

**THE CREATIVITY OF IBN ABĪ AL-DUNYĀ (d. 281/894) IN
PURIFYING THE HUMAN SOUL: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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AUTHOR DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRAK

Tesis ini memberi penjelasan berkenaan dapatan daripada hasil pengintergrasian kreativiti dan pegangan kepada matlamat-matlamat utama. Ibn Abi Al-Dunya, cendekiawan pendidikan yang terkenal telah menunjukkan bakat kemahiran kreatif sebagai antara keperibadiannya. Beliau merupakan seorang lelaki yang teguh dengan kepercayaannya dan berusaha sebaik mungkin untuk meninggalkan jejaknya yang positif. Kehidupannya semasa zaman kegemilangan ketamadunan islam disertai dengan penyaksiannya terhadap kehidupan baharu yang mewah, meletakkan bebanan ke atasnya yang menjurus kepada pembaharuan. Semasa hidupnya, beliau berjaya menulis pelbagai buku dalam pelbagai bidang memfokuskan kepada tajuk-tajuk berkaitan asetisisme. Tesis ini mengkaji empat puluh sembilan buku yang ditulis oleh Ibn Abi Al-Dunya yang berkaitan dengan pembersihan jiwa manusia bagi individu itu sendiri dan di kalangan masyarakat. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa Ibn Abi Al-Dunya menggunakan metodologi komprehensif berdasarkan doktrin Islam dan pengalamannya yang luas dalam pendidikan dengan mendekati pelbagai lapisan masyarakat. Kaedah kajiannya berjaya dalam memperkenalkan tajuk pembersihan daripada pelbagai sudut dengan cara yang kreatif. Ia juga memantapkan konsep pembersihan dan menetapkan teknik-teknik yang bersesuaian untuk mencapainya. Analisis tersebut menunjukkan bahawa kaedahnya adalah dengan menggunakan tiga prinsip utama: kepercayaan (al-'aqidah), moral (al-akhlaq), ibadah dan urus niaga (al-'ibadah wa al-mu'amalat).

ABSTRACT

This thesis sheds light on the outcome that results from the integration of creativity and holding onto ultimate goals. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, a well-known educator and scholar, has proven to possess creative skills among his other characteristics. He was a man of belief who strived his best to leave a positive imprint behind. His life during the ‘golden age’ of the Islamic civilization and his witness to the new luxurious life that accompanied it, placed burdens over him that led to the route of reform. During his lifetime, he managed to write numerous books in various fields, focusing on topics related to asceticism. This thesis studies forty-nine books of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā’s works that are related to the purification of the human soul at the level of individuals and the level of the society. It attempts to examine Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā’s creativity and methodology in purifying the human soul at the individual and societal levels. It also aims at exploring the life and personality of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā and analyzing his works. The thesis examines the concept of purification of the soul from the Islamic perspective and analyzes the contributions of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā on purifying the human soul at both the individual and societal levels. It evaluates the creative traits and methodology in purifying the soul. This thesis employs a historical and analytical approach toward data gathering and content analysis to help identify the main features and elements of purification of the human soul from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. It is a library-based study that depends mainly on theoretical data provided by written sources. The study found that Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā followed a comprehensive methodology based on the Islamic doctrine and his extensive educational experience with thorough contact with different classes of his society. His method successfully introduced the topic of purification from all its angles in a creative way. It also established the concept of purification and set the appropriate techniques to achieve it. The analysis shows that his method is based on three main principles: belief (*al-‘aqīdah*), morals (*al-akhlāq*), worship and social dealings (*al-‘ibādah wa al-mu‘āmalāt*).

