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# FORTIFYING THE DEEP ECOLOGY PLATFORM: NURSI'S *TAFAKKUR ĪMĀNĪ* AS A METAPHYSICAL COMPLETION TO ARNE NAESS' DEEP QUESTIONING

Moh. Isom Mudin<sup>\*</sup>, Nur Hadi Ihsan<sup>\*\*</sup>, and Nabila Huringiin<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

**Abstract:** The escalating environmental crisis underscores the inadequacy of purely technical solutions, necessitating a fundamental reorientation of humanity's relationship with nature. This article examines two transformative approaches to this challenge. It first considers Arne Naess' Deep Ecology, whose method of Deep Questioning effectively repositions humanity within the broader ecological community and establishes a philosophical basis for biocentric equality and the Ecological Self. Naess' principal achievement lies in developing an inclusive framework that fosters ecological solidarity across diverse traditions. However, the movement's philosophical openness—its chief strength—simultaneously presents its central limitation: the absence of a definitive metaphysical foundation capable of sustaining long-term environmental commitment. The study, therefore, turns to Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's *tawhidic* ecology, arguing that its core practice of *tafakkur ĩmānĩ* (contemplation of faith) complements and enhances the Deep Ecology project rather than supplanting it. Grounded in *tawhĩd taĥqĩqĩ* (verified monotheism) and *nazar ĥarfĩ* (interpreting creation as Divine signification), Nursi's framework reconceives the biosphere as a manifestation of Divine Names (*tajalliyāt al-asmā' al-ĥusnā*). The resultant synthesis preserves the horizontal-immanent strengths of Naess' approach while augmenting it with a vertical-transcendent epistemology, thus forging a comprehensive environmental philosophy.

**Keywords:** *deep ecology, ecotheology, ecosufism, tafakkur ĩmānĩ, Islamic environmental ethics*

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## INTRODUCTION

The escalating ecological crisis demands a fundamental rethinking of human–nature relations, revealing the insufficiency of technical solutions alone. John B. Cobb Jr. and Seyyed Hossein Nasr exemplify efforts to bring religious moral foundations into this discourse, demonstrating how faith traditions can address environmental problems.<sup>1</sup> This crisis necessitates eco-religious understanding as an alternative approach, offering the ethical foundation and motivational capacity required for meaningful ecological sustainability.<sup>2</sup> Arne Naess’ (1912–2009) Deep Ecology movement, with its core methodology of Deep Questioning effectively expands moral consideration beyond the human and establishes a philosophical basis for biocentric equality.<sup>3</sup> By advocating for biocentric equality and promoting an expanded Ecological Self through identification with the entire biosphere, Deep Ecology provides a crucial philosophical shift from resource-based environmentalism to a vision of ecological integrity.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding its contributions, Naess’ framework suffers from a fundamental ontological deficit. Its derivative nature—drawing ultimate principles from diverse traditions without a transcendent anchor—compromises its motivational resilience against contemporary challenges like neoliberal extractivism.

This article contends that the theo-ecological philosophy of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960),<sup>5</sup> particularly his systematic approach of *tafakkur imānī* (contemplative cognition) as developed in the *Risale-i Nur*, offers a powerful metaphysical complement to Naess’ project. Nursi’s framework is not merely an alternative but a profound grounding mechanism. His political exile forged an intimate ecological sensibility, where he perceived nature through faith: “As long as He exists, everything exists... the light of faith makes trees and stones become friendly companions.”<sup>6</sup> This conceptual resonance with Naess’ Ecological Self, however, finds its deepest articulation in Nursi’s unflinching diagnosis of the spiritual pathology underlying the ecological crisis. For Nursi, the degradation of nature is not a mere policy failure but the inevitable consequence of a worldview severed from its transcendent anchor. He identifies materialist philosophy as the root malady, declaring:

*al-falsafah al-māddiyyah tā‘ūn ma‘nawī; haythu tasabbabat fī saryān hummā muhlika fī al-bashariyyah, wa ‘arriḍahā li-l-ghaḍab al-ilāhī* [Materialist philosophy is a spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Md Abu Sayem, “Religions and Environmental Sustainability: Focusing on Some Practical Approaches by John B. Cobb Jr. and Seyyed Hossein Nasr,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i1.265>.

<sup>2</sup> Md Abu Sayem, “Eco-Religious Teachings and Environmental Sustainability: An Analysis of Workability of Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s ‘Eco-Spirituality’ in the Context of Bangladesh,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i3.357>.

<sup>3</sup> Arne Naess, “Deepness of Questions and the Deep Ecology Movement,” in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. George Sessions (Shambala Publications, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Arne Naess, “Deepness of Questions and the Deep Ecology Movement,” in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson (Springer Netherlands, 2005), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6\\_87](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6_87).

<sup>5</sup> Nur Hadi Ihsan and Moh. Isom Mudin, “Paradigma Kalam Dalam Konservasi Lingkungan Menurut Said Nursi,” *Tasfiyah* 4, no. 1 (2020): 27, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v4i1.4052>.

<sup>6</sup> Said Nursî, *Al-Lama‘āt* [The Flashes], 6th ed, trans. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 321–22.

plague; it has caused a deadly fever to spread throughout humanity, exposing it to divine wrath].<sup>7</sup>

This penetrating critique reveals that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of meaning: when the cosmos is reduced to dead matter through what Nursi terms *al-naẓar al-ismī* (the self-referential gaze), it becomes vulnerable to exploitation without limit.<sup>8</sup> The materialist worldview, by severing creation from its Creator, not only licenses ecological destruction but simultaneously plunges humanity into what Nursi describes as a “*ṭā ‘ūn ma‘nawī*; spiritual plague”—a condition of existential disorientation where freedom degenerates into rebellion, and scientific progress becomes complicit in cosmic devastation. Faith, for Nursi, provides the “inner peace” necessary to face environmental crises with purposeful resilience rather than despair.<sup>9</sup>

The strategic significance of dialoguing between these two thinkers lies in Nursi’s methodology, which proceeds *al-sayr al-āfāqī* (the journey across the horizons) initiates from observing the cosmos (*āfāq*), witnessing the manifestations (*tajallī*) of Divine Names in creation,<sup>10</sup> providing a clear teleological vector that integrates cosmological observation with metaphysical insight to bridge the is–ought dichotomy plaguing secular environmental ethics.<sup>11</sup> This article, therefore, undertakes a systematic analysis of both frameworks by examining their fundamental aspects: underlying metaphysical bases, ontological claims about reality, epistemological methods for understanding nature, and implications for ecological praxis.<sup>12</sup> Employing an integrative synthesis methodology through detailed content analysis of primary texts—Naess’ works on Deep Ecology and Ecosophy T, and Nursi’s *Risale-i Nur* focusing on *tafakkur īmānī*’s operational mechanisms—we argue that, while Naess’ Deep Questioning effectively deconstructs the instrumentalist paradigm, Nursi’s *tafakkur īmānī* provides the necessary metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological depth to secure its foundation.

## DEEP QUESTIONING IN THE ECOSOPHY OF ARNE NAESS

### *Deep Questioning as the Defining Method of Deep Ecology*

The philosophical genesis of Arne Naess’ concept of “depth” originated not in ecological discourse but in his pioneering work in empirical semantics and engagements with

<sup>7</sup> Said Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt* [The Words], 6th ed., trans. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 864.

