

## Conceptual Framework of Māturīdī Thought

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### 1. Introduction

Abu Mansour al-Māturīdī, the Turkish-origin thinker of Transoxiana, was a commentator, jurist and theologian with profound analytical skills, critical demarcations, and rational constructions. In short, he was a complete intellectual and thinker.

Considering especially the nomadic and pastoral lifestyle of the Turks in addition to the dynamic character of the geography he lived in, Māturīdī formed his thought in a complexity that is in harmony with real life, and on a rational ground, taking into account practical experience and reality,<sup>1</sup> and this perspective was also reflected in his approach and solution to religious issues. Abū Hanīfa's contribution to the intellectual world of Māturīdī was prodigious. Similarly, Abū Hanīfa was not only the representative of the rationalist movement (*Ahl al-Ra'y*) tradition but also a merchant who knows social and practical life well. It is possible to observe in Abū Hanīfa's life both an attitude that pays attention to the facts and the trust in reason in solving the problems encountered.

Māturīdī was raised mainly by the Hanafi *fiqh* scholars. He supported the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and *fiqh* understanding, which he inherited from Abū Hanīfa, with rational evidences, and also after discussing the *furū'* (substantive *fiqh*) with strong evidence, he systematized the scientific negotiation and discussion with definite proofs (*burhan*) by clearing it of doubt.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hanifi Özcan, *Türk Düşünce Hayatında Mâtürîdîlik (Maturidism in Turkish Intellectual Life)* (Ankara: Cedit Neşriyat, 2012), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Mansūr Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmūd as-Samarkandī al-hanafi Māturīdī, *Kitâbü't Tevhîd Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*. trans. Prof. Dr. Bekir Topaloğlu. (Ankara: ISAM, 2005), Introduction part, p.XXII. (Since this Turkish translation of *Kitab al-Tawhid* is used in this research, it will only be referred to as *Kitab al-Tawhid* in the following sections.)

Thus, he rose to the leading position among the Hanafi jurists and the leader of Muslims in Transoxiana. He adopted and reconstructed the Hanafi *fiqh* and *kalam* understanding and supported and developed it with rational evidence.<sup>3</sup> However, considering him as a simple imitator and continuation of Abū Hanīfa is the biggest obstacle to seeing Māturīdī's original side and his founding role in *fiqh* and *kalam*. Despite taking his inspiration from Abū Hanīfa, he processed, developed, and systematized the legacy he inherited from him, and almost reconstructed it through the filter of reason. From an intellectual point of view, Māturīdī was an original thinker and a founding figure. Māturīdī added several issues that were not discussed by Abū Hanīfa to the basic topics of *kalam* and many post-Māturīdī thinkers followed Māturīdī on this regard. The theory of knowledge and the genesis (*takwin*) are just two of the examples to give in this field. Māturīdī's discussion of knowledge as a value at the very beginning of his work on *kalam* was also adopted by thinkers from different traditions (Ashari/ Māturīdī) in the following period and a similar method was followed in the writing of books. This was also original in that it was both an important epoch for the science of *kalam* and the first sign that the issues to be discussed would be dealt with on an epistemic basis.

Māturīdī stood out among his peers with the consistency and depth of his views, the richness of meaning he attributed to words, his power of logical proof and explanation.<sup>4</sup> He became the founder of a well-established *kalam* school and deserved to be the imam of the *mutakallims* (scholar of *Kalām*). The sect formed in his name has managed to affiliate more than half of the Muslims and to gain love and respect among the Anatolian people.<sup>5</sup> While doing this, he reconstructed every concept in the thought system on a rational basis and considered it imperative to be supported with evidence for an idea, an opinion and even a religion to be acceptable.<sup>6</sup> In other words, every word and concept in Māturīdī's system of

<sup>3</sup> See: Murat Şimşek, *İmam Ebû Hanîfe ve Hanefîlik [Imam Abū Hanīfa and Hanafism]* (İstanbul: Haciveyiszade İlim ve Kültür Vakfı, 2019), 308-320.

<sup>4</sup> Emine Ögük, *Kelâm Geleneğinde Temel Kaynaklardan İstifade Yöntemi Mâtürîdî Örneği [The Method of Exploiting Basic Sources in the Kalam Tradition: The Maturidi Example]*. (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2015), 19.