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على النتاج الحاصل من اجتماع الابداع مع امتلاك الفرد لأهداف سامية وشخصية متميزة تؤهله للتقدم والقيادة. لقد كان الإمام المحدث والعالم المربي ابن أبي الدنيا أحد تلك الشخصيات التي أظهر هذا البحث امتلاكه لمميزات شخصية وصفات ابداعية ساهمت في نتاجه الابداعي الغزير. فقد كان الإمام ابن أبي الدنيا صاحب إيمان عميق بمبادئه وقيمه وكان يمتلك منذ نعومة أظفاره رغبة ملحة في التعلم والتعليم والانتفاع ونفع الآخرين. كان شخصية موسوعية فريدة لكثرة أصناف العلوم التي تلقاها وألف فيها الكتب. ولقد كان للحياة التي عاشها الإمام ابن أبي الدنيا في أوج التقدم العمراني والانفتاح الحضاري أو ما عرف بالعصر الذهبي الأثر البالغ في انكبابه على تأليف كتب الزهد فقد غلبت على مؤلفاته الموضوعات الزهدية. ولعلها كانت بادرة فاعلة نافعة منه لعلاج ما استشرى من أدواء مهلكة وأمراض قلوب في مجتمعه بعد الانفتاح الحاصل وما جره من ترف وآثار سلبية. كما كان لكثرة تردده على العلماء وتردد طلبه العلم عليه واختلاطه بجميع شرائح المجتمع بمن فيهم الخلفاء والأمراء، إذ كان المربي الشخصي لعدد من الأمراء العباسيين، كان لذلك أثر إيجابي في دقة تشخيصه لعيوب عصره وإمامه بالمهارات الاجتماعية التي مكنته من إيصال رسالته. لذلك جاءت هذه الرسالة للبحث والاستقصاء في سيرة الإمام ابن أبي الدنيا ومؤلفاته الزهدية عن اسهاماته في تركيبة النفس على مستوى الفرد والمجتمع ومنهجيته في ذلك مع ربطها بشخصيته الابداعية التي أثرت مؤلفاته وتركت بصمة واضحة فيها وفي أسلوبها وطريقة إخراجها للناس. لقد أظهرت نتائج البحث أن الإمام ابن أبي الدنيا قدم من خلال مؤلفاته نظرية رصينة في تركيبة النفس للفرد والمجتمع أساسها الشريعة الإسلامية. وقد استند في نظريته الزهدية إلى ثلاثة محاور رئيسية: تركيبة النفس من خلال العقيدة، وتركيبه النفس من خلال الأخلاق الكريمة، وتركيبه النفس من خلال العبادات والمعاملات.

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LIST OF TRANSLITERATIONS

‘	ع
a	ا
b	ب
t	ت
th	ث
j	ج
h	ح
kh	خ
d	د
dh	ذ
r	ر
z	ز
s	س
sh	ش
ṣ	ص
ḍ	ض
ṭ	ط
ẓ	ظ
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INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Creativity is an essential human ability that can be applied to a wide range of activities. It includes elements such as: cognitive abilities (i.e., things that happen in the brain), behaviour (i.e., the interaction between a person and the outside world), attitudes (i.e., the way of thinking about things) and skills (Taylor, 2010). However, there is not yet a unified definition for the concept of creativity. Creative people may follow different patterns of their own although they may share common features in general. More importantly is how these creative people apply their creative skills in order to contribute to their society and the world.

On the other hand, Islam, as a way of life, outlines a comprehensive model of the human being that incorporates the spiritual, psychological, emotional and social aspects. From its teachings we discover that at the core, we are spiritual beings who need to cultivate and sustain a connection with our Creator, Allah (SWT). While philosophers, scientists and researchers throughout the ages have attempted to understand the true nature of humankind, we find that the most precise, detailed and comprehensive explanation of human soul is in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Allah (SWT) knows us better than we know ourselves, and His knowledge encompasses much that we will never be able to grasp (Utz, 2011).

Behaviour is considered to be anything that an individual does, or any action that can be observed by others. A mental process usually covers the internal, subjective, unobservable components, such as thoughts, beliefs, feelings, sensations,

perceptions, etc., that can be inferred from behaviour. The religion of Islam offers a comprehensive approach to assist an individual in purifying the soul and reach a level of complete peace, happiness and well-being.

‘Abdullah Ibn Muḥammad, who is widely known by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, is a recognised scholar of Hadith. He was the tutor of several Abbasid princes who later became Caliphs. He made great efforts to help educate people about the process of purifying the human soul at the individual and societal levels. Although others have explored his methods in reform, his creative methods in purifying the soul have not been studied. This aspect of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā’s personality has not received sufficient attention from scholars and researchers. As to the best knowledge of the researcher, there is not yet any published material examining the creativity of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in purifying the soul. Due to the above mentioned factors, this study will focus on exploring concepts of creativity and purification from the Islamic perspective as well as analyzing the creative methods of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, which he applied in purifying the human soul.

