



## Worship as Cognition, Intentionality and Freedom

İbadet: Bilgi, Niyet ve Özgürlük

Şaban Ali DÜZGÜN

Professor Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Theology, Ankara/Türkiye  
[duzgun@ankara.edu.tr](mailto:duzgun@ankara.edu.tr) | [orcid.org/0000-0002-0447-9018](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0447-9018) | [ror.org/01wntqw50](https://ror.org/01wntqw50) | [sabanaliduzgun.com.tr](http://sabanaliduzgun.com.tr)

### Article Information

#### Article Type

Research Article

#### Date Recieved

05 December 2022

#### Date Accepted

25 December 2022

#### Date Published

31 December 2022

#### Plagiarism

This article has been scanned with iTenticate software. No plagiarism detected.

#### Ethical Statement

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited (Şaban Ali Düzgün).

**Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.**

Cite As

“ Düzgün, Şaban Ali. “Worship as Cognition, Intentionality and Freedom”.  
*Kader* 20/3 (December 2022), 841-852.  
<https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.1214750> ”

## Abstract

Worship/ibādah is commonly defined as the innermost capability of cognizing of all rational beings of the existence of God and the sense of gratitude towards Him. The oft-quoted verse from the Qur'ān, Chapter al-Dhāriyāt, verse 56, is interpreted to this cause: "And tell them that I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may (know and) worship me." The intuitive knowledge requires them with conscious willingness to know His reality and conform their own existence to that of God. Analyzing worshipping act is to analyze the worshipper and his nature; so, it is necessary to engage in such a detailed probe of the composition of the human being as it is vital to our goal of showing how the personality of a human being is satisfied with the worshipping act. Therefore, analysis of human being as a worshipper brings us face-to-face such terms as **intentionality (niyah)**, **cognition (ma'rifah)** and **freedom (hurriyah)**. Through his intentionality, human beings transcend the natural causal nexuses they are part of. We know that as part of nature and causal nexuses human beings have always been called to ponder about the created beings (how the sky is exalted, how celestial bodies are manifested as ornament, etc.), all of which are intended to affect his 'will' and orient it to this cause. Cognition, intentionality/willingness and freedom give the deepest meaning to what the Qur'ān describes as worship/ibādah, which is designed as an instrument for the inner development of the worshipper, who by the act of conscious/intentional self-surrender to the all-pervading Creative Will of God encounters with numinous One. Symbols in the worshipping act and the meaning every single act conveys during worship always remove the tension of this encounter, a phenomenological tide. Through this encounter, a worshipper transforms himself/herself into an ethical agent. The conditions that are necessary before, during and after prayer are intended to meet this essential end. The Qur'ānic verse, "Surely Prayer forbids indecency and evil"<sup>1</sup> as post-condition of prayer is a call to create an ethical subject. And perseverance in prayer will turn this ethical subject into a subjected ethical subject which means ethical codes and norms willy-nilly arises from him. Al-amr bi'l ma'ruf and al-nahy 'an al-munkar/enjoining the doing of what is right and avoiding doing of what is wrong is not but the manifestation of this exposed subject (determined or oriented subject), which means ethical behaviors necessarily become an indispensable part of him. Worship is a demand for recognition. It is a transpersonal act, aiming to satisfy the desire of finite being to transcend its finiteness. But at the end of worshipping act not unification, on the contrary a total clarification of the limits and borders between the two becomes much more evident.