<sup>5</sup> See: Ahmet Vehbi Ecer, *Büyük Türk Alimi Maturidi (The Great Turkish Scholar Māturīdī)*. (İstanbul: Yesevi Yayıncılık, 2006), 56.

<sup>6</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Teohîd Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 3.

thought was reconsidered on the basis of reason, evidence, justice and wisdom. 'Wisdom' is at the center of the Māturīdī system and means exactness of the words and deeds and putting everything in its proper place.<sup>7</sup> Thus, one had to consider each concept and the meaning to be given to each term within this general framework, if he/she did not want to fall into absurdity/irrationality.

Māturīdī's universal approach, which placed reason and revelation at the center and resonated in the real world, paved the way for the Muslim Turks to stay both Muslim and Turk in the pluralistic world they lived in as well as to become a dominant power in an imperial geography. In today's chaotic world contaminated with technology, Māturīdī's point of view continues to be a hope for Turks in both staying Muslim and protecting their local and national identities. It is because of this feature that Māturīdīsm has become an expression of religious understanding in Turkish intellectual life.<sup>8</sup>

Through presenting the conceptual framework of Māturīdī thought in general terms, this study examines a number of concepts that form the general framework of his system. Undoubtedly it is important to determine the conceptual framework of Māturīdī thought but it is equally difficult because each concept Māturīdī discusses carried great importance in his general framework. Since discussing each concept would be beyond the limits of a single paper, this study refers to the most significant concepts. In the following section, the Māturīdī system of thought is briefly defined, and the place of the concepts of knowledge, reason, faith, will/responsibility/morality, wisdom, and prophethood in this system is discussed under separate subheadings. The conclusion part evaluates the possibility of building a wisdom-centered civilization based on Māturīdī. However, it should be noted right away that while analyzing today's problems, bringing the present to the center as the greatest unknown and the past as well-known may have no meaning other than the adaptation of the present to the past.<sup>9</sup> While trying to overcome the contemporary problems related to faith, the thoughts put forward by Māturīdī are important, but they should not be the only criterion that makes the knowledge of the new dependent on

<sup>7</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhīd Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 391.

<sup>8</sup> Özcan, *Māturīdīlik [Māturīdīsm]*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Cabiri, Muhammed Abid, *Felsefi Mirasımız ve Biz [Our Philosophical Legacy and Us]*, Translated by İbrahim Akbaba (İstanbul, İz Publishing, 1997), 22.

the knowledge of the past. This will mean handling the new in a way that contributes to enrichment and development.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Māturīdī's Thought System

Māturīdī's thoughts were quite systematic, i.e. collection of his thoughts formed a distinct system, the focus of which was wisdom and justice. Wisdom was in fact, the keystone that held his system together. Although the senses and hearsay evidence (news) were important in this system, reasoning was paramount. Having reason is not only a requirement to be the recipient of revelation, but it is also the reasoning that understands the revelation, interprets the hearsay evidence, processes the sensory data and harmonizes them within a general system.

This system is not disconnected from the outside world and requires maximum consideration of the facts because the system's exclusion of the facts would make that system utopian and imaginary. Māturīdī considers the harmony between the components (senses, news, revelation, custom and tradition, etc.) vital for the well-being and integrity of the system. Māturīdī resolves this harmony with reasoning, contemplation and *ta'wīl*. Because contemplation and reasoning based on the external world lead a person to the Creator, the feeling that encourages people not to think is nothing but a demonic delusion.<sup>11</sup> In Māturīdī's system of thought, consistency and harmony between these components is achieved through *ta'wīl*. *Ta'wīl*, which forms the texture of the system and gives its color, is a product and an achievement of the mind. *Ta'wīl* means preferring one of the possible meanings of rulings, more precisely, *sunnah* and tradition through reason as the meaning most suitable for the benefit of man. In this preference, customs and traditions shed light on the mind and direct it to the most appropriate understanding and comprehension. While doing this, *ta'wīl* uses tools such as inference (*istidlal*), comparison (*qiyas*) and reasoning (*ijtihad*). These are mental and rational processes based on contemplation and deliberation.<sup>12</sup>

As stated above, the main task in Māturīdī's system falls on the mind, and it is the mind that forms the actual system. Māturīdī has full

<sup>10</sup> Because there is no guarantee that the religious problems will be the same now and in the future as they were in the past.

