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Nicea Council and Nurcholish Madjid on Human Dignity: a Way of Dialog

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Abstract

One of the discussions in the Council of Nicea was that man was created in the Imago dei (the image of God). With the presence of Christ as God incarnate, this understanding is further affirmed, that man has sacred value and ultimate goal in relation to God. In line with that, Nurcholish Madjid, who is one of the Islamic figures in Indonesia, also has interesting thoughts about human beings, especially about human dignity. His thinking is based on Islamic teachings about humans being created as representatives of Allah in this world. This theme of human dignity is important, especially when viewed from two perspectives, Catholicism (in the Council of Nicaea) and Islam (in Nurcholish Madjid's thought). The hope is the creation of a dialogue of thought between two different cultures for the sake of creating harmony and mutual understanding. Therefore, this article wants to answer the question of How did Nurcholish Madjid and the Council of Nicea think about human dignity? The author tries to see the connection between the points of thought in the council of Nicaea and the points of thought of Nurcholish Madjid. Using the Appreciative Inquiry and interculturality approach, the author wants to dialogue these two thoughts and find out what things are related to each other. This paper argues that both Nicea and Madjid contribute valuable insights into the discourse on human dignity. This common view can be a way of dialogue between Islam and Catholicism so that harmony can be created in religious life.

Keywords

Nicea, Nurcholish Madjid, Dialogue, Interculturality, Appreciative Inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The concept of human dignity has been one of the fundamental aspects in various religious traditions and philosophical thoughts. Historically, human dignity has often been associated with the relationship between humans and God, as well as their rights and responsibilities in social life. Various religious traditions emphasize human values, justice, and equality as integral parts of the dignity inherent in every individual.

Within the Christian tradition, the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) represents a pivotal moment in affirming the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and its implications

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for the understanding of human dignity. The concept of *Imago dei*—the belief that human beings are created in the image of God—constitutes a theological foundation that upholds the intrinsic worth of every individual, emphasizing that such dignity must be recognized and safeguarded.

Conversely, in the context of modern Islamic thought, Nurcholish Madjid underscores the principle of *Tawhid* (the oneness of God) as the theological basis for human equality. He posits that all individuals are fundamentally equal before God, and he highlights the principles of individual freedom and moral responsibility as integral dimensions of human dignity.

The intellectual dialogue between the theological affirmations of the Council of Nicaea and the ethical thought of Nurcholish Madjid holds significant relevance for advancing deeper interreligious understanding. Both perspectives offer valuable contributions to the cultivation of a society rooted in respect for human dignity, justice, and social harmony.

This study seeks to examine the concept of human dignity as articulated in the Council of Nicaea and in the thought of Nurcholish Madjid. By analyzing how each tradition conceptualizes and affirms the dignity of the human person, it becomes possible to identify points of convergence and divergence within their respective theological frameworks. Furthermore, the study aims to explore how these perspectives might inform and enrich interreligious dialogue. By identifying shared values that can serve as a foundation for meaningful communication and cooperation across religious boundaries, insights from these two traditions may provide a constructive basis for strengthening tolerance and mutual understanding in an increasingly pluralistic world.

METHOD

This study employs the method of library research, a scholarly approach that relies on the examination of existing literature to obtain data and information relevant to the research topic. This method is chosen due to the conceptual and theoretical nature of the research, in which data collection is not conducted through fieldwork, but rather through an in-depth analysis of pre-existing literature[1].

The data for this research are drawn from various types of written sources, including scholarly books, academic journals, conference proceedings, as well as

[1] Zed, M. (2004). *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.

previous theses and dissertations related to the issues under investigation. These sources are gathered through searches of academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and the digital catalogues of university libraries. All identified literature is then critically analyzed in order to filter and select references that are both relevant and academically credible[2].

The research is analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach, whereby data obtained from the literature review are organized, interpreted, and connected to the theoretical frameworks employed in the study. This approach enables the researcher to provide a comprehensive description and interpretation of the phenomena or concepts under investigation through the synthesis of diverse scholarly perspectives. In this context, the secondary data are not merely arranged chronologically or thematically, but are processed to construct systematic arguments that support the resolution of the research questions[3]. Through this methodology, the study aims to generate new insights into the research topic by developing a robust theoretical construction grounded in a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature.

In analyzing the thoughts of the Council of Nicaea and Nurcholish Madjid, the author employs two approaches: Appreciative Inquiry and the Intercultural Approach. The Appreciative Inquiry method is used to explore how these two lines of thought can complement each other in order to form a common understanding, making it easier to engage in dialogue. This method encourages us to focus on the positive aspects of each perspective that can be mutually embraced. Meanwhile, the intercultural approach is applied in the context of dialogue between two different faiths, namely Christianity and Islam. Through this approach, the author seeks to understand the thoughts rooted in two distinct cultural traditions and to identify elements that can serve as pathways for meaningful dialogue.