**Keywords:** Kalām, Worship ('ibādah), Intentionality (niyah), Cognition (ma'rifah), Freewill.

## Öz

İbâdet, bütün akıl sahibi varlıkların Allah'ın varlığını idrak edebilme ve O'na karşı şükretme duygusu olarak tanımlanır. İbadet eylemini incelemek, ibadet edenin doğasını tahlil etmeyi gerektirir. Bu tahlil bizi ibadet eylemine eşlik eden bilgi/kavrayış, niyet/yönelimsellik ve sürecin sonunda ortaya çıkan özgürlükle buluşturur. Bilgi/kavrayış, Kur'an'ın ibâdet olarak işaret ettiği ilişki formuna en derin mânâyı verir. İbadet, Tanrı'nın mutlak yaratıcı iradesini keşfetme ve ona insanî seviyede eşlik etme arzusudur. Allah'ın varlığını ve birliğini bilmeye yapılan çağrı,<sup>2</sup> ibadetin bilgi ve niyet unsuruna en üst seviyede yapılan daveti içerir. Bu davete icabet sırasında devreye giren semboller ve her bir eyleme ibadet sırasında yüklenen anlam, insan yaşamında yeni olgulara hayat verir. Niyet yahut yönelimsellik ise, insanların parçası oldukları doğal nedensel bağları aşma arzusunu içinde barındırır. İnsanın verili olan bu düzeni ve illiyet bağını aşarak kendine yeni bir ufuk arama çabası ibadetin niyetle ilgili kısmında içerilir. İbadet bir tanım talebidir. Sonlu varlığın sonluluğunu ve sınırlılığını aşma arzusunu tatmin etmeyi amaçlayan bir 'ilişki' eylemidir. Sonlu ile Sonsuz arasındaki bu ilişkinin bilgi zemininde inşa edilmesi, Allah ile insan arasındaki sınırın bulanıklaşmasını değil tam tersine daha belirgin hale gelmesini sağlar. İbadetteki bilme, bilen öznenin her zaman bu sınırların farkında olması demektir. Niyet, sonlu varlığın Sonsuz olanla iletişime geçerek sonluluğun getirdiği değer yitimini dindirme arzusudur. Özgürlük ise sonlu varlığın Sonsuz Olan'la iletişimi yoluyla, kendisini çepeçevre kuşatan bütün kısıtlama ve dayatmalardan azade olma isteğidir. Allah'tan başkasına tapanların bir düşüşü, parçalanma ve kayboluş trajedisi yaşamalarının sebebi<sup>3</sup> her zaman bir kısıtın ve dayatmanın nesnesine dönüşmüş olmasındandır. Onun için Allah ısrarla ibadetin sadece kendine yapılmasını talep ederek bu trajediyi bloke etmek istemektedir. İbadetin kabulü için nasıl ibadetten önce yerine getirilmesi gereken şartlar, ibadet sırasında

<sup>1</sup> al-'Ankabüt 29/45.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammed 47/19.

<sup>3</sup> al-Ḥajj 22/31.

takep edilmesi gereken rükünler varsa, aynı şekilde ibadetten sonra yerine getirilmesi gereken şartlar vardır. Bunlar yapılan ibadetin gerçekten ibadet niteliğine sahip olup olmadığını denetleyen ibadet sonrası kriterlerdir; bu ibadetin fenomenolojisidir: İbadet bireyi kendi iç dünyasında bir itmi'nana kavuşturmalı,<sup>4</sup> kamusal alanda ise ahlakî bir özne olarak inşa etmelidir.<sup>5</sup>

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kalam, İbâdet, Niyet (yönelimsellik), Bilgi, Özgürlük.

## 1. Introductory Remarks

Conceptions of human in Muslim scholarship depend on two main axes: Metaphysics and ethics. Even the scholars who studied human only from biological perspective did their analysis considering these two. Muslim philosophers and theologians developed their philosophy of human nature via spirit (*rūh*) and soul (*nafs*). They thought all motives (*devā'i*) and blockades (*savārif*) of thought and actions within *rūh* and *nafs* as essential orienting powers (*hady*) entrusted by God. All these orienting power (*hady/hidāyah*), together with senses, emotions and thought enabled man to separate (*tamyiz*) true from false (epistemic distinction), good from evil (ethical distinction) and beautiful from ugly (esthetical distinction). To prevent human from misusing his power, He brought human with essential parameters (*hudūdAllah*) and called every single object of this power as trust (*amānah*) and declared man responsible for his initiatives towards them and connected the sense of responsibility (*taqwā*) to the correct usage of this initiative. Equipped with these qualifications, autonomous, wise and free man finally was asked to undertake new initiatives, all of which are designated as 'worship' meaning 'ibādah in the Qur'ān. To put another statement, completing all these qualifications one further step was needed for a more comprehensive 'relationship' between God and human, which was worship.