<sup>11</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Teohid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 172.

<sup>12</sup> Özcan, *Mātūrīdīlik [Mātūrīdism]*, 40.

confidence in reason in this regard, and every person with reason can find a way to understand this system that Allah has revealed in the inner and outer world, and its orders and prohibitions.<sup>13</sup> However, reasoning is a pure and voluntary phenomenon, and only those who use their minds can achieve this.

### 2.1. Knowledge

Māturīdī was the first thinker who saw knowledge as a value *per se* in the tradition of Islamic thought and tried to determine its theoretical framework. He examined knowledge as a definition, source, and value. Starting from knowledge and stating the value of knowledge was important for the thinker in determining the route to follow in the issues he would deal with later, and it was also an indication that the thinker placed knowledge at the core of his system. Māturīdī does not only deal with and discuss religious knowledge but deals with knowledge in general and sees knowledge as valuable on its own.

According to Māturīdī, reason and transmission are two basic means of accessing knowledge that every community can safely apply and never stay away from.<sup>14</sup> Although the emphasis is on the acquisition of religious knowledge, Māturīdī elsewhere generally determines the sources of knowledge as cognition, hearsay (news), and inference (*istidlal*).<sup>15</sup> The concepts of cognition and inference, which Māturīdī uses, are extremely remarkable because the presence of senses or mind in humans by itself is not sufficient for the acquisition of knowledge. For the formation of knowledge, it is necessary for someone who has a sound sense and mind to use them to access knowledge.

According to Māturīdī, it is a rational obligation to accept information obtained through the senses provided that they are sound and information obtained through news, on the condition that it is verified.<sup>16</sup> This is true in general as well as in the field of religious knowledge. If a piece of news is not likely to be false and is confirmed, then the news is as certain as having been heard from the mouth of the prophet himself. However, Māturīdī does not see

<sup>13</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 174.

<sup>14</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 10-11.

the news through hearsay (*ahad*) with the same accuracy and sets a final principle to evaluate them. To him, the source (reporters/*ravis*) of a piece of news that is transmitted by hearsay (*ahad*) should be investigated in detail and the news content should be evaluated within the framework of a determined rule (*nass*).<sup>17</sup>

Inference is of great importance for the science of *kalam* and especially for the system of Māturīdī. Inference is a solution considering the theological drawbacks of a comparison between what is observed and not-observed, and highlights the active use of reason through contemplation and deliberation. The *kalam* scholar, with the clues or evidences he obtained from the visible world, goes as far as the evidence leads under the guidance of reason. To Māturīdī, there is a need for inference for the certainty of knowledge in terms of its value and the determination of its certainty. Rational analysis/inference is necessary especially in sorting out the information transmitted through senses or news. No sane person can deny inference because he has no means to deny it, other than inference itself. It is necessary to apply inference to a comprehensive observation of the external world, to discover the wisdom that indicates the existence of the creator in it, and to draw metaphysical conclusions from it. On the other hand, according to Māturīdī, the only way to eliminate the doubts that descend on mind in a world that is constantly changing and where extraordinary events are experienced, is contemplation and inference. Because inference is a tool that guides people away from doubts and reach the truth.<sup>18</sup>

According to Māturīdī, the value of knowledge is measured by its certainty and inference is necessary for the certainty of knowledge. Thus, the information that disables inference and is obtained only by imitation has no reliability. Blind imitation can never be excused, because the imitator does not have any evidence to show the truth of his claims and convince the mind, nor any proof to suggest his rightness.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, as it cannot eliminate conflict, is not based on

<sup>17</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> According to Māturīdī, just as we refer to the eyes when colors are mixed, and to the mind when sounds are mixed, it seems inevitable to resort to inference (*istidlal*) in mental confusion. See: Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 2.

inference, and expresses speculative knowledge, inspiration has no value in the knowledge process.<sup>20</sup>

The reason has an important place in both obtaining and verifying the knowledge, and in a way, the reason determines the value of the knowledge. Although not independent of epistemology, we thought it would be appropriate to discuss the reason under a separate heading because of its special place in terms of Māturīdī's general thought system.