Problem Statement

Al-Imām Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is well known as a Muslim Hadith scholar. His efforts in the field of Hadith narration and other Hadith related aspects, have been studied and introduced by many researchers (Khalaf, 1997). However, being a dedicated creative reformer is a characteristic of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā that is not been widely known, especially to those who never had the chance to have a deeper look into his biography. Even though this is the case, no scholarly study highlighting his creativity in purifying the soul has been found until today. It is worth noting that only brief information of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā’s life has reached us. Nevertheless, researchers

can write much about such a character through his works. In other words, achievements are the best reflection of an individual's intentions. Seeking change for the better is every nation and every individual's desire. Thus, holding up the intention to widen the scope of reform to include one's society rather than merely one's self or family, indicates positivity. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is a personality that sought reform in society in many creative ways. Although Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was not the only reformer among his contemporaries who had concern about purifying the human soul, he was the one who sought reform both at the individual and societal levels. The study attempts to examine Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's creativity and methodology in purifying the human soul at the individual and societal levels.

Research Questions

1. Who is Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā and what was his role and status in Islam?
2. What is meant by purification of the soul in Islam and what are its dimensions? What is its relation with ethics and Sufism?
3. How did Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā propose to purify the human soul at the individual level?
4. How did Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā propose to purify the human soul at the societal level?
5. What are the creative characteristics and methods used by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in purifying the human soul?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the life and personality of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā and analyze his works.

2. To examine the concept of purification of the soul from an Islamic perspective and its relation to ethics and Sufism.
3. To analyze the contributions of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā on the topic of purifying the soul at the individual level.
4. To analyze the contributions of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā on the topic of purifying the soul at the societal level.
5. To evaluate the creative characteristic of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā and his methods in purifying the soul.

Significance of the Research

This study aims to establish concepts of creativity and human soul based on perspectives derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. It also underlines the status of the soul in Islam and identifies its main characteristics. It examines the creative features and works of the Muslim scholar Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā that makes him one of the greats who sought reform through his efforts in purifying the human soul. Islam offers a comprehensive approach to help individuals in purifying their souls. According to the Qur'an, those who purify their soul are granted success, "The one who purifies his soul succeeds" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Shams 91:9)¹. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is thought to be one of the earliest and most prolific writers who developed this kind of genre and devoted a separate work for it entitled: *Muḥāsabat Al-Nafs wa Al-Izrā' 'Alayhā* (Self-accountability and Admonishment). However, this is not the only work done by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in the field of soul purification, but it is the most apparent one. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in many of his other works, explored and examined the concept of

¹ All Qur'anic translations in this thesis are based on M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, 2005. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press. Translations from other sources will be cited accordingly.

purification of the soul, to mention but a few: *Al-Tawāḍu' wa Al-Khumūl* (Humbleness and Modesty), *Al-Ḥilm* (Longanimity), *Tham Al-Baghī* (Oppression Censuring), *Tham Al-Ghībah* (Scandal Censuring), *Mudārāt Al-Nās* (Amicability Towards People).

Scope of the Study

The scope of the research is to expound the concept and definition of purification of the soul in Islam and to specify its basic elements and the main characteristics of the human soul. Thus, the main focus of the study is devoted to illustrating the creativity of the Muslim scholar Al-Imām Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā (d. 281 A.H.) in crafting methods for purifying the human soul through his works and life. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was a prolific writer who published many books in various fields during his lifetime. However, only his works that are of close relevance with the topic of this thesis will be involved. For example: *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs wa Al-Izrā'* *'Alayhā* (Self-accountability and Admonishment), *Al-Tawāḍu' wa Al-Khumūl* (Humbleness and Modesty), *Al-Ḥilm* (Longanimity), *Tham Al-Baghī* (Oppression Censuring), *Tham Al-Ghībah* (Scandal Censuring), *Mudārāt Al-Nās* (Amicability Towards People), *Makārim Al-Akhlāq* (The Noble Qualities of Character), *Al-Ṣamt wa Ādāb Al-Lisān* (Silence and Discipline of the Tongue), *Al-'Iyāl* (The Family) and others.