## 2. Etymological Analysis of the term Worship ('*ibādah*)

Such terms as *nusuk* (act of worship);<sup>6</sup> *du'a* (invocation);<sup>7</sup> *khuḍū'* (bow down in humility);<sup>8</sup> *khuṣū'* (awe of God);<sup>9</sup> *rukū'* (bow down);<sup>10</sup> *sajda* (prostration);<sup>11</sup> *qunūt* (standing before God in devout obedience);<sup>12</sup> *tasbīh* (extolling and praising God)<sup>13</sup> and *shukr* (to be grateful)<sup>14</sup> are used in the Qur'ān as different forms or close meanings of worship.<sup>15</sup>

Three terms from the root '*a-b-d*' have extensive usage: '*ibādah* (some exact forms of rituals like prayer, fasting, etc.), '*ubūdiyyah* and '*ubūdah* (one's perpetual respect and sensitivity towards God).

<sup>4</sup> al-Ra'd 13/28.

<sup>5</sup> al-'Ankabūt 29/45.

<sup>6</sup> al-Baqarah 2/196.

<sup>7</sup> Fātir 35/14.

<sup>8</sup> al-Shu'arā 26/4.

<sup>9</sup> Tā-Hā 20/3.

<sup>10</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/43.

<sup>11</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/43.

<sup>12</sup> al-Baqarah 2/238.

<sup>13</sup> al-Ra'd 13/13.

<sup>14</sup> al-Naml 27/40.

<sup>15</sup> I bn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, (Beirut: 1994), article *d-'a-v*.

Fakhr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī defines ‘*ibādah*’ as ‘the most advanced form of respect’ in his *Mafātīh al-Gayb*.<sup>16</sup> According to Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah the term ‘*ibādah*’ signifies both *love* and *obedience* and if any ritual does not have these two prerequisites it can’t be deemed as ‘*ibādah*’.<sup>17</sup> Rāgīb al-Isfahānī describes ‘*ibādah*’ as the most advanced form of humility and ‘*ubūdiyyah*’ as the manifestation or expression of this humility,<sup>18</sup> and naturally considers ‘*ibādah*’ much more important than ‘*ubūdiyyah*’. Furthermore, Isfahānī mentions two kinds of ‘*ibādah*’: One is compulsory, the other one is voluntary/volitional. The fact that all beings function and work in harmonious manner with the natural law of the universe (as the necessary result of the will of God) is the kind of compulsory ‘*ibādah*’ and called *sajda* in the Qur’ān.<sup>19</sup> The second one is volitional ‘*ibādah*’ and in the end the worshipper deserves reward. This Qur’ānic verse has much reference to this cause:

“Are you not aware that before God prostrate themselves all things and beings that are in the heavens and all that are on earth –the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts”.<sup>20</sup>

When Ibn al-‘Arabī comments the term ‘*sajda*/prostration’ in this verse as their need and worship to God. This kind of ‘*ibādah*’ is called by Ibn ‘Arabī as dispositional/natural (*fitri*) and essential/ontic (*zātī*) worship which is different from volitional one.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Why worship?

We naturally gravitate towards what we value, and we ascribe worth to those things, whether it is God or something else. This natural dispositional inclination needs an outer and upper criterion to be judged and evaluated by whether it is a correct inclination or not. This ultimate criterion is postulated as *aql* (intellect) and called *hujjiyya al-aql* (intellect as the ultimate criterion) by some Muslim scholars, the example of whom is Imām Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī stating: “... So God determined not natural inclinations but reasons as the ultimate criteria.”<sup>22</sup>