<sup>8</sup> Nursī, *Al-Lama‘āt*, 158.

<sup>9</sup> Zuleyha Keskin, “Inner Peace in the Life of Said Nursi,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v4i3.243>.

<sup>10</sup> Said Nursī, *Al-Maktūbāt* [The Letters], 6th ed., trans. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 567.

<sup>11</sup> Moh Isom Mudin et al., “Prinsip Ekologis Untuk Kehidupan Berkelanjutan Perspektif Teologi Islam: Kajian Atas Kitab Rasail al-Nur Sa’id Nursi” [Ecological Principles for Sustainable Life from the Perspective of Islamic Theology: A Study of Sa’id Nursi’s *Risale-i Nur*], *Fikrah* 9, no. 1 (2021): 45, <https://doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v9i1.9018>.

<sup>12</sup> Primadi Candra Susanto et al., “Qualitative Method Concepts: Literature Review, Focus Group Discussion, Ethnography and Grounded Theory,” *Siber Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary* 2, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.38035/sjam.v2i2.207>.

psychoanalysis and the Vienna Circle, focusing on “depth of intention”—defined as the clarity, distinctions, and richness of understanding a proposition. This evolved into his realisation that depth is present in all fundamental aspects of existence,<sup>13</sup> an epistemological stance that naturally transitioned into depth of questioning, shifting focus from answers to the act of enquiry. This methodological toolkit, which Naess later termed “deep ecology,” was fundamentally defined by its commitment to pursuing foundational questions others neglected, as he emphasised that the core differentiator lies in “keep asking more searching questions... about human life, society, and Nature,”<sup>14</sup> where depth is determined by the level of questioning rather than the content of the answer, marking the distinction between shallow and deep approaches as a difference in the depth of questions posed, and defining the movement as one that questions more deeply.<sup>15</sup>

The concept of depth constitutes the core of Naess’ philosophy, representing a rigorous mode of enquiry that seeks the fundamental rationale behind facts or assertions. This depth is intrinsically linked to a sense of seriousness in argumentation. As Naess explains, every clearly articulated question, when taken seriously, inevitably leads to further questions, ultimately drawing one into the realm of philosophy from which “there is no theoretical escape.”<sup>16</sup> He clarifies that what distinguishes the deep ecology movement from its shallow counterpart is not necessarily the answers provided, but the act of raising and earnestly engaging with “deep questions.” According to Naess, argumentation within the shallow movement rarely involves complete social and philosophical problematisation. Yet, when its supporters are invited to consider these deeper questions, they often come to accept the perspectives of the Deep Ecology movement.<sup>17</sup>

Arne Naess’ philosophy fundamentally equates “depth” with persistent enquiry into foundational assumptions, systematically deconstructing instrumental thinking to challenge value systems that privilege human interests over the non-human world.<sup>18</sup> This approach, as noted by David Rothenberg, reflects a “refusal to ignore troubling evidence,” maintaining problematic complexity as a form of resistance against pragmatic yet reductive solutions.<sup>19</sup> Naess’ method, while Socratic in spirit, diverges crucially: rather than professing ignorance, Ecosophy T derives conclusions from explicit hypotheses to systematically challenge superficial reasoning.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the distinction between shallow and deep ecology lies not in

<sup>13</sup> Arne Naess, “Through Spinoza to Mahayana Buddhism or Through Mahayana Buddhism to Spinoza?,” in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson (Springer Netherlands, 2005), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6\\_78](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6_78).

<sup>14</sup> Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Gibbs M. Smith, Inc./Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Warwick Fox, “Intellectual Origins of the ‘Depth’ Theme in the Philosophy of Arne Naess,” *The Trumpeter* 9 (1992), accessed September 3, 2025, <https://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/index.php/trumpet/article/download/427/698?inline=1>.

<sup>16</sup> Arne Naess, “Author’s Preface,” in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson (Springer Netherlands, 2005), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6\\_87](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6_87).

<sup>17</sup> Naess, “Deepness of Questions,” *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, 207.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Bodian, “Simple in Means, Rich in Ends. An Interview with Arne Naess,” in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. George Sessions (Shambala Publications, 1995), 27.

<sup>19</sup> Arne Naess, “Introduction: Ecosophy T—from Intuition to System,” in *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, ed. and trans. David Rothenberg (University of Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, Nachdr. (Smith, 1999), 65.

their conclusions but in the courage to endure philosophical discomfort, interrogating until reaching those foundational norms we “support wholeheartedly,” thereby demanding intellectual accountability through continuous questioning.<sup>21</sup>

### ***How Deep Questioning Drives a Paradigm Shift***

Deep Questioning employs Socratic interrogation to deconstruct anthropocentrism, aiming to replace instrumental rationality with an ecocentric consciousness. Its goal is a spiritual paradigm shift towards Earth wisdom through persistent examination of foundational assumptions.<sup>22</sup> Building on this foundational critique, the “solution” proposed by Deep Ecology is nothing short of comprehensive transformation of modern consciousness. It calls not for incremental reforms but for a radical shift in our perceptions, thinking and values.<sup>23</sup> This aligns perfectly with Fritjof Capra’s observation that “we are now at the beginning of such a fundamental change of worldview in science and society, a change of paradigms as radical as the Copernican revolution.”<sup>24</sup> In this view, tinkering with policies within the existing structure is insufficient; the architecture of thought that places humanity as separate from and superior to nature must be overturned. Therefore, Deep Ecology’s goal is to catalyse a Copernican-scale revolution in ethics and perception, decentring the human and recognising the intrinsic value of the entire ecosphere, thereby demanding a fundamental restructuring of modern institutions and ways of being that are in harmony with, rather than dominant over, the natural world.<sup>25</sup>

This philosophical critique and call for a paradigm shift crystallised into a concrete social and political force known as the long-range Deep Ecology movement. As it emerged from the Ecological Revolution of the 1960s, its primary objective was to translate this radical rethinking into tangible change. The movement’s main concern has been to bring about a major paradigm shift—a shift in perception, values, and lifestyles—as a basis for redirecting the ecologically destructive path of modern industrial growth societies.<sup>26</sup> This objective is what fundamentally distinguishes it from shallow environmentalism; it seeks not to manage the symptoms of the crisis but to alter the civilisational trajectory causing it. Philosophically, this has been characterised by a decisive move from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, a transition that inherently demands and is expressed through committed environmental activism aimed at systemic, rather than superficial, transformation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Arne Naess and Per I. Haukeland, *Life’s Philosophy: Reason and Feeling in a Deeper World* (University of Georgia Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, Nachdr., 65.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Katz, Andrew Light and David Rothenberg, “Introduction: Deep Ecology as a Philosophy,” in *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*, ed. Eric Katz, Andrew Light and David Rothenberg (MIT Press, 2000), ix, <http://archive.org/details/beneathsurfacecr0000unse>.

<sup>24</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living System* (Flamingo, 1996), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive, and Social Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability* (Doubleday, 2002), 78.