THE COUNCIL OF NICEA AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Background to the Council of Nicea (325 AD)

The Council of Nicaea was one of the most significant events in the history of the Christian Church. Convened in 325 AD in the city of Nicaea (modern-day İznik,

[2] George, M. W. (2008). The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know. Princeton University Press.

[3] Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Turkey), the council was initiated by the Roman Emperor Constantine, who sought to resolve divisions within the Church concerning the doctrine of Christ's divinity[4]. The controversy over Christ's divinity was initially sparked by Arius, a priest from Alexandria. Arius taught that Jesus Christ was not truly God, but rather the first and highest of God's creations. In other words, Christ held a status superior to that of humans but remained subordinate to God the Father.

According to Arius, Christ was divine only insofar as His existence was granted and created by the Father. He asserted that Christ did not share the same substance (*ousia*) as the Father. Thus, the Logos (the Word) was a created being—an intermediary existence between God and the cosmos (creation). The Holy Spirit, in Arius's view, was also a creation of the Logos, and its divine quality was considered even lesser than that of the Logos incarnate[5].

This theological disagreement led to a serious schism within the Church, posing a threat to the stability of the Roman Empire. Having legitimized Christianity as an accepted religion within the empire, Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to settle the conflict. In addition to addressing the Arian controversy, the Council also dealt with several disciplinary matters, such as the determination of the date of Easter, regulations concerning bishops, clerical celibacy, the reconciliation of heretics with the Church, and liturgical penitential norms[6]. The Council was officially concluded on June 29, 325 AD.

THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE NICEA PERSPECTIVE

The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) stands as a pivotal moment in Christian history, addressing not only theological questions concerning divinity but also bearing significant implications for the understanding of human dignity. This concept can be elucidated through several key points:

Imago dei (Humanity as the Image of God)

In Christian tradition, human dignity is rooted in the concept of *Imago dei*, which affirms that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27). This foundational belief asserts that every person possesses

[4] Archibald Robertson, "The Council of Nicea," *Theology* 10, no. 60 (June 1, 1925): 309, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X2501006003.

[5] Eddy Kristiyanto, *Gagasan Yang Menjadi Peristiwa* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2002), 68–69.

[6] Kristiyanto, 70.

inherent value, irrespective of social status, race, or other background factors[7]. Within the context of the Council of Nicaea, the notion of *Imago dei* gains heightened relevance through the theological debates concerning the nature of Christ. The Council affirmed that Jesus Christ is "of the same substance as the Father" (*homoousios*), thereby reinforcing the profound relationship between humanity and the divine[8]. As creatures fashioned by God, human beings are endowed with a dignity and honor that derive from their Creator.

The Role of Jesus Christ in the Redemption and Restoration of Human Dignity

The fall of humanity into sin, as recounted in the narrative of Adam and Eve, is believed to have damaged—but not entirely obliterated—the purity of the *Imago dei*. Within the Christian worldview, Jesus Christ plays a central role in redeeming humanity from sin and restoring the dignity that was lost. The Council of Nicaea affirmed the doctrine of the Incarnation, declaring that Jesus is truly God who became truly human. Through His sacrificial death on the cross and His resurrection, Christ initiates the restoration of human dignity, which had been distorted by sin. This theological affirmation suggests that human dignity is not solely a matter of creation but also of redemption and renewal. It is through Christ's love and self-giving sacrifice that humanity's inherent worth is reaffirmed and elevated. Thus, the redemptive work of Christ is integral to understanding the full scope of human dignity within Christian theology—a dignity that is both given by God and restored through divine grace.

Implications for Human Relationships

The concept of human dignity as articulated in the context of the Council of Nicaea carries significant ethical implications for social relations and interpersonal conduct. Firstly, it affirms the equality of all human beings. If every individual is created in the *Imago dei*, then each person possesses equal value before God. This theological affirmation rejects any essential hierarchy among human beings and undermines all forms of discrimination or oppression based on race, status, or other distinctions. Secondly, the redemptive love and forgiveness demonstrated by Christ

[7] Mark J Cherry, "Created in the Image of God: Bioethical Implications of the Imago Dei," *Christian Bioethics: Non-Ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 23, no. 3 (October 26, 2017): 220, https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbx009.