Worship is one’s response to the rhythm of God’s revelation. This revelation is not propositional revelation alone, the whole created realm as the manifestation of His creating act (God’s attributes/names) is also revelation in the literal meaning of the term ‘*reveal*’ and ‘*revelation*’. We worship because God has made us worshippers. (*Wa mā ḥalaqtu’l-jinna wa’l-insa illa li-ya’budūnī*<sup>23</sup>). He has given us the ability to respond in worship to that revelation. We do not worship because we are forced to do it, rather we are asked to do it willingly. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be ‘volitional’, but mechanical, which goes totally against the fact that humans are volitional beings and through this characteristic they make use of their potentiality to the full. To be humankind is to have this

<sup>16</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīh ḥ al-Ghayb*, (Qairo: 1938), 14/159.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārīj al-Sālikīn*, (Qairo: 1403/1983), I/58.

<sup>18</sup> Rāgīb al-Isfahānī, *Mufradātu alfāz al-Qur’ān*, ed. Safvān Adnān Dāvūdī, (Damascus: 1992), article ‘a-b-d.

<sup>19</sup> See al-Ra’d 13/15; al-Hajj 22/18; al-Rahmān 55/5.

<sup>20</sup> al-Hajj 22/18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥat al-Makkiyya*, ed. Osmān Yahyā, (Qairo: 1972), II/328; IV/118.

<sup>22</sup> Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu (Istanbul: İsam Publications, 2002), p. 284.

<sup>23</sup> al-Dhāriyāt 52/56.

potentiality of 'being' and 'grown-up'. To be born human does not guarantee every single person to persevere as human. To keep it, to improve it or to lose it among alternatives. And 'human dignity' is something deserved at the end of this struggle. 'Human dignity' is something one feels in void when it is lost.

#### 4. Worship as Cognition

Worship/ibādah is commonly defined by Muslim scholars as the innermost capability of cognizing/knowing of all rational beings of the existence of God. The opt-quoted verse from the Qur'ān, Chapter *al-Dhāriyāt*, verse 56, is interpreted to this cause: "And tell them that I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may (**know** and) **worship** me." To worship is a verb and the characteristic of any verb is that it needs 'will'. So 'faith' and its indispensable consequence 'worship' are considered also 'verbs' as the necessary components of this 'will'.

The intuitive knowledge requires them with conscious willingness to know His reality and to conform their own existence to that of God. The inner world of human beings (*anfus*) and the outer world/nature (*afāq*) have such a design that whoever ponders about them will necessarily be conscious of whatever hidden to the senses. The following verses imply it: "Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed messages for all who are endowed with insight." and "O our Sustainer! You have not created this without meaning and purpose. ...".<sup>24</sup>

#### 5. Worship and Human Personality

When we analyze human being as a worshipper and his worshipping act such terms as **intentionality** (*niyah*), **cognition** (*ma'rifah*) and **freedom** (*hurriyah*) in the worshipping act seem essentials to focus on, which means analyzing worshipping act is to analyze the worshipper and his nature. We need to engage in such a detailed probe of the composition of the human being as it is vital to our goal of showing how the personality of human being satisfied with the worshipping act through his intentionality. With this intentionality human beings transcend the natural causal nexuses they are part of. As part of nature and causal nexuses human beings have always been called to ponder about the created beings (how the sky is exalted, how celestial bodies are manifested as ornament, etc.), all are intended to effect his 'will' and orient it to a certain cause. So humans' volitions and actions are oriented not determined so that they could feel themselves as natural part of this processes.

Cognition, intentionality/willingness and freedom give the deepest meaning to what the Qur'ān describes as worship/ibādah, which is designed as an instrument for the inner development of the worshipper, who acquires this quality by the act of conscious/intentional self-surrender to the all-pervading Creative Will of God.

Worship is like an encounter. And this phenomenological tide, symbols in the worshipping act, the meaning every single act conveys during worship always remove the tension of the encounter. Worship is a demand of recognition. It is a transpersonal act, aiming to satisfy the desire of finite

<sup>24</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/191-193.

being to transcend its finiteness. But in the end of worshipping act not a unification on the contrary a **total clarification of the limits and borders** between the two beings becomes much more evident.