<sup>26</sup> Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary,” in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson (Springer Netherlands, 2005), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6\\_85](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6_85).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Arne Naess' "Apron Diagram" operationalises the paradigm shift by structuring Deep Questioning as a dialectical engine that systematically drives the derivation of concrete actions from ultimate philosophies while maintaining bidirectional critical validation across four hierarchical levels.<sup>28</sup> Commencing at Level I (Ultimate Philosophies), this interrogative process excavates and refines core presuppositions—such as biospheric egalitarianism—forging a robust axiological foundation through relentless “why” interrogation, which in turn logically informs Level II’s consensus-based platform principles. As derivation progresses to Level III (Policies), questioning shifts to ideological critique, challenging techno-managerial solutions that lack paradigmatic realignment, while at Level IV (Specific Actions) it evaluatively ensures praxis reflects ecocentric coherence.<sup>29</sup> Crucially, this continuous upward-downward interrogation prevents activist degeneration into shallow pragmatism, thereby functioning not as a mere catalyst but as the essential self-correcting mechanism that sustains the transformative integrity of Deep Ecology from cosmology to direct action.

### *The Theological Architecture of Deep Questioning*

Arne Naess fundamentally conceptualises Deep Questioning not merely as an analytical tool but as the architectonic principle underlying his entire derivational system for ecological philosophy. The method’s defining characteristic lies in its radical openness, explicitly designed to integrate ultimate premises from diverse philosophical and religious traditions—spanning Spinoza’s pantheistic *Deus Sive Natura*,<sup>30</sup> Gandhi’s commitment to non-violence and spiritual self-realisation, Buddhist conceptions of intrinsic value, and Islamic principles of stewardship (*khilafah*).<sup>31</sup> This synthesis demonstrates the possibility of constructing a transcultural ecological ethic that simultaneously grounds environmental responsibility in metaphysical awareness and ethical commitment, creating what Naess envisioned as a comprehensive framework for biospherical egalitarianism.<sup>32</sup>

This structural openness is systematically embedded within the design of his Level 1 of the derivational pyramid, which he explains that the top level of the derivational pyramid is made up of principles that are both normative and descriptive, and these principles originate from a variety of philosophical and religious creeds.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, Deep Questioning operates as a meta-methodological framework—it is agnostic to the specific content of the ultimate premises but rigorous in its demand for a coherent derivation of ecological norms from whichever foundational worldview one adopts.<sup>34</sup> This design simultaneously empowers

<sup>28</sup> Arne Naess, “The Apron Diagram,” in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (North Atlantic Books, 1995), 10–11.

<sup>29</sup> Arne Naess, *Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, ed. Alan R. Drengson and Bill Devall (Counterpoint, 2008), 107–8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>31</sup> Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 185.

<sup>32</sup> Omer Atilla Ergi, “The Necessary Connection between Laws of Physics and Metaphysics,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v9i2.625>.

<sup>33</sup> Arne Naess, “The Deep Ecology Movement,” in *Problems of International Justice*, ed. Steven Luper-Foy (Routledge, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429303111-9>.

<sup>34</sup> Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep.”

pluralism while exposing a critical philosophical vulnerability: the potential absence of a non-arbitrary terminus. The system can accommodate Gandhi's pursuit of moksha as easily as it can a Spinozistic metaphysics, but it provides no internal criterion for adjudicating their validity, ultimately grounding ecological commitment in subjective, pre-existing belief structures rather than an objective metaphysical reality.<sup>35</sup>

Naess unambiguously transcends a materialistic or purely scientific framing of ecology by positing that ultimate, deep ecological awareness is spiritual or religious awareness. This is not an ancillary observation but the cornerstone of his entire project. His acknowledgment of Gandhi's metaphysics—where all political action was directed toward the goal of self-realisation (*moksha*) and seeing “God face to face”—demonstrates that Naess views the deepest wellspring for ecological action as a transformation of consciousness rooted in a sense of cosmic belonging. He crystallises this by defining the human spirit as “the mode of consciousness in which the individual feels a sense of belonging, of connectedness, to the cosmos as a whole.”<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the famous “ecological self” is not a psychological construct but a spiritual achievement. This explains why Naess finds deep resonance with the Perennial Philosophy across traditions; the content may differ, but the shared structural element is recognition that a profound, spiritually grounded connectedness to the whole of existence is the only motivator powerful enough to sustain a genuine deep ecological commitment.<sup>37</sup> The method of Deep Questioning is thus the intellectual pathway to triggering this spiritual awakening, making ecology a fundamentally philosophical and religious endeavour rather than a technical or managerial one.

### ***Deep Questioning in the Spectrum of Environmental Thought***

Deep Questioning, as the methodological core of Arne Naess' Deep Ecology, fundamentally differs from ecofeminism in its analytical focus and target of critique. While ecofeminism identifies patriarchal structures—specifically the dualistic logic that privileges male over female, culture over nature, and reason over emotion—as the root of women's oppression and ecological destruction,<sup>38</sup> Deep Questioning operates at a more foundational epistemological level. It does not begin with a predetermined diagnosis of social hierarchy but instead deploys relentless “why” interrogation to uncover the presuppositions underlying all anthropocentric thinking. Where ecofeminism traces environmental degradation to historically specific patterns of gender domination,<sup>39</sup> Deep Questioning deconstructs the conceptual frameworks—whether patriarchal, scientific, or economic—that enable any form

<sup>35</sup> Mehdi Khayat-zadeh and Mohammad Pakdin Asl, “Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Iṣfahānī's Ontological Argument and Spinoza's Ontological Arguments for the Existence of God: A Comparison,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v7i2.485>.

<sup>36</sup> Naess, *Ecology of Wisdom*, 91.

<sup>37</sup> Alex Guilherme, “Metaphysics as a Basis for Deep Ecology: An Enquiry into Spinoza's System,” *The Trumpeter* 27, no. 3 (2011).

<sup>38</sup> Iris Marion Young, “‘Feminism and Ecology’ and ‘Women and Life on Earth: Eco-Feminism in the 80's,’” *Environmental Ethics* 5, no. 2 (1983), <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics1983525>.

<sup>39</sup> Karen J. Warren, “Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections,” *Environmental Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1987), <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics19879113>.

of instrumental rationality toward nature. This methodological openness allows Deep Questioning to accommodate ecofeminist insights without being reducible to them, functioning as a meta-critical tool that can interrogate the assumptions of any worldview, including those that generate gender-based hierarchies.

In relation to social ecology and spiritual ecology, Deep Questioning occupies a distinctive intermediary position. Unlike Bookchin's social ecology, which attributes ecological crises to social hierarchies and advocates for decentralised, communal institutions as the solution, Deep Questioning focuses on transforming individual and collective consciousness through sustained philosophical enquiry rather than prescribing specific political structures. It shares with social ecology a commitment to radical critique but diverges in its emphasis on personal worldview transformation over institutional reorganisation.<sup>40</sup> Conversely, while Deep Questioning agrees with spiritual ecology that the deepest form of ecological consciousness is inherently spiritual, it maintains a methodological agnosticism toward specific religious or spiritual traditions. Where spiritual ecology often begins with the premise of nature's inherent sacredness,<sup>41</sup> Deep Questioning arrives at spiritual awareness through the process of questioning—leading practitioners to what Naess describes as “self-realization” and “identification” with the nonhuman world without requiring prior commitment to any particular metaphysical system. This positions Deep Questioning as a potential bridge between political ecologies and spiritual approaches, offering a procedural path toward ecological consciousness that remains open to diverse philosophical and religious foundations while demanding rigorous examination of all assumptions.