To summarize, knowledge is a key term in Māturīdī and he placed knowledge at the base of his system. In fact, this carries hints that every discussion and analysis need to be knowledge-based because thoughts, opinions and hypotheses can only be based on evidence, and this is realized on the axis of knowledge. If a hypothesis is not based on knowledge, it is built on ignorance, and such a hypothesis cannot be accepted.

## 2.2. Reason

Reason and rational inference have a privileged position in Māturīdī's thought system. To him, reason is a proof, and what the mind finds beautiful is not ugly in any way. According to Māturīdī, who also makes sociological analysis to justify this, the existence of a common point and an essence that will prevent the society from conflict that may lead to extinction and collapse is inevitable, and Māturīdī states this as religion.<sup>21</sup> The correctness and acceptability of a religion can only be achieved with rational evidence.

To Māturīdī, to see the elegance and wisdom that Allah has incorporated into the world in creation and not to attribute randomness to Allah is possible through reason.<sup>22</sup> Because, through the things that can be perceived and understood, the reason can also infer the fields that transcend itself, that is the metaphysical world. Matters related to the extrasensory realm can also be understood with reason.<sup>23</sup> Although it cannot be known and defined in terms of its nature, reason is a part of the cosmos and the only means of reaching the truth.<sup>24</sup> The way to know the existence and uniqueness

<sup>20</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 56, 285.

<sup>24</sup> Hülya Alper, *İmam Māturīdī'de Akıl-Vahiy İlişkisi (The Relationship between Reason and Revelation in al-Māturīdī)* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2009), 54.

of Allah and to have faith in Him and His messengers is through inference.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, it is the reason that investigates the causes and principles existing in the universe.<sup>26</sup>

Although Māturīdī attributes irreplaceable value to reason, it cannot exceed the limits drawn for it, since it is a being with limited capability. For example, although it may know Allah, it cannot know His nature; even if it knows the necessity of gratitude to the giver of blessings, it cannot know how this gratitude can be accomplished.<sup>27</sup>

To Māturīdī, the reason is capable of distinguishing between good and evil. The reason can decide whether something is good or bad, and what the reason finds good can never be bad. However, inference is also necessary in detecting good and bad.<sup>28</sup> A person can also confront the troubles he encounters in life by means of contemplation and inference. Man is the only being among other creatures who is held responsible because of his reason,<sup>29</sup> and he can comprehend the right through his reason.

Māturīdī also gives full authority to the reason in matters of religion and responsibility. Because reason is the addressee of religion, and even if prophets had not been sent, man had to find Allah with his reason. On the other hand, the information given by the prophets is based on inference prior to the confirmation of their prophethood. Knowing the prophethood of a prophet is through inference.

Finally, whether in general or with reference to religious knowledge, reason is the basic principle of Māturīdī's thought system and gives its color to his system. The existence of reason in man comes before the revelation and even the prophet. From another point of view, according to Māturīdī, reason is also the basis of religious and moral knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 368.

<sup>26</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 229.

<sup>27</sup> See: Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 146, 227, 229.

<sup>28</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 14, 252.

<sup>29</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Hanifi Özcan, *Maturidi'de Bilgi Problemi (The Knowledge Problem in Maturidi)*. (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı, 1993), 70.



### 2.3. Faith

Since it is one of the basic concepts of the Māturīdī's thought system, it is necessary to make a few short observations about faith. First of all, it should be noted that according to Māturīdī, reason is also at the center of the understanding of faith since man is held responsible for faith because of his reason.<sup>31</sup> According to Māturīdī, both faith and unbelief are concepts that belong to the mental world of man. Since the realization of belief and unbelief is only possible with the reason, that is, with the activity of the mind, the reason can be called religion.<sup>32</sup> The first thinkers who included the theory of assent (*tāsdik*) in the definitions of faith were Abū Hanīfa and later Māturīdī. Assent, on the other hand, implicitly includes knowledge, confession and deeds. The heart is the worthiest talent of man for the formation of faith, and in this respect, the heart is closed to all kinds of outside (forced) interference.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, knowing the issues that generate faith is possible with the contemplation and inference. Both the concepts of heart and assent in faith are mental actions and basically faith is an action of the heart.