Methodology

In terms of approach, this research will employ a historical and analytical approach toward data gathering and content analysis to help identify the main features and elements of purification of the human soul from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The researcher will rely heavily on the Qur'an, Hadith, works of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā,

biographies and highly reliable sources as the primary source of Islamic thought in an attempt to determine the main creative features used by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in the field of purifying the soul. This research will be a library-based study, which depends mainly on theoretical data provided by written sources.

Literature Review

Recently, interest in creativity as a subject of research has grown significantly. Scholars and researchers have been working hard and conducting numerous studies to establish the concept of creativity and its aspects in a reliable scientific manner. However, researchers and scholars have not yet approached a unified definition for the concept of creativity. Until today, we lack a single unified definition that is agreed upon by a considerable number of researchers. Everyone tends to define creativity from a different perspective based on certain aspects. It is even argued that the concept of creativity is “too loosely defined” and “too much driven from bottom-up operationalist view” where development of tests of creativity “has taken priority over the clarification of basic conceptual and theoretical issues” (Kaufmann, 2003). For example, Taylor Harding, from University of South Carolina, claims that “creativity is about more than imagining or making something that has not previously existed...it is that force in each of us that begins with a yearning to answer an unanswered (or ill-answered) question by imagining more than one correct answer” (2010: 51). Accordingly, the conclusion of the process of creativity takes place when an answer is realized. On the other hand, Hawlader (2011) believes that creativity is the ability of an individual that enables him/her to dream up, think of or visualize uncommon solutions to a problem. In this respect, creativity plays an important role in the development of a nation. In other words, a creative individual is ought to have the

ability to produce something new. Therefore, the “success of a creative process depends to a great extent on the individual, and the environment that exists around him/her” (Hawladar, 2011).

Furthermore, Sieglinde E. Prommer (n.d.) in his article, ‘No Creativity in Legal Translation,’ agrees with what has been stated earlier that although many attempts have been made to define creativity, no definition acceptable to everyone has yet been established. According to Sternberg and Lubart (1999: 3), researchers of creativity often define creativity as “the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)” and is also required “to be accepted as creative by society.” Creativity is elsewhere described as the “tendency to generate ideas, recognize alternative, or coming up with new possibilities that may be useful in solving problems and communicating with others” (quoted in; Prommer, n.d.). Thus, the process of creativity involves playing with the way things are interrelated and creative behaviour is distinguished by expressiveness, inventiveness, originality and productivity (Prommer, n.d.).

However, this diversity in defining creativity stands as the best example of the wide scope and interaction of this field of science with almost all people’s fields of life. According to Robert J. Stenberg and Todd I. Lubart (1999):

Creativity is a topic of wide scope that is important at both the individual and societal levels for a wide range of task domains. At an individual level, creativity is relevant, for example, when one is solving problems on the job and in daily life. At a societal level, creativity can lead to new scientific findings, new movements in art, new inventions, and new social programs. The economic importance of creativity is clear because new products or services create jobs. Furthermore, individuals, organizations, and societies must adapt existing resources to changing task demands to remain competitive. (p. 3)

This clearly shows the integration of creativity at both levels, as a thinking process and as an action in everyday life. Therefore, creativity has become a vital issue for scholars to examine and explore constantly.

On the other hand, contemporary Muslim scholars have emphasized on the necessity of examining the concept of creativity and its aspects based on the Islamic perspective. This is due to the lack of sufficient interest given by Muslim scholars and researchers toward the topic of creativity in Islam. In spite of that, several attempts have been made to study creativity within an Islamic framework, but only a few have succeeded in examining the concept in a reliable scientific manner and simultaneously establishing a concrete understanding of the concept from an Islamic perspective (Al-Karasneh & Saleh, 2010).