## APPLYING NURSI'S *TAFAKKUR ĪMĀNĪ* TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

### *Tafakkur Īmānī as the Core of Nursi's Tawhidic-Ecology*

Nursi distinguishes *tafakkur īmānī* as a “light” dissolving heedlessness, contrasting with reason's “fire” consuming illusions—establishing it as a teleological epistemological discipline.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Nursi introduces the dimension of journeying into this contemplative process through the terms *al-sayr al-qalbī*—the heart's journey and *al-siyāḥah al-khayāliyyah*—imaginal tourism.<sup>43</sup> It becomes clear that these terms are an active and dynamic movement of the soul—not a static state. The culmination of this argument lies in Nursi's assertion that the rational assent and heart's submission arising from *tafakkur īmānī* are qualitatively different and superior to mere imagination, supposition, or

<sup>40</sup> John P. Clark, “A Dialogue with Arne Naess on Social Ecology and Deep Ecology (1988-1997),” *The Trumpeter* 26, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>41</sup> Leslie E. Sponsel, “Spiritual Ecology,” in *Encyclopedia of Religious Psychology and Behavior* (Springer, 2025), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38971-9\\_2054-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38971-9_2054-1).

<sup>42</sup> Said Nursî, *Al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī an-Nūrī* [The Staff of Moses], 6th ed, ed. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 256.

<sup>43</sup> Nursî, *Al-Maktūbāt*, 519; Said Nursî, *Mulḥaq Qaṣṭamūnī* [The Kastamonu Addendum] (Sozler Publications, 2015), 296.

conceptualisation, as they are subject to an objective scale of truth.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, man's existential function is to witness the glorification of all beings through investigation via *tafakkur īmānī*.<sup>45</sup>

Nursi's *tafakkur īmānī* derives its ontological foundation not from philosophical speculation but from Divine command, rooted in Qur'anic imperatives like "*la'allakum tatafakkarūn*" (so that you may think) and "*afalaa ta'qilūn*" (then will you not reason?),<sup>46</sup> establishing contemplation as a form of cognitive worship. This paradigm transforms nature from a mere resource into a Divine text to be deciphered.<sup>47</sup> Nursi further posits that while humans in their animal dimension suffer greater existential anguish than other creatures, their unique faculties equip them to function as witnesses (*shahīd*) to creation's cosmic glorification through *tafakkur*.<sup>48</sup> Crucially, he reveals the method's teleological structure: cosmological enquiry consistently culminates in calls for rational engagement (*afalaa ta'qilūn*) or the revelation of God's Beautiful Names (*al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), providing the imperative and destination for all ecological contemplation.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Nazar Ḥarfī and Imān Taḥqīqī Moving Beyond Nominal Perception***

In his profound Deep contemplation throughout the *Risale-i Nur*, Ustad Bediuzzaman Said Nursi employed distinctive terms, among them "*al-naẓar al-ḥarfī*" (other-indicative gaze) or "*ma'nā ḥarfī*" (other-indicative meaning), which stands in opposition to "*al-naẓar ismī*" (self-referential gaze) and "*ma'nā ismī*" (self-referential meaning) that denotes a shallow perception. Nursi's distinction between *al-naẓar al-ismī* and *al-naẓar al-ḥarfī* derives from classical Arabic grammar, where "*al-ism mā dalla 'alā ma'nān fī nafsīhi*" (the noun indicates meaning in itself) and "*al-ḥarf mā dalla 'alā ma'nān fī ghayrihi*" (the particle indicates meaning in something else). Using the mirror metaphor, *al-naẓar al-ismī* views beings as self-referential entities with intrinsic meaning, while *al-naẓar al-ḥarfī* reads them as "letters" pointing beyond themselves—Divine writings (*maktūbāt rabbāniyyah*) manifesting the Beautiful Names (*tajalliyāt al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*).<sup>50</sup> Another key term is "*nazar taḥqīqī*" (investigative/verificative observation), contrasted with "*nazar taqlīdī*" (imitative/traditional observation). Additionally, the term "*ma'nawī*" (meaning-oriented, spiritual) is central, expressing the profound dimensions of beings, cosmic realities, and environmental elements. This concept is antithetical to "*māddī*" (materialistic), which reflects a superficial, shallow outlook.<sup>51</sup> These *ma'nawī* meanings "express the manifestations of the Most Beautiful Names

<sup>44</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 309.

<sup>45</sup> Nursī, *Al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī an-Nūrī*, 367.

<sup>46</sup> Nursī, *Al-Lama'āt*.

<sup>47</sup> Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi et al., "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia: Contributions by Scholars, Institutions, and the Government," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>.

<sup>48</sup> Nursī, *Al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī an-Nūrī*, 357.

<sup>49</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 480.

<sup>50</sup> Nursī, *Al-Mathnawī al-'Arabī an-Nūrī*, 117.

<sup>51</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 141.

(*al-Asmā' al-Husnā*) and the sublime attributes of the Great Creator (glory be to Him), as if they are divine writings, recitations of the Most Beautiful Names.”<sup>52</sup>

The focus of this contemplation (*tafakkur imānī*) toward the deep environment is “*tawhīd tahqīqī*” (verificative/realised monotheism). It is witnessing the manifestations of the Most Beautiful Names and the Divine Seal in all layers of the cosmos, the world, the communities of nature, and the environment—individually and collectively.<sup>53</sup> The breadth of this enquiry is virtually limitless, nearly as vast as the universe. The true realities (*haqiqat al-haqaiq*) of the communities of the environment are, in fact, the Divine Beautiful Names. Their essences (*māhiyyāt*) are shadows of those realities; the true realities are the manifestations (*tajalliyāt*) of those Names.<sup>54</sup> As for the certainty (*yaqīniyya*) of this *tawhīd* at the level of “*haqq al-yaqīn*” (absolute certainty), it cannot be shaken when doubts assail it. The source of its certitude is derived from engaging all human subtleties, from the heart to the spirit to the innermost secret (*sirr*).<sup>55</sup> From the perspective of reasoning, true *tawhīd* springs from a methodological proof, which Ustad termed “*al-burhān al-innī*” (a posteriori proof, proof from effect to cause), and not “*burhān limmī*” (a priori proof, proof from cause to effect).<sup>56</sup>

Authentic *tafakkur imānī* requires the intellect’s light to emanate from an illuminated heart, defining profound contemplation as the antithesis of superficial observation.<sup>57</sup> He warns that, without this integrative framework, intellectual activity degenerates into *al-zalam al-damis* (oppressive darkness) that produces injustice and error, akin to an eye lacking its central pupil (*sawād al-‘ayn*) and thus incapable of true vision.<sup>58</sup> True contemplative knowing emerges only when the heart’s intuitively witnessed realities (*mashhūd dhawqī*) are articulated by the intellect into structured analogical proofs (*mubāhana tamthīliyya*), forming a holistic epistemology where Divine effusion (*fayḍ*) from the Qur’an illuminates the wounded spirit (*rūh majrūh*) and heart (*qalb maqrūh*), activating innate faculties (*fitrah*) like spiritual intuition (*hads*), inspiration (*ilhām*), and Divine love (*‘ishq ilāhī*) that collectively transcend reductive rationalism and ground knowledge in experiential and revealed certainty.<sup>59</sup>