## 6. Intention in Worship or Awareness of the Numinous

Actions are considered but lifeless forms, and their life is the intention or secret of sincerity within them. Intention or intentionality is the essence and foundation of any action, be it as religious service/prayer or a legal action. For instance, the correct intention in Hanafī legal system (*fiqh*) entails to specify what you are doing, in your heart – this is a condition for validity in actions where intention is a condition, such as prayer, fasting, or zakat.

Muslim scholars say that it is recommended to actively sustain one’s intention till the end of one’s worship, both the minimal intention and the intention of doing it for the sake of God.<sup>25</sup> This is also part of spiritual excellence given by the Prophet Muhammad when he was asked by Jibrīl “It is to worship Allah as though you see Him, and to know that if you see Him not that He sees you.” This sincere intention or purity in intention is the first obligatory act in prayer. That purity avoids hypocrisy. This sincerity reads in the verse:

“And they were not ordered only to worship Allah believing purely in Him, devoted solely to Him and establish prayer and to give alms. That is the correct religion”.<sup>26</sup>

“All actions are judged by motives, and each person will be rewarded according to their intention ...”. This hadith sets one of the most crucial principles specifically in regards to the acceptance of one’s deeds by God.

One expression used to this cause in the Qur’ān is ‘in the way of God’/*fi sabīl Allah*, thus making people to ensure that their intentions and actions be for the sake of God, which is the exact form of total altruism.

## 7. Worship and Free Will

Human inclines and directs his mind towards anything which he thinks may benefit him/her, restrains himself from what he/she thinks will harm him/her, chooses one of the alternative courses of action by the exercise of his/her own reason, and thinks himself/herself responsible for the merits or demerits of his/her actions. Now, while he/she thinks desires and inclines, chooses, and acts, he/she always considers himself/herself quite free, and never thinks or feels that any outside agency compels him/her to do any of his/her actions. This consciousness of freedom, al-Māturīdī asserts, is a reality, the denial of which will lead to the denial of all human knowledge and sciences. Quoting passages from the Qur’ān<sup>27</sup> he also shows that the actions enjoined or prohibited by God are ascribed to men, and that they will be accountable for their ‘own’ actions. All this clearly proves that God has granted men freedom of choice and necessary

---

<sup>25</sup> Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Humām, *Fath al-Qadīr Sharkh al-Hidāya*, ed. Mustafa al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1970, I/35.

<sup>26</sup> al-Bayyinah 98/5.

<sup>27</sup> al-Baqarah 2/77; 177.

power to perform an action.<sup>28</sup> When ‘faith’ and its necessary outcome ‘worship’ are considered acts of men then they are freely and consciously chosen and performed, which means consciousness preceded all these processes.

## 8. Ethical Consequences of Worship: Post-conditionality

A worshipping one transforms himself into an ethical one. The conditions that are necessary before, during and after prayer are intended to meet this vital aim. The Qur’ānic verse, ‘Surely prayer avoids indecency and evil’<sup>29</sup> as a post-condition is a call to create an ethical subject. And perseverance in prayer will turn this ethical subject into a subjected ethical subject which means ethical codes and norms willy-nilly arises from these deeds. *Al-amr bi’l ma’rūf and al-nahy ‘an al-munkar* is not but the manifestation of this subjected subject. Ethical behaviors necessarily become indispensable part of this ethical subject.

Worship is a way of transcending personal ego and one’s desire to reconstruct himself/herself. Through the spiritual connection with God and with the energy accumulates during this relationship human core develops self-awareness and it manifests itself in ethical relations. There is no surprise that the performative language of the Holy Books is intending to create this ethical realm through the symbolic rhetoric.

In Muslim theology faith and worship as its necessary outcome are considered ‘deeds’ or ‘actions’, and the primeval character of it is free will and freedom.

Ibn al-Nafis in his masterpiece *al-Risāla al-Kāmiliyya* defines worship as the necessary outcome of observing God’s signs in the physical world. His solitary Kāmil/perfect man living an isolated island discovers God and His attributes and this discovery obliges him to surrender his will to God’s and worship Him. As we remember in Ibn Tofail’s *Hayy b. Yaqzan* the only thing Hayy discovers was the reality of God not His attributes. The point is here that first cognition functions and successively ‘will’ plays its role and starts worshipping as the sign of gratitude.