Concerning creativity from Islamic perspective, the concept needs to be explored first at the lexical level. In order to establish the conceptual meaning of a certain term it is also important to refer to the lexical variants of that term by consulting Arabic dictionaries. Examining the meaning of all the derivatives of creativity is crucial as well since the meaning of one derivative is, in some way or another, related to the meaning of the other derivatives while they all share a different degree of correlation with the same root, in our case *b-d-ʿ* (بداع). According to Abdul-Raof (2004: 94), “The morphological mechanism of Arabic enables it to produce lexical items derived from the same root (theoretically over 200 words can be derived from the same root).” Linguistically, 103 words are derived from the root *b-d-*

In general, the root *b-d-ʿ* refers to two meanings (Ibn Fāris, n.d.). The first denotes meanings such as the creation or invention of something with no other match for the first time or the use of something in a different way than it is known for. For

example, the Arabs *أول* (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.) means to be the founder and the beginner of something. In Al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ (Al-Jawḥarī, n.d.) *أول* means to invent something matchless. A poet is described as *mubdaʿ* *مبدع* when he composes a poem in a new style different from the classic one. *Bidʿah* *بدع* means to come up with something new that has not been known before (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.). In Islam, *bidʿah* is defined as every ritual practice that is not known in Islam and has no evidence from *Sharīʿah*. According to Al-Faqīhī (n.d.: 8), *bidʿah* in Islam is “a new way of practicing Islamic rituals as to become closer to Allah through exaggeration in worship.” However, *bidʿah* in Islam is sometimes accepted and preferred. Ibn Al-Athīr (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.) divides *bidʿah* in Islam into two types: good and repugnant. If the *bidʿah* contradicts the principles of Islam and has not existed during the Prophet’s time, it is prohibited. Whereas, *bidʿah* is praiseworthy when it does not contradict the principles of Islam. For example, Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) said when referring to the gathering for the night prayer in Ramaḍān (i.e., *tarāwīḥ*): ‘What a good *bidʿah* this is!’ (Ibn Hajar, 2001: 298). Although *bidʿah* in Islam usually holds the negative side of innovation and contradicts the concept of *Sunnah*, Umar (RA) has used it with reference to its linguistic origin (i.e., *b-d-ʿ*). Moreover, Umar (RA) had not actually come up with an entirely new practice by gathering Muslims for *tarāwīḥ* in Ramaḍān as Muslims used to pray behind the Prophet (SAW) whenever they saw him praying a night prayer. Being worried that the night prayer would become obligatory on Muslims if they kept praying behind him, the Prophet (SAW) stopped performing his night prayer in public. When the Prophet (SAW) died, Umar (RA) thought of gathering Muslims to perform *tarāwīḥ* prayer in congregation in Ramaḍān as after the death of the Prophet (SAW) the principles of Islam were completed and nothing could be added or prescribed. In other words, Umar (RA) had merely revived

what the Prophet (SAW) had done before. According to Al-Shāfi‘ī (Al-Bayhaqī, 1971: 1/469) “Newly-invented matters are of two types: The first of them is what opposes the Qur’an, the Sunnah, a companion’s narration or a consensus, this is the misguided innovation. And the second is what has been introduced of goodness and there is not a single scholar who opposes it. This is newly-introduced yet not blameworthy.” On the other hand, Jarīr Ibn ‘Abdullah related that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: “Whoever enacts a good Sunnah in Islam will receive its reward and the reward of those who practice it; while the reward of those who practice it will not be lessened. Whoever innovates a practice in Islam will receive its sin and the sin of those who practice it; while the sin of those who practice it will not be lessened” (Muslim: 1017).

Of relation to the literal meaning of *ibdā‘* is the Islamic concept *ijtihād*. The term *ijtihād* is derived from the three-letter Arabic verbal root *j-h-d* (ج-ه-د). In Islamic jurisprudence, *ijtihād* is defined as the ultimate effort of a jurist to make a decision or find a solution in Islamic law (*Shari‘ah*) as opposed to *taqlīd*, which is copying and obeying without question (Burhān Al-Dīn, 2000, v. 10, p. 22). In *ijtihād*, Muslim jurist/s practice *ibdā‘* and are required to hold creative minds as they are qualified to drive new Islamic rulings on contemporary issues based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

On the other hand, *b-d-‘* also refers to meanings such as discontinuity, termination and fatigue. According to Lisān Al-‘Arab, the Arabic word أَبَدَ (‘abada) means “if their camels get tired or fall down. Also أَبَدَ (‘abada) means to make someone’s dispute of no use or to terminate it.” (Ibn Manzūr, n.d.)