Nursi delineates a sophisticated epistemic hierarchy progressing from sensory perception (*al-takhayyul*) through conceptualisation (*al-taṣawwur*), rational processing (*al-ta’aqul*), and intellectual assent (*al-taṣdīq*), culminating in volitional commitment (*al-iltizām*) and ultimately settled conviction (*al-i’tiqād*) within the heart. He cautions that truncated development yields cognitive dysfunctions—sophistry (*al-safsāṭah*) from disembodied imagination or fanaticism (*al-ta’aṣṣub*) from unexamined commitment. Crucially, Nursi ontologically privileges the heart as faith’s dwelling place (*mustaqarr al-īmān*), relegating the

<sup>52</sup> Nursī, *Al-Mathnawī al-‘Arabī an-Nūrī*, 117.

<sup>53</sup> Nursī, *Al-Lama ‘āt*, 172.

<sup>54</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 736.

<sup>55</sup> Nursī, *Mulḥaq Qaṣṭamūnī*, 104.

<sup>56</sup> Said Nursī, *Isyārāt Al-I’jāz Fī Maṣān al-Ījāz [Sign of Miraculousness]*, 6th ed., ed. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 150.

<sup>57</sup> Said Nursī, *Ṣayqal Al-Islām [The Polish of Islam]*, 6th ed., ed. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 168.

<sup>58</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 848.

<sup>59</sup> Nursī, *Al-Mathnawī al-‘Arabī an-Nūrī*, 350, 403.

brain to a reflective mirror and guardian (*hāris al-īmān*) that clears epistemological obstacles. True certainty emerges only when cerebral knowledge descends into the cardiac core, where intuition (*al-hads*) and inspiration (*al-ilham*) function as transcendent guides, prioritising the remembrance of received truths (*al-tadhkīr*) over theoretical speculation.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Typology of Contemplative Pathways***

Nursi's epistemological framework for *tafakkur īmānī* strategically integrates two complementary methodological paths: the extrospective journey (*al-sayr al-āfāqī*) through cosmic observation and the introspective journey (*al-sayr al-anfusī*) through self-purification. While acknowledging the traditional value of introspection, Nursi prioritises the *āfāqī* approach as suited to addressing contemporary epistemic conditions, leveraging the immediacy of cosmic evidence to activate the heart–intellect nexus.<sup>61</sup> This methodological hierarchy enables a systematic progression from intellectual assent (*tasdīq*) to convictional certainty (*i'tiqād*), where the contemplation of Divine manifestations in creation is the primary catalyst for transformative knowledge, while the introspective path maintains its crucial role in grounding this knowledge in spiritual intentionality and ethical commitment.<sup>62</sup>

Nursi's *tafakkur īmānī* establishes a rigorous methodological framework grounded in the Divine Names al-Zāhir and al-Bāṭin, based on the principle that the small reflects or represents the large in miniature form. This system mandates a detailed, analytical approach (*tafṣīlī*) for contemplating small entities, where Divine craftsmanship manifests in intricate complexity, and a holistic mode (*ijmālī*) for vast cosmic phenomena that reveal Divine majesty.<sup>63</sup> Nursi sternly warns against methodological inversion: applying *ijmālī* to small objects hardens the ego through overlooked complexity, while applying *tafṣīlī* to large creations causes cognitive fragmentation.<sup>64</sup> When properly unified, these approaches transform the cosmos into an integrated pedagogical system where every entity functions as a legible “letter” testifying to Divine oneness, guiding the seeker systematically toward the light of certainty (*nūr al-yaqīn*).<sup>65</sup>

### ***Nursi and the Synthesis of Islamic Ecological Thought***

This study positions Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's *tafakkur īmānī* within a comparative framework alongside three influential contemporary Islamic voices on environmental ethics: Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, ‘Alī Jum‘ah, and ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Najjār. The selection of these three figures is neither arbitrary nor exhaustive, but strategic—each represents a distinct disciplinary entry point into Islamic environmental discourse. Each scholar, from their respective disciplinary vantage points, affirms that the cosmos is not a self-subsistent reality but a created order bearing witness to its Creator, and that humanity's role as *khilafah*

<sup>60</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 910, 946.

<sup>61</sup> Nursī, *Al-Maktūbāt*, 567.

<sup>62</sup> Nursī, *Al-Kalimāt*, 628.

<sup>63</sup> Nursī, *Al-Mathnawī al-‘Arabī an-Nūrī*, 349.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

(vicegerent) entails a sacred trust (*amānah*) toward all beings. This common framework of *tafakkur imānī* (faith-based contemplation) unites them, yet their distinctive methodologies and emphases generate a rich, multi-layered paradigm that addresses the ecological crisis from theological, ethical, jurisprudential, and cosmological dimensions.

An-Najjār provides the cosmological-cultural foundation through his concept of *thaqāfah al-islāmiyyah li-l-bī'ah* (Islamic culture's conception of the environment), delineating four essential dimensions: the ontological status of the cosmos within Divine unity, the spiritual dimensions of natural entities, the universal laws governing these dimensions, and the reciprocal relationship between humanity and the environment. His distinctive concept of *irtifāq al-bī'ah* synthesises affection (*rifq*) with utilisation (*intifā'*), transcending the false dichotomy between instrumental exploitation and romantic preservation.<sup>66</sup> Al-Qaradāwī's contribution lies in integrating *'aqidah*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, and positive law to produce a practical environmental ethics. His key conceptual contribution is the distinction between *himāyah* (protection) and *ri'āyah* (comprehensive care). While *himāyah* operates only from the negative dimension (*jihad al-'adam*)—preventing harm and pollution—*ri'āyah* encompasses positive development (*jihad al-wujūd*) through cultivation and growth, and negative protection against damage.<sup>67</sup> Alī Jum'ah complements this by distilling the Islamic environmental worldview into five foundational binaries: *al-khilāfiyyah wa al-taskhīr* (vicegerency and subjugation), *al-ḥaqq wa al-wājib* (right and duty), *al-manhaj wa al-binā'* (methodology and construction), *al-muḥāfazah wa al-maḥabbah* (preservation and love), and *al-manfa'ah wa al-jamāl* (utility and beauty). This five-fold synthesis provides a systematic grid for analysing and evaluating human interaction with the natural world.<sup>68</sup>

Nursi's unique contribution lies in his systematic articulation of *tafakkur imānī* as a structured epistemological discipline. While al-Qaradāwī provides the practical–ethical framework, 'Alī Jum'ah the hermeneutical categories, and an-Najjār the cosmological foundation, Nursi supplies the contemplative methodology that animates them all. His principle of *nazar ḥarfī*—reading creation not for its own sake but as signs pointing to the Divine Names—transforms environmental perception into an act of worship, revealing every being as a dynamic manifestation (*mazhar*) of *al-Asmā' al-Husnā*. This vertical dimension, grounded in *tawḥīd taḥqīqī*, provides the metaphysical depth that practical ethics requires for sustained motivation, transforming environmental stewardship from obligation into loving response to Divine beauty. Together, these four thinkers constitute an integrated Islamic ecological paradigm: Nursi supplies the contemplative–epistemological foundation, an-Najjār the cosmological–cultural framework, 'Alī Jum'ah the hermeneutical categories, and al-Qaradāwī the practical–ethical superstructure.