According to Māturīdī, assent is an element of certainty in faith and faith is a definite contract of the heart. Thus, 'exception in faith' that express doubt and hesitation is not accepted, and similarly, believing by imitation that is not based on the free choice of the individual cannot be excused because the acceptance of religions and beliefs is only possible with evidence, and there is no evidence in imitative faith. Because faith, in a way, is formed by the contemplation and inference. Thus, by thinking about the world, of which the reason is a part, and acting on the wisdom therein, faith, in a way, is the affirmation of the existence and uniqueness of Allah.

Establishing a rational ground of faith is important for today's people who research and question. Māturīdī's findings and distinctions in relation to faith also shed light on today's people and the problems they encounter. First of all, faith is the determined action of the individual, it is not random nor accidental. Māturīdī, therefore, firmly rejects the "exception in faith," which expresses a complex

<sup>31</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 493.

<sup>32</sup> Hanifi Özcan, *Matüridi'de Dini Çoğulculuk (Religious Pluralism in Maturidi)* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı, 1995), 41-42.

<sup>33</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 488, 492.

state of mind that brings to mind hesitation and doubt in faith. Nor does he accept a faith based on the authority of others. Faith must occur by the individual's own will. Therefore, a belief created by imitating someone else does not save its owner from responsibility.

On the other hand, the fact that Māturīdī does not include behavior/deed in the existential structure of faith and that he defines faith as assent (*tasdik*) is also important considering today's *Salafi/Takfirist* understandings. Because, according to Māturīdī, faith is assent and no person can be deprived of faith because of his actions. At the same time, this understanding is extremely important in terms of social unity and integrity, as it considers every person who has assent as a believer.

#### 2.4. Will/Responsibility/Morality

As stated above, man is a rational being and the basis of his responsibility is reason. Since the wise creator created man and held him responsible, He gave freedom to the human being, who is responsible for both punishment and reward to be in accordance with wisdom (just), to do his actions freely.<sup>34</sup> As with belief and unbelief, man is also free to do the beautiful/ugly things. Therefore, according to the Māturīdī system of thought, morality is a concept closely related to will, destiny and the imagination of Allah, as well as beauty and ugliness (*husn-qubh*), which expresses the value of human behavior.

The theology developed by Māturīdī about human beings and their behaviors allows the construction of an assertive Muslim identity that can take responsibility and builds the future, instead of withdrawing to its own world in individual and social issues. To him, both Allah and the man are agents, and the fact that Allah is an agent does not prevent the man from performing his own actions freely. However, man cannot be the creator of his own act because he has no knowledge of the details of the act. Therefore, it is possible

<sup>34</sup> According to Māturīdī, Allah, who created the creatures, has the attribute of knowledge and wisdom, and He created everything in a just and proper way. Both Allah's creation and destiny take place within the framework of wisdom. Therefore, every action that takes place occurs in accordance with this wisdom (correctly/justly). (See: Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhīd Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhīd Translation)*, 91-92.) Since everything in his creation is in harmony with wisdom, it is a requirement of wisdom for man to have the power and freedom of choice in order to be responsible.

to attribute the act to God in terms of creation, and to human beings in terms of realization/acquisition of that deed.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, Allah has the attribute of an independent, eternal creator, He is the creator of everything. Everything created by Allah is in accordance with wisdom and in its proper place, there is no evil in creation. In our history of thought, Māturīdī distinguished between creation and the created (*takwin-muqevven*) and has shown that there is no harm in attributing the deeds to human beings.<sup>36</sup> Because Allah's having the attribute of creation (*takwin*) and being the creator of human actions does not force man to commit any action.