In the Qur’an, creativity is mentioned 4 times using three derivatives of the root (*b-d-‘*), namely: *bad‘* (بَدَعَ) (mentioned 2 times in two different places), *bid‘* (بَدَأَ) (mentioned one time) and *ibtada‘* (ابْتَدَأَ) (mentioned one time). Indeed, the

Qur'an itself is a creative masterpiece of Arabic language. It is a book of creativity and it encourages creativity. It contains many creative and great ideas as well as a complete system of guidance for life. When the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) it was meant to be a miracle that challenged all people to produce something like it. However, people failed to create something that even resembled a single āyah of the Qur'an. This indicates the creativity of revealing an inimitable Book that is unique and relevant to all people in all places and times (Al-Karasneh & Saleh, 2010: 413). Islam, as a new belief that emerged during the period of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), is creative by nature. It came with new teachings and principles that opposed the beliefs and practices of the general public in Mecca regarding how they worshiped Allah. It led people to shift from a life of mere imitation to a totally new system based on thinking, reasoning and understanding.

According to Al-Mazīdī (1993: 306), creativity is “the ability of designing new forms that are beneficial for humanity and are in accordance with the Islamic law and principles.” This means that any newly created things should be functional and beneficial for people. At the same time, new inventions and creations must be in accordance with the Islamic principles, law and instructions. Accordingly, Muslims should adhere in their creativity to the Islamic teachings and principals and follow the divine guidance in converting their creative ideas into something useful and practical. Due to this, creative Muslims are recognised from non-Muslims in this ethical-spiritual dimension. (Zarif, Nizah, Ismail & Mohamad 2013: 122)

In her study *Creativity in Islamic Thought: A Comparative Analysis*, Waḥīdah Yūsuf (1999) draws a comparison between the Islamic and Western view of creativity. She examined the concept of creativity in detail, its aspects and characteristics from an Islamic perspective. Based on her study of Islamic sources, Yūsuf derived a

methodology of creativity from an Islamic perspective. Similarly, Al-Ḥammādī (1996) briefly discussed in his book *Sharārat Al- Ibdā'* [The Sparks of Creativity] the concept of creativity from the Qur'anic perspective. However, many of his definitions for creativity were based on Western sources.

It was upon the foundation of Islam that knowledge and creativity flourished through the emergence of a myriad of scholars, thinkers, philosophers and scientists exploring various disciplines and sciences (Islam, 2011). In his studies, Akdogan (2008) has succinctly demonstrated the creativity of the Muslims in advancing knowledge, science and producing novel inventions and technologies, which were not only instrumental during the Middle Ages, but also influential in catalyzing the Scientific Revolution which was to be championed by Europe later on. (Zarif, Nizah, Ismail & Mohamad, 2013: 123)

In reference to creativity and creative people, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā stands as an ideal example for Muslim's creativity. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is the nickname of Abū Bakr 'Abdullah Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Ubayd Ibn Sufyān Al-Qurashī Al-Baghdādī. He was born in Baghdad in 208/823. He was raised in a well-educated family since his father, Muhammad, was a well-known scholar in Hadith. Due to this, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was exposed to different Islamic sciences at an early stage of his life. According to Al-Khatīb Al-Baghdādī (2001: 11/293–295), Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā began to make independent frequent visits to scholars since he was ten years old. His personality helped as well in getting the utmost benefit of these lessons. Therefore, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā grew with an excellent background in Hadith as well as other Islamic sciences. His childhood and surrounding environment played an essential role in forming his scholarly and decent personality. Ibn Shākir Al-Kutbī (1973: 1/494–495) relates in his book *Fawāt Al-Wafayāt* that Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was the tutor of

several Abbasid princes who later become Caliphs. This indeed indicates the high status of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā and his firm personality to be handed such a responsibility of those who will become one day the rulers of the country. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was a deeply spiritual man and someone who was deeply concerned about his society and Ummah in all. He was known for his ascetic life, and numerous scholars transmitted Hadith reports on his authority. According to Najim Khalaf (1997: 94), Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā left behind a sum of two hundred and seventeen (217) books wrote in various fields of sciences. However, not all of his works are existent today.