<sup>66</sup> Abd al-Majid al-Najjar, *Qadlāya Al-Bi'ah Min Mandzur al-Islami* [Environmental Issues from the Islamic Perspective], 2nd ed. (Wuzarah al-Awqaf wa as-Syu'un, 2004), 12–14.

<sup>67</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradlawi, *Ri'ayah Al-Bi'ah Fi Syari'ah al-Islam* [Environmental Care in Islamic Law] (Dar as-Syuruq, 2001), 8.

<sup>68</sup> Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah Wa Huffadz Alaiha Min Mandzur al-Islam* [The Environment and its Preservation from the Islamic Perspective] (Wabil, 2009), 10–19.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS: FORTIFYING THE DEEP WITH THE DEEPER

### *Both are Powerful for Deconstructing the Instrumentalist Worldview*

Said Nursi's concept of *tafakkur īmānī* and Arne Naess' method of Deep Questioning initiate a powerful deconstruction of the instrumentalist worldview that reduces nature to a mere resource. Nursi diagnoses this instrumentalist perspective as the self-referential gaze (*nazar ismī*), which he identifies as the foundational philosophy of materialism. He trenchantly labels this "the contaminated philosophy (*muzahraf*),"<sup>69</sup> arguing it is a "moral plague" that severs creation from its Creator, leading to spiritual and ecological ruin. For Nursi, the catastrophic World Wars are direct evidence of the corruption that flows from this worldview, which fosters rebellion and blind imitation of a godless civilisation.<sup>70</sup> The ecological crisis stems from a perceptual failure—a flawed worldview. Naess directly attributes this to humanity's inability to form an adequate worldview, explicitly rejecting mechanistic science's "passive, dead, value-neutral" conception of nature,<sup>71</sup> which is the scientific expression of the instrumentalism Nursi condemns. Instead, Naess calls for a radical shift in perspective, envisioning nature as akin to Spinoza's "*Deus sive Natura*"—an all-inclusive, creative, and alive reality (*natura naturans*).<sup>72</sup>

Said Nursi's critique of the *ismi* (nominal view) and Arne Naess' Deep Ecology launch a fundamental assault on the mechanistic and reductionist worldview that Fritjof Capra identifies as the source of our ecological tension; calling instead for a holistic, "systemic" understanding akin to Capra's "web of life." Their critiques converge on the insight that the ecological crisis is, first and foremost, a crisis of perception.<sup>73</sup> By focusing solely on the isolated parts (the atomistic view), modern science and philosophy, as R. D. Laing devastatingly observed, had to "destroy the world in theory before we could destroy it in practice."<sup>74</sup> Nursi and Naess, from their respective traditions, sought to restore a vision of the whole—for Nursi, a cosmos saturated with Divine meaning (*āyāt*); for Naess, a relational, Spinozistic *natura naturans*—thereby pre-emptively championing the systemic thinking Capra deems essential for survival.

Both thinkers identified the mechanistic gaze as leading directly to nature's desacralisation. Nursi's critique of the *ismi* perspective enables this process, reducing nature from a sacred entity to a mere resource—paralleling Nasr's metaphor of nature's degradation from a "married woman" demanding responsibility to a "prostitute" available for exploitation

<sup>69</sup> Nursi, *Al-Lama 'āt*, 158.

<sup>70</sup> Nursi, *Al-Kalimāt*, 864.

<sup>71</sup> Naess, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, 52.

<sup>72</sup> Ecy de Jonge, *Spinoza and Deep Ecology: Challenging Traditional Approaches to Environmentalism*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Philosophy Series (Routledge, 2004), <https://philpapers.org/rec/DEJSAD>.

<sup>73</sup> Capra, *The Web of Life*, 4.

<sup>74</sup> Arran Gare, "The Grand Narrative of the Age of Re-Embodiments: Beyond Modernism and Postmodernism," *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (2013).

without obligation.<sup>75</sup> Naess' Deep Questioning is designed to combat this desacralisation by fostering a deep-seated identification with the natural world, the Ecological Self, which inherently instils a sense of reverence and responsibility. Rachel Carson's critique of instrumental rationality—poisoning ecosystems to control pests—epitomises the desacralised arrogance toward nature. Nursi and Naess offer its philosophical antidote by restoring nature's intrinsic value and sacred integrity.<sup>76</sup> Finally, Nursi and Naess offer a profound critique of what Julia Schroeder terms "Imperial Ecology," the ideology of dominion rooted in the Baconian project of conquering nature for human benefit.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Both are Stances Against Environmental Destruction***

Said Nursi's *tafakkur īmānī* and Arne Naess' Deep Questioning culminate in an absolute, non-negotiable prohibition against environmental destruction. Nursi asserts that causing corruption and pollution (*ifsad*) is fundamentally forbidden in Islamic law, arguing that such acts are inconceivable for a human being whose innate humanity (*insaniyah*) remains pure.<sup>78</sup> For him, environmental degradation is a symptom of deeper spiritual corruption, a betrayal of humanity's role as God's vicegerent (*khalifah*) and honourable "elder brother" to all creation.<sup>79</sup> This aligns powerfully with Naess' grave warning that humanity will ultimately destroy itself by thoughtlessly eliminating essential links in the web of life.<sup>80</sup> Both thinkers frame environmental harm not merely as a practical error but as a profound violation of a cosmic order—for Nursi, it is transgressing Divine law (Sunnah); for Naess, it is severing the biological relationships that constitute our existence.

This shared prohibition is rooted in a common conviction that caring for the environment is an intrinsic, fundamental aspect of being human. Nursi grounds this duty in the human being's God-given station as the bearer of a great trust (*amānah*), making stewardship a core component of our identity.<sup>81</sup> Naess arrives at a similar conclusion through ecology, arguing that our co-evolution with other life forms means that our wellbeing is inextricably linked to the planet's health. He warns that our attempts to distance ourselves from nature, to "de-wild and de-sacralize it," ultimately lead to our dehumanisation.<sup>82</sup> Thus, for both, ecological care is not an optional add-on but a necessary expression of our true nature—whether defined theologically as fulfilling a Divine trust or ecologically as recognising our embeddedness in the biosphere.

<sup>75</sup> Seyyed Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Unwin, 1990), 20.

<sup>76</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Mariner Book, 2022), 6.

<sup>77</sup> Julia Schroeder et al., *The Ecology Book* (DK Publishing, 2019), 296.

<sup>78</sup> Nursi, *Al-Lama 'āt*, 478.

<sup>79</sup> Nursi, *Ṣayqal Al-Islām*, 474.

<sup>80</sup> Harold Glasser, "Learning Our Way to a Sustainable and Desirable World: Ideas Inspired by Arne Naess and Deep Ecology," in *Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability*, ed. Peter Blaze Corcoran and Arjen E. J. Wals (Springer Netherlands, 2004), 131, [https://doi.org/10.1007/0-306-48515-X\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/0-306-48515-X_11).