People always have the opportunity to do the opposite of an action they commit. People do not think of the concepts of divine decree (*al-qadā*) and predestination (*al-qadar*) in their daily lives, prefer and perform their behaviors.<sup>37</sup> Allah created human beings possessing intelligence and will, showing bad behavior as evil and good behavior as beautiful to their mental comprehension, and held them responsible for their conscious behaviors.<sup>38</sup> Man does not feel obligated to commit any act and can perform all his actions freely depending on his own choice. On the other hand, the reason in man not only determines the reasonableness of behaviors, but also forms the basis of morality because reason is a criterion on which the position and arrangement of any act should be based.<sup>39</sup> The ability to see the beautiful as beautiful and to see the ugly as ugly is innate in the human mind. Therefore, committing bad deeds is not welcomed in practical life, but doing the legitimate is welcome.<sup>40</sup> As well as being the source of knowledge it will acquire based on wisdom, the reason is also the source of knowledge which will hold its owner morally responsible. With his comments emphasizing the importance of reason in morality, Māturīdī differs from the approaches that see only Allah's power as the basis of value.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi* (*Kitab al-Tawhid Translation*), 304.

<sup>36</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi* (*Kitab al-Tawhid Translation*), 309.

<sup>37</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi* (*Kitab al-Tawhid Translation*), 395.

<sup>38</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi* (*Kitab al-Tawhid Translation*), 282.

<sup>39</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi* (*Kitab al-Tawhid Translation*), 285.

<sup>40</sup> Māturīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi* (*Kitab al-Tawhid Translation*), 127.

<sup>41</sup> Sami Şekeroğlu, "Māturīdī'nin Nazarında İnsanın Ahlakiliği Sorunu", ("The Problem of Human Morality in al-Māturīdī), Perspective") in *Uluğ Bir Çımar İmam Maturidi (A Great Plane: Imam al-Māturīdī)*, (İstanbul: Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2014), 525.

### 2.5. Wisdom (Hikmah)

Wisdom is the key concept of Mātūrīdī thought. Mātūrīdī's system of thought is constructed around wisdom. Wisdom means putting everything in its proper place and giving its rightful owner his due.<sup>42</sup> Wisdom, which expresses accuracy in words and actions, is basically based on knowledge. Allah is wise and does not go beyond wisdom because going out of wisdom is dissolute and mostly stems from ignorance and need. None of this is possible for Allah.

In fact, Mātūrīdī in a way builds his entire system on wisdom. Almighty Allah has created everything in its proper place and has not wronged anyone. Therefore, no man has been held responsible for anything beyond his power. Because it would be inconsistent for divine wisdom, basically based on justice, to demand from man something that he cannot afford.<sup>43</sup>

### 2.6. Prophethood

Mātūrīdī's understanding of prophethood is also shaped on the basis of his understanding of wisdom, since, by his wisdom, Allah sends a prophet who will help people and teach, awaken and warn about the things that will lead them to salvation in this world and in the afterlife, which is necessary by reason. Although Mātūrīdī presents this as a rational necessity, it is not a necessity that comes from someone else's compulsion from the outside, but a necessity that arises entirely from its own essence and emerges as a result of its wisdom. In fact, later Mātūrīdī thinkers state that sending prophets is permissible and even obligatory (*wājib*) due to Allah's wisdom.<sup>44</sup> Although Mātūrīdī thinkers consider this a necessity on the basis of wisdom, according to the understanding accepted in the Mātūrīdī system, it is permissible and it is Allah's grace to send prophets. Even if the human reason had not need a prophet, it would have been still appropriate to send a prophet as per the grace of Allah.

Although the later Mātūrīdī thinkers express sending a prophet as a wisdom-based necessity, it is clear that it is not a necessity that

<sup>42</sup> Mātūrīdī, *Kitābū't-Tevhid Tercümesi (Kitab al-Tawhid Translation)*, 124.

<sup>43</sup> Emine Ögük, *Mātūrīdī'nin Düşünce Sisteminde Şer-Hikmet İlişkisi (The Relationship between Evil and Wisdom in Mātūrīdī's Thought System)*. (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2010), 163.

<sup>44</sup> Ebu'l-Berekāt Muhammed b Mahmud Neseфі, *İslam İnançının Ana Umdeleri (Basic Principles of Islamic Faith)*, trans by. Temel Yeşilyurt (İstanbul: Endülüs Yayınları, 2019), 75.

requires for someone else to compel it. Nor does it mean that God himself or someone else necessitate for His essence. The necessity expressed at this point is a requirement that expresses the certainty of the realization of something, which is a requirement of Allah's wisdom, and the impossibility of its non-existence.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, they consider the presence of the prophet necessary in terms of how to express gratitude to the giver of blessings, which is a rational necessity. In addition, they allocate an important role to the prophets in eliminating the conflict between people and ensuring social unity and solidarity.