The previous studies focusing on Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā are very few. Most of his extant works have been studied with a very brief introduction to his life. Yet, a reasonable study of his life could be found in almost all of Khalaf's studies on Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works. He studied the life of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā based on four aspects, his personal life and surrounding environment, his teachers, his scholarly background and his achievements (Khalaf, 1997: 51–94). Another study on Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was found in an MA thesis in Beirut Islamic University by Fāḍil Ibn Khalaf Al-Ḥummādah. In his thesis, *Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā Muḥaddithan wa Muṣliḥan*, Al-Ḥummādah (2012) studies Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā from two angles: being a scholar of Hadith and a reformer. The first section of Al-Ḥummādah's thesis focuses on the efforts of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā as a scholar of Hadith, how he dealt with Hadith and his methodology in judging Hadith and Hadith transmitters. The second section discusses four aspects in which Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is believed to be a reformer. The thesis is concluded with two theories used by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in his practice of reform: The theory of asceticism and the theory of punishment. These two studies are the only studies found so far that partially discussed the life and personality of Ibn Abī Al-

Dunyā, which is not sufficiently comprehensive to do justice to the vastness of his character and his published intellectual contributions.

It seems that content-based studies seemed to be given better consideration. For example, in *Tracts on Listening to Music: Being Thamm al-malahi by Ibn Abi'l-Dunya and Bawariq al-ila by Majd ad-Din al-Tusi al-Ghazali*, James Robson (1938), the editor, provides an introduction to these two books in addition to some translation and notes. *Ibn Abi Al-Dunya: Morality in the Guise of Dreams: A Critical Edition of Kitab Al-Manam*, is another book edited and introduced by Leah Kinberg (1994). The book is a compendium of 350 Muslim dream narratives in Arabic critically edited for the first time. With the aim to provide the pious Muslim with a code of behaviour, the book relates dreams that deliver clear messages, of the kind that can be followed with no need for interpretation. The scholarly introduction in English gives a survey of the contents of the Arabic text, emphasizing the unique features of the book, while concentrating on their contribution to practical ethics. The book also examines the role dreams play in various genres of classical Arabic literature. The wide circulation of the dreams of *kitāb Al-Manām* in later sources bears witness to the popularity of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's work. An orientalist study done by James A. Bellamy (1963) entitled, *The Makarim Al-Akhlaq by Ibn Abi Al-Dunya: A Preliminary Study*, was published in *The Muslim World* (pp. 106–119). According to Bellamy, the main purpose of this article is to describe another work of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's, which should add to his reputation as a literary figure. *Shortening Long Hopes* is a selection of forty Hadith from *Qīṣar Al-Amal* (i.e., shortening long hopes) of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, translated into English by Musharraf Hussain Al-Azhari (2008). Finally, two MA theses, which seem to discuss a similar topic, were found. The first thesis is entitled *Al-Jawānib Al-Tarbawīyyah fī kitāb Al-'Iyāl li Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā: Dirāsah wa Taḥlīl* done by Riḥāb

Husayn Hmaidāt (1998). She divides her study into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, his life and role in society, and his book *Al-Iyāl*. The other four chapters discuss different aspects of his reform efforts. The other MA thesis, *Al-Tarbiyah Al-Usariyyah fī Dawū' Kitāb Al-Iyāl li Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā wa Taṭbiqātuhā al-Tarbawīyyah*, done by Sa'īd Muṣlih Al-Ji'aīd (2008) studies *Kitāb Al-Iyāl* as well. However, Al-Ji'aīd's study focused on aspects of the family, mainly parents and children.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (SWT) emphasizes on the necessity of purification and purity of the human soul: "The one who purifies his soul succeeds and the one who corrupts it fails" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Shams 91: 9–10)². Purification of the soul is a prerequisite for closeness to God. Indeed, the whole point of morality and spirituality is to purify one's soul. With purification of the soul, one takes control of their ego, greediness, anger, hatred, jealousy, injustice and all kinds of heart diseases that negatively affect an individual and the society. Therefore, there is a desperate need to re-embrace morals and value at any time and in any community. Muslim communities need to re-embrace *Tazkiyah* more and more.