## 9. Worshipping other than God: Self-annihilation

To worship other than God is signified in the Qur’ān as self-annihilation and lost: “... And he who associates with Allah – it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds, or the wind carried him down into a remote place.”<sup>30</sup>

Without cognition no one knows whom he worships and why. So the question comes: Is the worship, which lacks cognition worth being called worship? Sufis answer is famous: cognition must precede worship. In this case, aim replaces definition and cognition transforms itself into worship itself.

<sup>28</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, 115. Also see Ayyub Ali “Māturīdism” in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, (Wiesbaden: 1963), 267.

<sup>29</sup> al-‘Ankabūt 29/45.

<sup>30</sup> al-Hajj 22/31.

Those who worship God aimlessly or without a preceding knowledge are criticized in the Qur'ān: "And of the people is he who worships God on an edge..." (*Va min an-nās man ya'bud Allaha 'alā harfin...*). On edge, (*'alā harfin*) means without cognition, with uncertainty, doubt and unconvinced way.

### 10. The Abstract and Concrete form of Worship: *Vita Contemplativa* and *Vita Activa*

Thinking/contemplation, *vita contemplativa*, is defined as worship in a prophetic saying of Prophet Muhammad, which means the term worship has more than the prescribed worshipping forms like prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc. Of course, this contemplation by definition requires carrying out and activating the object of this contemplation, *vita activa*. This bilateral structure is the key anthropological principle in thought and action. To think is to think about something. To do is to have enough motivation and love to carry it out. As a result, to think is to do, *vita contemplativa* is *vita activa*. In this case contemplation and action in any form are the practical and meaningful dimension of abstract religion, thus for man transforming ordinary time to real and effective time, which is called worship in which consciousness, intentionality, activity and creativity are all embraced. To summon man to worship in this sense is a call to become involved in flux of time and be its real actor.<sup>31</sup> It is a call to transform the *Kronos* into *Kairos*.

Thinking and doing are the qualifications of a free man in the Qur'ān; otherwise, he is depicted as a slave:

"God propounds to you the parable of (two men): a man enslaved, unable to do anything of his own accord, and a (free) man upon whom we have bestowed godly sustenance from ourselves, so that he can spend thereof voluntarily, both secretly and openly. Can these two be deemed equal?"<sup>32</sup>

This free man is not only wise and righteous but also has the strength and authority to enjoin a righteous way of living upon others. Thus, while in the first parable the main issue is the contrast between freedom and bondage - between dependence and independence, in the second parable we are given the antithesis of dumbness and incompetence, on the one hand, and wisdom, justice and competence, on the other; and in both parables the implication is the same. God's call to worship is the seeking a man to do business. In this sense, theology means man's search of God, while anthropology is God's search of the man.<sup>33</sup>

Before concluding, the following questions must be raised and responded: Has the worshipper have an enterprising, frenzied and stimulated personality to challenge the besieging powers around him or on the contrary has a diffident, anonym and timid personality who is always passing the buck to others? What kind of function and effect does the worshipping act have upon the worshipper? Could submission to omnipotent God transform one into neurotic and complex one?

---

<sup>31</sup> Two distinct form of the verb *sh-h-d* is used to denote this difference. *Shāhid* and *Shahid*. While the former is passive agent of any event, the latter is active and effective agent on the event.

<sup>32</sup> al-Nahl 16/75.

<sup>33</sup> Here is the exact place to remember the masterpiece work of Abraham J. Heschel's *God in Search of Man*, (New York: 1955).

Metaphorically speaking, the Holy Qur'ān defines God in this relation as light (*nour*)<sup>34</sup> and it seems that worship provides the transmission line between the two. God's invitation to worship is always an invitation to keep this line open and think and work with it.