<sup>81</sup> Said Nursi, *As-Shu 'ā'āt* [The Rays], 6th ed, trans. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, n.d.), 53.

<sup>82</sup> Arne Naess, "Beautiful Action: Its Function in the Ecological Crisis," in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson (Springer Netherlands, 2005), 122.

On a practical level, this shared spirit manifests in a call for proactive, positive action that transcends mere opposition. Nursi introduces the powerful concept of “*al-'amal al-ijaby*” (positive action), or *hima* by some scholars,<sup>83</sup> which involves actively “organizing the blessings” dispersed throughout creation for the benefit of all beings, thereby expressing gratitude to the Creator.<sup>84</sup> This moves beyond simply avoiding harm to actively enhancing the natural world as a form of worship. This resonates deeply with the upper levels (III and IV) of Naess’ platform, which advocate for a substantial reduction of human impact and active promotion of life’s richness and diversity. Both frameworks insist that true environmentalism is not about austerity or “zero growth” as an end in itself,<sup>85</sup> but about a positive, transformative project: for Nursi, it is participating in a cosmic dialogue of meaning by uncovering the hidden treasures of the Divine Names; for Naess, it is fostering planetary flourishing through profound re-evaluation of quality of life.

### ***Exposing the Limits of Naess’ Deep Ecology through a Nursian Lens***

Deep Ecology’s biospherical egalitarianism, rooted in Spinozian pantheism, equates creator with creation. Nursi’s theocentric framework fundamentally diverges, deriving cosmic unity from each being’s direct relation to the Necessary Being, not immanent networks.<sup>86</sup> This ontological distinction transforms ecological interconnectedness from a horizontal biological relationship into a vertical Divine connection,<sup>87</sup> where all species unite through their shared dependence on the Creator. From a Nursian perspective, this ontological framework constitutes what he terms “*ihbāṭ qīmat al-kā'ināt*” (existential devaluation of beings).<sup>88</sup> While Deep Ecology’s ecocentrism posits ontological equality among species, Nursi’s framework reveals that this approach neglects the crucial concept of “*al-qīmah al-'āliyah al-mutawajjihah ilā al-ṣāni*” (transcendent value directed toward the Creator).<sup>89</sup> Deep Ecology’s biospherical egalitarianism flattens ecological value, whereas Nursi’s framework establishes a teleological hierarchy where species derive differential significance from their unique manifestations of Divine attributes.<sup>90</sup>

Deep Questioning’s epistemological limitation lies in its inability to transcend physical ecosystems, reflecting what Nursi terms wilful ignorance of existential wisdom—reducing nature to “deaf nature and blind coincidence.”<sup>91</sup> This epistemological closure prevents Deep

<sup>83</sup> Davide Ravazzoni, “Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya’s Himma: Entrepreneurial Leadership as an Expression of the Islamic Tradition,” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v8i2.531>.

<sup>84</sup> Said Nursî, *Al-Malāḥiq* [The Appendices], 6th ed., trans. Ihsan Kasim Salihi (Sozler Publications, 2011), 400.

<sup>85</sup> Arne Naess, “The Politics of the Deep Ecology Movement,” in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson (Springer Netherlands, 2005), 207.

<sup>86</sup> Nursî, *Al-Maktūbāt*, 360.

<sup>87</sup> Capra, *The Web of Life*, 9.

<sup>88</sup> Nursî, *Al-Kalimāt*, 78.

<sup>89</sup> Nursî, *Al-Lama'āt*, 528.

<sup>90</sup> Isom Mudin, “Bediuzzaman Said Nursi on the Deep Environmental Values: Towards a New Environmental Vision for Sustainable Living,” *Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture* 14 (2023).

<sup>91</sup> Nursî, *Al-Maktūbāt*, 113.

Ecology from accessing what Nursi identifies as (onomastic manifestations)—the Divine Names and attributes that are the teleological foundation for ecological systems. Consequently, Deep Ecology’s methodology leads to “profound misguidance” in ecological interpretation, as it remains confined within a strictly material–empirical paradigm.<sup>92</sup> Deep Ecology’s deep questioning, despite challenging anthropocentrism, remains epistemologically superficial by failing to decipher nature’s semiotic dimension—what Nursi identifies as “cosmic signs” (*āyāt kawniyyah*) pointing to transcendent purposes beyond biological functionality.

The spectre of ecological nihilism in Deep Ecology’s conceptualisation of intrinsic value, while representing advancement beyond instrumental approaches, ultimately constitutes what Nursi describes as “*ittihām al-mawjūdāt bi-al-tafāhah wa-tahqīr bi-al-qīmah*” (accusation of triviality and value degradation) by severing the existential connection between creatures and their Creator.<sup>93</sup> Deep Ecology’s value theory operates within a binary framework of “limited material instrumental values” and singular intrinsic values, whereas Nursi’s system reveals the existence of multidimensional sublime values emanating from manifestations of the Divine Names.<sup>94</sup> This axiological limitation becomes evident in Deep Ecology’s struggle to provide compelling reasons for biodiversity conservation beyond ecological functionality. Nursi’s framework bridges the “motivational gap” in conservation by integrating instrumental use (*al-taskhīr*) with miraculous purpose (*mu’jizat al-qudrah*), creating a value matrix that acknowledges utility and transcendence.<sup>95</sup>

The void of ecological meaning and purpose the Deep Questioning methodology of Deep Ecology culminates in what Nursi characterises as “*al-‘adam al-muṭlaq wa-al-fanā’ al-mahḍ*” (absolute nullity and pure annihilation) due to its inherent inability to establish “existential purpose” for ecological systems.<sup>96</sup> This questioning process, which “fills his world with non-existence,” generates what might be termed “*Jahannam Ma’nawīyyah*” (semantic hell) in ecological discourse, where conservation efforts lack transcendent motivation.<sup>97</sup> Deep Ecology’s fundamental failure to address the ultimate why of biodiversity preservation—particularly within a universe conceptualised as the product of blind chance—reveals its teleological poverty. Nursi’s framework, by contrast, positions each species as “specific manifestations within divine manifestation,” thereby providing cosmic significance to ecological conservation.<sup>98</sup> This teleological dimension transforms environmental stewardship from mere crisis management to participatory engagement in what Nursi would identify as

<sup>92</sup> Nursî, *Al-Mathnawī al-‘Arabī an-Nūrī*, 2–6.

<sup>93</sup> Nursî, *Al-Kalimāt*, 148.

<sup>94</sup> Salih Yucel, “An Islamic Perspective of the Natural Environment and Animals: Said Nursi and his Renewalist Philosophy,” *UMRAN – International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 2, <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2018.5n2.236>.

<sup>95</sup> Nursî, *Isyārāt Al-I’jāz Fī Mazān al-Ījāz*, 29.