### 3. Conclusion: Establishing a Wisdom-Centered World

The geographical zone where Māturīdī lived was located at the center of trade routes, it was culturally pluralistic, dynamic and vivid in terms of thought. The way to survive in such a dynamic area is through creating the world of ideas on a dynamic basis with experience coming from within life. A thought's having a reflection in life, being able to make sense of a phenomenon and basing it on an irresistible rational basis is the only condition for surviving on such a slippery ground. Thus, the understanding of religion on the basis of reason and common sense, on the axis of justice, wisdom and freedom of the individual was also important in the time and ground in which Māturīdī lived, and it is extremely important for today's societies as well.<sup>46</sup>

While trying to understand and live the religion, it will be both meaningful and eye-opening for contemporary individuals to consider the inherent universal horizon to the utmost extent and to reconstruct the interpretation in line with this objective. The way to do this, while trying to understand the message of the revelation, is through an understanding that does not conflict with reason and common sense, on a ground that both gives meaning to and develops the customs and the culture of the society, and on a comprehensive axis that adds meaning to the troubles of contemporary people. Māturīdī is one of the rare thinkers who succeeded in this.

<sup>45</sup> Alper, *İmam Mâtürîdî'de Akıl-Vahiy İlişkisi* [*The Relationship between Reason and Revelation in al-Mâtürîdî*], 119.

<sup>46</sup> Halis Adnan Arslantaş, "Çağdaş Zamanların Çözümlemelerinde Bir Güç Faktörü Olarak Mâtürîdî" ("Mâtürîdî As a Power Factor in the Analysis of Contemporary Times." in *Uluğ Bir Çınar İmam Maturidi (A Great Plane: Imam al-Mâtürîdî)*. ed. Ahmet Kartal. (Istanbul: Doğu Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2014), 162.

According to Māturīdī, it is possible to build a civilization centered on wisdom. His system of thought is a wisdom-centered thought system that later found its expression in Hodja Ahmad Yasawī. Wisdom is the roof concept of his thought. Our supreme book, the Qur'an, praised wisdom and equated attaining wisdom or giving wisdom to someone with attaining many good deeds.<sup>47</sup> Wisdom (*hikmah*) is a kind of sagacity in which knowledge is at core. Wisdom means knowing what and how to do something in the most appropriate way. Wisdom expresses appropriateness, which means putting something in its place; therefore, in a civilization based on wisdom, everything is in its place. There is accuracy in speech and deed, and in such civilization there is no place for the absurd, the nonsense and the meaningless. Since wisdom also expresses giving the owner his due, justice is at its center. With this thought, it is unwise and absurd not to give the rightful owner his due; fulfilling the right is righteousness and justice. Fulfilling the right also eliminates injustice; since there is no oppression, there will be no oppressed in such civilization. Imam Māturīdī constructs this civilization he created on the axis of wisdom by reinterpreting every word and concept on the axis of reason, evidence, justice and wisdom. He overcomes the possible tension that may occur while creating this, by resorting to reasoning and *ta'wīl*. On the other hand, while trying to understand the message of the revelation, he realizes this by considering these on a ground that does not contradicts with reason and common sense and that both adds meaning and develops the customs and culture of the society, and on a comprehensive axis that adds meaning to the troubles of contemporary people.

In Māturīdī's wisdom-centered civilization, knowledge is at the center and it is valuable per se. To him, knowledge is the first step on which both wisdom and thought are built. This also implies that within this civilization the route must be established with knowledge at the center.

On the other hand, while building civilization, it is important to develop the freedom of the individual and a theology that guarantees this. This will both give people self-confidence and contribute to the creation of an honorable Muslim individual identity in today's world, because as in every field, freedom in the religious field is

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<sup>47</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:269.

the main issue of human beings. Because only an individual who is free and can perform his own actions can truly take responsibility for his actions. This means the construction of a Muslim identity that is assertive, takes responsibility and builds the future, rather than one that is withdrawn into their own world and cannot take an active role in individual and social issues. The theology developed by Māturīdī about man and his behavior seems to provide this opportunity to the individual.

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