According to Imām Al-Ghazālī (quoted in Abd Al-Ḥamīd, 2012), *Tazkiyat Al-Nafs* means, "completing the perfection of one's soul (*Nafs*) by cutting down its desires, and allowing its noble characteristics to evolve" (p. 3). Similarly, Imām Ibn Kathīr (quoted in Abd Al-Ḥamīd, 2012: 3) points to *Tazkiyat Al-Nafs* as a process for "cleansing the soul from its evil characteristics and moral and moral dirt and waste, reducing its bad habits, and developing good habits and characters." According to this opinion, *Tazkiyat Al-Nafs* can be categorized into two different categories, emptying one's soul from any existing evil characters and re-filling the soul with good and desired characters. Abd Al-Ḥamīd (2012: 5–6) illustrates these two categories by

one's desire to fill a glass of water, which is infected and contaminated, with clean water to make use of it. In this case, the glass will have to be, first, cleaned and sanitized in order to refill it with clean water. Abd Al-Ḥamīd believes that *Tazkiyah* of the *Nafs* is likely to be attained through maintaining steadfastness (i.e., *Istiḳāmah*). On the other hand, *Istiḳāmah* can be achieved through three things: fear of Allah at all times, following up bad deeds with good ones and treating people in a kind manner with respect and sincerity (p. 6–7).

In his article *Purification of the Self (Tazkiyat Al-Nafs)*, Professor Omar Hasan Kasule (2001) divides his work into five sections. In the first section, he describes in brief what “personality” (which he refers to as *Al-Nafs*) means. He also describes the different states of the *Nafs* as found in the Qur’an starting with the lowest rung which is *Al-Nafs Al-Ammarah* (tendency to evil) and ending with the highest level which is *Al-Nafs Al-Kāmilah* (completed self). The possibility of change of personality through life stages is also discussed, as well as the spiritual and intellectual development of personality. Lastly he emphasizes on the necessity of purifying the *Nafs* and struggling against natural tendencies toward evil that may lead to diseases of the heart such as covetousness, pride, evil and base desire. In the second section, Kasule defines *Tazkiyah* from the Qur’anic view and emphasizes that *Tazkiyah* is through Allah without denying the individual’s efforts towards it. In the third section, Kasule presents several methods that help in achieving *Tazkiyah*. He divides these methods into *Tazkiyah* by physical acts of worship and preliminaries of purification of the *Nafs*. Kasule concludes his paper by introducing some models of purity starting with the Prophet (SAW) and the four righteousness Caliphs followed by basic traits of believers (spiritual, social and *‘Ibādāt* traits).

Muhammad Tariq Ghauri (2009) asserts in his article *Purification of Soul in Islamic Perspective: A Comparative Study of Islamic Concept of Tazkiyah with Monasticism* that all human beings are actually mixtures of spirit and matter, a soul and a body. He further describes how Islam stands as a perfect and comprehensive spiritual and social package of life that successfully integrates beliefs, moral values and actions. According to Ghauri (2009), the methods prescribed by Islam for attaining *Ihsān*, which is the highest state of purity and transparency of heart and mind, are called “the pillars of Islam.” Jamaal Al-Deen M. Zarabozo (2002), in his book *Purification of the Soul: Concept, Process and Means*, gives a great deal of importance to the process of purification and claims that failing to fulfill the requirements needed to purify one’s soul is due to improper understanding of the goal of purification and not keeping it in mind. Furthermore, Zarabozo states eleven ways that can help a person in his/her path of self-purification. These means are not necessarily taken in orderly succession but they are all interconnected. He concludes his book with a comparison between the Sufi path of purification and the way of the Sunnah.

Although research has been already done on the works of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā and the concept of creativity and the definition of purification of the soul in Islam, but this study is considered important for several reasons. Debates on creativity are still going on and there is not yet a universal agreement among researchers on one the exact concept of creativity and its main elements. Moreover, there is a gap of research on the personality of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā that needs to be filled. Purification of the soul, on the other hand, has been thoroughly studied. But the integration of these three main elements has not been done before. Thus, this study attempts to analyze all these

aspects together in the hope to produce a new understanding on the matter as exemplified by the characteristics and methods of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā.

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