that '*And He taught Adam the Names, all of them*' (Qur'an, 2:31).

For Nursi, these names are the beautiful names of God Himself, the Asma ul-Husna (Nursi, *The Words*: 254). The Qur'an mentions that all the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah (Qur'an, 6:180; 18:110; 20: 8;59:24). The knowledge of Asma ul-Husna is closely linked with the purpose of our creation. In the Qur'an Allah says that He created the jinns and humans for nothing else but that they may worship Him (Qur'an, 51:56). Nursi in commentary of this verse writes that the purpose and aim of man being sent to this world is to recognize the Creator of the Universe, and to believe in

⁴ Buharî, İsti'zân, 1; Müslim, Birr, 115, Cennet, 28

Him and worship Him. And according to his nature, man's duty and obligation is to know Allah and believe in Him, and by thought and with certainty affirm His existence and unity (Nursi, 2015c, p. 125). Thus, the knowledge of the God becomes important for the belief in the God. But the questions arise, like who is the God? What is He like? How can we know Him? This is where, according to Nursi, the *Asma ul-Husna* comes to our rescue. Nursi says that all the pure sciences speak of God and make known the Creator together with His names, and each science with its own particular tongue makes known His attributes and perfections (Nursi, 2015c, p. 226-28). Man has been created to act as a mirror, for the *Asma ul-Husna*, small samples of which have been placed in his being in order that he becomes not only a place of demonstration for those names but, a willing and purposeful presenter of them (Nursi, 2015e, p. 23-24). Nursi believes that in granting knowledge of *Asma ul-Husna*, not only did God teach man to recognize all the Divine attributes of perfection, but He also gave him the ability to display those attributes consciously and in doing so, he acts as the God's vicegerent on the Earth (Turner, 2013, p. 178). Nursi believes that man has been created as a microcosm of the cosmos and is best placed in the ladder of the creation to act as a mirror for all Divine names. Nursi writes that 'the true meaning of your life is this: it's acting as a mirror to the manifestation of the *Asma ul-Husna* and the manifestation of the Eternally Besought One. That is to say, as the focal point of all Divine Names manifested in the world, we become mirrors to the Single and Eternally Besought one (Nursi, 2015d, p. 141). 'But why do the names want to be displayed?' Why do they want to see their impresses'? Kelton Cobb (2003, p. 136) states that 'Nursi pushes further into the mystery of the inner life of the God by answering that the names desire to 'constantly write anew', a thousand of different 'missives of being' in order to display each missive to the witnessing gaze of the Sacred Essence, the Most Pure and Holy One, Who is signified. The displaying of Divine Names has two different and essential functions; first, they actively renew the created world primarily for the purpose of displaying the God to Godself; and secondly their display aims to get the attention of the meditative gazes of all sentient beings, and cause them to read them (Nursi, 2015b, p. 335). Kelton Cobb believes that by presenting this argument Nursi returns to the theme of the correlation of the Names to the various branches of knowledge

(Cobb, 2003: 136). In this subject, Nursi writes that ‘it was the teaching of the *Asma ul-Husna*, that resulted in comprehensive disposition, of countless sciences, and numerous all-embracing branches of knowledge about the universe, and extensive learning about the Creator’s attributes and qualities, which afforded man superiority over not only the angels but also the heavens and the Earth and mountains in the question of the bearing of the Supreme Trust’ (Nursi, 2015, p. 254).

The story of high school students, asking Nursi about Allah, has been mentioned twice in the *Risale*. They asked Nursi to tell them about the Creator, since their teachers did not speak to them of Allah. He said to them ‘All the sciences you study continuously speak of Allah and make known the Creator, each with its particular tongue (Nursi, 2015c, p. 226; 2015d, p. 169). Nursi concluded that hundreds of sciences, indeed pure, make known the Glorious Creator together with His Names, each through its broad measure of scale, its particular mirror, its far-seeing eye, and searching gaze, they make known His attributes and perfections (Nursi, 2015c, p. 228-29; 2015d, p. 171). Nursi insisted that there cannot be any contradiction between pure science and the Divine revelation as both manifest from the same source.