<sup>96</sup> Nursî, *Al-Maktūbāt*, 75–76.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>98</sup> Nursî, *Al-Mathnawī al-‘Arabī an-Nūrī*, 336.

creation's fundamental purpose, that is recognition and celebration of Divine wisdom and beauty manifested throughout the natural world.<sup>99</sup>

### *Completing Naess' Ecological Vision through Nursi's Tafakkur Īmānī*

Naess' immanent Deep Ecology deconstructs anthropocentrism but lacks metaphysical grounding. Nursi's *tafakkur Īmānī* completes it by revealing beings as dynamic manifestations of the Divine Names, serving five cosmic purposes: preserving beauty, producing metaphysical truths, dispersing eternal fruits, declaring Divine glorification, and manifesting sacred phenomena.<sup>100</sup> Nursi identifies life (*al-ḥayāh*) as the supreme manifestation of the Divine Name Al-Ḥayy, surpassing Naess' ecological valuation through its 25 Divine purposes—including being existence's purest extract, the clearest proof of Divine Oneness, and a refining machine preparing beings for eternity.<sup>101</sup> Whereas Naess' ecocentrism values nature's biological dimension, Nursi's *tafakkur Īmānī* reveals nature's five-dimensional sacred function. The synthesis of both gives birth to a complete ecological spirituality: on one hand, we perceive the web of life horizontally à la Naess, while on the other hand, we delve into the ocean of meaning vertically à la Nursi—transforming environmental action from merely saving the earth into participation in a cosmic symphony that glorifies His Majesty.<sup>102</sup>

The integration of Nursi's *tafakkur Īmānī* and Naess' Deep Ecology transcends mere synergy, representing a fundamental completion of the deep ecological project. While both deconstruct the instrumentalist paradigm, Naess' immanent framework, which grounds value in the biosphere's self-realisation, ultimately lacks a telos beyond the flourishing of the ecological whole. Nursi's theology provides this essential teleological anchor. When Naess alludes to the Abrahamic "caliph," noting that "Mankind is accountable to God...regent, caliph, deputy, guardian...are some of the terms used in the Bible and the Koran,"<sup>103</sup> he touches on but does not develop a metaphysical foundation. Nursi's *khilāfah* redefines biocentric equality as an ontological truth: all creatures possess intrinsic value as manifestations of the Divine Names. This embeds Deep Ecology's horizontal web of life within a vertical hierarchy of meaning, providing nature's inherent worth with a non-arbitrary, transcendent foundation.

This ontological difference generates a critical distinction in the temporality of environmental ethics. Deep Ecology derived from Deep Questioning is fundamentally reactive; it is a corrective response to the crisis of industrial modernity and a call to shift consciousness to avert collapse. Its motivation, while profound, is historically contingent. In

<sup>99</sup> Salih Yucel, "Purpose-Driven Life in Islam and Emotional Stability: Examining Said Nursi's Perspective," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v9i2.649>.

<sup>100</sup> Nursi, *Al-Maktūbāt*, 365.

<sup>101</sup> Nursi, *Al-Lama'āt*, 507.

<sup>102</sup> Ismail Albayrak, "Prison Life in the Eyes of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and Aleksander Solzhenitsyn: A Comparative Study," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 3 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v8i3.609>.

<sup>103</sup> Naes, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, 185.

contrast, an ethic derived from *tafakkur īmānī* and *tawhid* is constitutively pro-active. Environmental care is not a crisis-management strategy but a continuous, positive act of worship (*ibadah*) and the fulfillment of a primordial trust (*amānah*). It is the default mode of existence for a conscious *khalifah*, an outward expression of an internal state of gratitude (*shukr*) and recognition of the Divine unity permeating creation. This stance, independent of the immediacy of any crisis, provides a more resilient and perpetually renewable motivation for stewardship, anchoring it in the timeless relationship between the servant and the Divine.

Ultimately, this integration resolves a central philosophical aporia in Deep Ecology: the nature and object of responsibility. In Naess' framework, responsibility is a horizontal obligation to the biotic community. This noble ideal, however, can lead to intractable conflicts between competing ecological values (e.g., predator vs. prey). Nursi's framework introduces a decisive vertical dimension: the primary responsibility (*amānah*) is not merely to the creation, but before the Creator. This theocentric orientation does not negate responsibility to nature but grounds it in a higher, transcendent court of accountability. It elevates the duty beyond sentimental identification or utilitarian calculation, situating it within a sacred covenant. The resulting synthesised paradigm achieves a comprehensive ethic: it is radically anti-instrumentalist, yet its motivation is not solely predicated on an expanded self-interest (even an ecological one). Instead, it is driven by a devotional responsibility to the Divine Source, making the care for creation an inseparable and non-negotiable aspect of a life lived in conscious submission to the Real (al-Haqq).

The integration of Naess' Deep Questioning with Nursi's *tafakkur īmānī* offers a distinctive contribution to climate discourse, which remains trapped within techno-scientific managerialism and economic calculus. Naess' relentless "why" interrogation deconstructs the instrumental rationality underlying fossil fuel dependency, forcing climate policy to confront its unexamined assumptions. Nursi's framework completes this project by providing what climate discourse lacks: a non-arbitrary metaphysical foundation for action. His *nazar ḥarfī*—reading creation as Divine discourse—transforms ecosystems from mere carbon sinks into sacred manifestations of the Divine Names (*tajalliyāt al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), grounding climate stewardship in cosmic worship rather than utilitarian calculation. This synthesis addresses the "motivational gap" plaguing climate policy: where economic incentives and scientific warnings prove insufficient, Nursi's framework provides transcendent motivation rooted in gratitude and sacred responsibility. By integrating Naess' systemic analysis with Nursi's vertical purposiveness, this synthesis generates a climate ethic that is simultaneously ecologically rigorous, philosophically grounded, and spiritually motivating—addressing not only physical symptoms but root causes in human consciousness and cosmological disorientation.

## CONCLUSION

The ecological philosophies of Said Nursi and Arne Naess offer complementary responses to the contemporary crisis through their distinctive epistemological approaches. Nursi's

system, rooted in *tawhīd taḥqīqī* and *naẓar ḥarfī*, frames nature as a manifestation of the Divine Names (*tajalliyāt al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*), establishing a vertical-transcendent paradigm where contemplation of the environment serves not as an end in itself but as a pathway to knowledge of God. This understanding is grounded in the Qur'anic declaration that “there is nothing that does not exalt His praise”<sup>104</sup>—a verse Nursi places at the beginning of every treatise in the *Risale-i Nur*, affirming that all beings are engaged in constant glorification of their Creator. For Nursi, the environment is Divine art, and God is the artist; to separate ecological reflection from this theological foundation would be to misrepresent his entire project. Naess' Deep Ecology, deriving from ecocentric pluralism, develops a horizontal-immanent framework through Deep Questioning, expanding human identification into an Ecological Self within the web of life. While Naess' platform achieves remarkable inclusivity, its metaphysical openness risks relativism and lacks a definitive motivational anchor. The synthesis of these approaches yields a robust environmental philosophy: it preserves Deep Ecology's systemic, relational strengths while grounding them in Nursi's teleological framework, transforming ecological commitment from ethical choice to participatory engagement with a cosmos imbued with sacred meaning. This integration addresses the core limitation in purely immanent ecological models, offering a spiritually-sustained foundation for long-term planetary stewardship that remains faithful to Nursi's original intention—that the environment be contemplated not for its own sake, but as a mirror reflecting the Beautiful Names of its Creator.

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<sup>104</sup> Qur'an 17:44.

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