### 11. Worship as Religious Experience: The Ground for and Meaning of Religious Experience

In general, 'religious experience' is defined as an awareness of Being or of 'being itself', as distinct from experiences of things whose reality depends upon and expresses that Being. Gabriel Marcel writes of God as that 'Absolute Being' which is 'rebellious to descriptions' but can be given 'as Absolute Presence in worship'.<sup>35</sup>

The term 'numinous' is used to describe a kind of experience. This experience of God may or may not involve sensations, but it refers principally to a kind of sensing, perceiving or apprehending of God. The subject has a sense of being in the **presence of that being** and he has **certain responses to this sense of being** in the presence of him.

In this numinous experience, *a person seems to apprehend a divine reality independent of himself*. Subsequent experiences of the desire to worship, venerate, delight in or fear the object of experience follow from this prior experience of what is assumed to be the reality of the divine.

### 12. Worship as the Necessary Outcome of Awareness of the Numinous

With regard to worship two concepts are to be kept in mind: awareness and aim/*telos*. To create awareness with an aim/*telos*, all cognitive and prescriptive faculties such as senses, reasoning, imagination, contemplation, understanding, judging and deciding must be activated. Although this procedure has many cognitive parts such as the experiential, intellectual, rational, etc., it is essentially a unified whole, and only this *holistic structure* can have a meaning. In order to make these cognitive elements religiously meaningful and operative, we have to put them in a web of cognitive relations supporting one another. As a result of these relations, our paradigm/worldview gains a religious color and affects our perception of things, and the power of this perception increases or decreases one's faith or makes him/her more or less enlightened.

### 13. Cognitive Dimension of Worship/Religious Experience

An important point in worship/religious experience is its *cognitive* or *communicative* side, the lack of which will in the last analysis lead to sheer *agnosticism* and *scepticism*. As God has revealed himself to and through His creatures, which constitutes the basis of this communication, any kind of agnosticism is theologically impossible. When tackling the cognitive or communicative side of worship, we use 'cognition' to mean the experience of knowing which includes perception, recognition and reasoning as distinguished from the experience of feeling. By adding that God discloses himself in the outside world and that the world of nature is the best, clearest and most universal evidence for the knowledge of Him, Muslim thinkers try to escape from agnosticism and scepticism as in the case of al-Ghazālī. As Fazlur Rahman puts it:

<sup>34</sup> al-Nour 24/35.

<sup>35</sup> G. Marcel, *Being and Having*, (London: Collins), 1965, 184.

“Fundamentally, al-Ghazālī affirmed an agnosticism about the ultimate and absolute nature of God and maintained that He was knowable only in so far as He was related to and revealed Himself to man. This revealed and relational nature of God is constituted by the Divine Names and Attributes.”<sup>36</sup>

The same line can be traced in Ibn ‘Arabī:

“In whatever situation you are, either on earth or air, know it or not, think it or not, you are under the Divine Names. It is these names that determine your movement and standing still, your contingency and existence. And this name says ‘I am God’, and it tells the truth. Considering that, you are supposed to say *Allāh Akbar*/God is greater... Know for sure that the Divine Being does not show himself to you as He is, but under one of these Divine Names. As this is the case, you will never know what the name God means.”<sup>37</sup>

#### 14. Experience as a Ground for the Reality of God

It seems that to enable communication and to confirm our knowledge, we take for granted that there is a preceding reality from which our cognitive faculties deduce some knowledge, which develops an ontological basis for the individual and his knowledge of both himself and God and around which many *sui generis* forms of life are developed.

In this sense, one finds a strong suggestion that this ground is direct and immediate. It is as if an awareness is born in consciousness. In this sense, religious experience is defined as the consciousness of ‘Absolute Being’. This Absolute Being resists all definitions but shows himself in prayer with His Absolute presence.<sup>38</sup> As John Baillie writes:

“The witness of all true religion is that there is no reality which more directly confronts us than the reality of God. No other reality is nearer to us than he. The realities of sense are more obvious, but his is the more intimate, touching us as it does so much nearer to the core of our being.”<sup>39</sup>

The ‘cognitive elements’, according to Tillich, are to be understood as coming to exist in the consciousness of a living person. Deep personal inadequacy and dependence seems the basic motive in this preference.