Nursi states that the human ‘I’ is the key to unlock the *Asma ul-Husna*, which, he believes, are hidden treasures. He considers human ‘I’, to be the key to the locked talisman of creation; a riddle that solves all existential problems and questions, a wondrous talisman (Nursi, 2015d, p. 558). But, before knowing the talisman of the universe, humans must first know the true nature of this ‘I’. So, what is the nature of the ‘I’ then? For Nursi human ‘I’ has no material existence but an immaterial one, it is a hypothetical unit of measurement to know and understand the attributes of Almighty God (Nursi: 2015d, p. 558). Since the God’s attributes are infinite and human mind is incapable of comprehending the infinite therefore, some unit, even if imaginary or immaterial, needs to be developed to comprehend the infinite. Nursi, also believes that the source of human knowledge is ‘I’ (man’s self), which to him, is a Trust given to the humans by Almighty God. He believes that this ‘I’ is the key to unlock the hidden treasures of the cosmos to reach to the Creator. (Nursi, 2015d, p. 558). ‘I’, therefore, has no tangible existence but is an abstract entity, a hypothetical unit of

measurement to know and understand the attributes of Almighty God. It acts as a demarcation line between the infinite and the finite, and it is through finite we are able to understand and comprehend the infinite. 'I', Nursi states has an indicative meaning; having no meaning in itself, it shows the meaning of others, therefore, the real nature of 'I' is indicative (Nursi, 2015d, p. 558-59). This face is the prophetic face of the 'I' where, according to Nursi, the 'I' knows itself to be a bondsman and realizes that it serves one other than itself and carries the meaning of not of itself but of another. It realizes its dependence in terms of existence, power, and ownership (Nursi, 2015d, p. 562). It hands over the sovereignty to Allah and accepts its position as the Khalifa on the Earth. But in relation to the other creations of Allah, humans occupy an exalted position. They are created in the best of moulds (Qur'an, 95:4); they have received *Ruh* from Allah Himself; man is the one before whom angles were ordered to prostrate (Qur'an, 15:29; 37:72). Prophets were sent to for his guidance, and he is the crown of the creation. Therefore, his I has a great value.

However, there is the other side of the human 'I' where the 'I' assumes to carry no meaning other than its own, points to none other than its own self and works purely for its own self and according to its own will and liking. It assumes its existence as real and essential; it says that it exists in itself and of itself. It becomes its own master and performs whatever soothes it and the manner it likes (Nursi, 2015d, p. 562-63). Nursi further states that when the human 'I' liberates itself from the Divine religion, it loses its way and takes reins into its own hands and runs into all sorts of misguidance (Nursi, 2015d, p. 563). When the 'I' tries to exert its existence before the God, I turns into the *Ana* which is not the correct realization of 'I', hence a breach of trust. When *Ana* emerges, humans reach to apex of arrogance as Iblis stated that *Ana khairun minhu* "I am better than him" (Qur'an: 38:76). Similarly, it makes humans to claim *Ana Rabbukum ul a'la* "I (Pharaoh) am your Lord the Highest." (Qur'an, 79:24). Therefore, in relation to the God, human I is just indicative but in its other existence, i.e, in relation to the other creation it has a superior existence of *Ashraful Makhlûqât*, a *Khalifah* (His vicegerent on Earth) who is authorized to use the delegated authority to exert himself. It is his free will and the power to execute the free will that can make him a talisman.

Conclusion

Indeed, man has been the recipient of the Divine trust, but he has indeed turned out to be unjust and foolish. This foolishness occurs as human 'I' tries to assume itself as a real sovereign, answerable and accountable to none other than itself. This claim of self makes him arrogant to the extent that he through his philosophy, perception and knowledge ascribes partners to Allah and thus reaches to the lowest of the low. In other words, as the Qur'an presents this state very beautifully that 'they have hearts with which they fail to understand; and they have eyes with which they fail to see; and they have ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle-indeed, even more astray. Such are utterly heedless.' (Qur'an, 7:179). Purification of human I is the way for salvation and salvation is the real success. The Qur'an states that 'He who purifies it will prosper.' (Qur'an, 91:9). But purification is not an easy task and cannot be accomplished unless the human 'I' surrenders its temporary and illusory ownership over itself and its attributes before the Divine Will and accept the role of a bondsman. Purification is possible when human 'I' realizes its own existence and readily accepts its position as 'a nebulous, insubstantial mechanism that exists solely to indicate, not of itself, but its Creator.' (Colin, 2013, p. 157). When this situation is reached, humans indeed become the vicegerent of Allah on the Earth. But walking on the right path may sometimes seem tedious, energy soaking but in the end, it rewards, and it is famously stated that all is well that ends well. Happiness and success lie in following the prophetic path, the path of those whom Allah has favored and not of those who incurred Allah's wrath and went astray. People who fail to recognize the Creator through His creation are the people who, according to Nursi, are defeated by their evil souls. Their souls are corrupted, and a corrupt soul reduces the value of Allah's bounties by being proud. It lays its hands on these bounties unlawfully by claiming them of its own. They wonder purposeless and when they lose their purpose, they lose the sight, hence become unable to comprehend the Divine names and the true nature of the trust bestowed to them. When they forget Allah, Allah makes them oblivious of themselves. Nursi believes that the perfection of soul lies in recognizing Allah, rather than trying to be self-centered.

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