#### 15. Conclusion

The full-blooded sense of the term worship has a complex content far beyond the meaning of its face value. It has a cognitive (*maʿrifa*) dimension. A person should have knowledge of what, why and for what purpose he worships. This cognition necessarily requires an orientation and intentionality. With these orientation and intentionality human being transcends the natural causal nexuses it is part of. This awareness of what one worships and why is a prerequisite for creating the desired moral results. Thus knowledge and worship come together to create ‘a purposeful moral action’. It means that morality first transforms the person from whom it emerges, creates a personality in

---

<sup>36</sup> F. Rahman, *Islam*, (London: Anchor Books), 1966, 95.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-tanazzulāt al-mawsiliyya*, edited by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Mahmūd, (Cairo: Maktabat ‘Ālam al-Fikr 1986), 90-91.

<sup>38</sup> G. Marcel, *Being and Having* (London: Collins, 1965), 184.

<sup>39</sup> J. Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1939), 155.

him, and then, by his example, turns to others and reaches a level of competence to show itself in the social arena. The moral power of worship is tied to the individual it originates from, the Creator to which this individual is attached, and ultimately the benefit it will provide to the society in which moral virtues will manifest themselves. The term worship also involves affective and emotional attitudes such as awe and reverence – a form of modesty and veneration. It is not easy to say which of these properties might be essential to the notion of worship and which merely accidental. This is the reason why we establish cognition, intentionality and freedom prior to all other forms.

The doctrinal basis of worshipping God alone has a serious moral manifestation in believer's life. No believer can bow before another person or creature in a way that would harm his human dignity; nor does he activate the feelings of love, respect and reverence that worshipping God creates in him. Because the *reasonableness* and *necessity* of worship is established only for God. This approach to worshipfulness appeals to God's excellent intrinsic nature rather than His relation to us. No interest or benefit at all can be considered in worshipping. Therefore, one cannot treat others with worship-like reverence no matter what benefit got from them. This is specifically vital for the communities with saint-cults. Especially in theistic religions the emphasis in scriptures which reads “Only You do we worship...” is quite essential in this regard. Thus, an appropriate response to the holy is fulfilled on the one hand, and a dignified life among human beings is guaranteed on the other.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author is on the editorial board of Kader. However, in this issue, in which the author's article was published, the editorial duties and authorizations of the author were suspended. Thus, the principle of double-blind refereeing was complied with.

## Bibliography

- Ali, Ayyub. "Māturidīsm" in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*. ed. Muhammad. M. Sharif. Wiesbaden, 1963.
- Baillie, John. *Our Knowledge of God*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939.
- Heschel, Abraham J. *God in Search of Man*. New York, 1955.
- al-Isfahānī, Rāḡīb. "a-b-d", *Mufradātu alfāz al-Qur'ān*. ed. Safvān Adnān Dāvūdī. Damascus, 1992.
- al-Jawziyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim. *Madārij as-Sālikin*. Qairo, 1403/1983.
- Ibn `Arabī. *Al-tanazzulāt al-mawsiliyya*. ed. by `Abd al-Rahmān Mahmūd. Cairo: Maktabat `Ālam al-Fikr 1986.
- Ibn Manzūr. "a.b.d", *Lisān al-Arab*. Beirut, 1994.
- Marcel, Gabriel. *Being and Having*. London: Collins, 1965.
- al-Māturidī, Abū Mansūr. *Kitāb at-Tawhīd*. ed. Bekir Topaloğlu. İstanbul: İsam Publ., 2002.
- al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*. Qairo, 1938.
- Ibn `Arabī. *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, (ed. Osmān Yahyā), Qairo, 1972.
- Ibn Humām, Kamāl al-Dīn. *Fath al-Qadīr Sharkh al-Hidāya*, ed. Mustafa al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1970.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam*. London: Anchor Books, 1966.