[8] Robert M. Grant, "Religion and Politics at the Council at Nicaea," *The Journal of Religion* 55, no. 1 (January 1975): 7–8, https://doi.org/10.1086/486406.

emphasize the principles of compassion, reconciliation, and restorative justice. Human dignity, therefore, is to be upheld through acts of love, justice, and forgiveness. Thirdly, the universal scope of Christ's salvific mission underscores the notion of universal brotherhood. If Christ came to redeem all of humanity, then all people are called to live in solidarity and fraternal unity, transcending boundaries of religion, ethnicity, and culture.

NURCHOLISH MADJID AND HUMAN DIGNITY IN ISLAM

After outlining the concept of human dignity from the perspective of the Nicene Council which reflects the early Christian understanding of human nature it is now important to explore how a similar idea, though developed within a different theological and historical context, also emerges in Islamic thought. One prominent figure who reflects on this is Nurcholish Madjid.

Biography of Nurcholish Madjid

Nurcholish Madjid was born on March 17, 1939, in the village of Mojoanyar, Jombang, East Java. He came from a devout Muslim family. His father, Abdul Madjid, was a respected *kiai* (Islamic scholar), an alumnus of the Tebuireng Islamic boarding school, and a prominent leader within the Masyumi political party. His mother's name was Fathonah. Nurcholish acknowledged that he grew up influenced by two cultural traditions: the traditionalist worldview associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the modernist orientation of Masyumi. Moreover, he lived during a critical period of political transition, spanning both the pre-independence and post-independence eras of Indonesia. These historical and cultural contexts deeply shaped his intellectual development and worldview.

From an early age, Nurcholish Madjid displayed notable qualities both in character and intellect—traits that were undoubtedly influenced by his social background. Nur Khalik Ridwan highlights several advantages of Nurcholish's upbringing: first, he was born into a respected religious family, often referred to as *haji* or *kiai haji*; second, his family valued education; and third, they were financially stable, which afforded him access to quality education without significant hardship. These factors contributed significantly to his growth into a well-mannered and intelligent young man.

As previously mentioned, Nurcholish Madjid received a strong foundational education. He completed his primary schooling—known at the time as *Sekolah*

Rakyat—in Mojoanyar and Bareng, alongside his studies at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Mojoanyar, Jombang. For his secondary education, he attended Pesantren Darul 'Ulum in Rejoso, Jombang. However, due to the pesantren's political affiliation with NU, and his own inclination toward Masyumi's modernist views, he eventually transferred to a modernist pesantren: Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah (KMI), at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Gontor, Ponorogo.

Following his graduation from Gontor, Nurcholish enrolled in the Faculty of Adab (Literature), majoring in Arabic Literature, at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta, where he completed his Master's degree in 1968. He later pursued further studies in Islamic political thought and philosophy at the University of Chicago from 1978 to 1984, earning a Ph.D. in Islamic Thought. His doctoral dissertation focused on philosophy and *kalam* (Islamic theology), particularly the thought of Ibn Taimiyah. Nurcholish Madjid passed away on Monday, August 29, 2005, due to complications from liver cirrhosis. He was laid to rest at the Kalibata Heroes Cemetery on August 30, 2005.

HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE THOUGHT OF NURCHOLISH MADJID

Nurcholish Madjid's Concept of the Human Person

Nurcholish Madjid's thought on human dignity is rooted in his broader philosophical and theological reflections on the nature of humanity. His ideas are grounded primarily in Islamic teachings and are articulated across his numerous writings. From these works, one can discern the depth of his intellectual engagement, offering a more profound and holistic understanding of the human self. In relation to his conception of the human being, Nurcholish Madjid articulates five key principles that form the foundation of his anthropological thought.

1. Humanity as the Macrocosm and Microcosm

The first key aspect of Nurcholish Madjid's thought on humanity is his concept of the human being as both a *macrocosm* and a *microcosm*. This idea appears in his essay titled "Freedom," where he writes:

> Human beings are a small universe, a *microcosm* that reflects the larger universe, the *macrocosm*, which encompasses the entire cosmos. As the pinnacle of God's creation, humans are sent to Earth as *khalifah* (stewards or representatives of God). Therefore, every action that leads to the improvement

> of humanity, performed by human beings themselves, holds intrinsic value of goodness and cosmic dignity, extending across the boundaries of the universe and carrying the meaning of universal truth and goodness—a value that is dimensioned in the totality of all creation. And since, in the final analysis, humans consist of indivisible individuals, each person becomes the 'institution' of ultimate and absolute responsibility in the divine tribunal in the afterlife[9].

Nurcholish Madjid's concept of humanity is significantly influenced by the Sufi tradition and philosophical mysticism, particularly the idea of the *Insan al-Kamil* (Perfect Human) as articulated by Ibn Arabi[10]. In this context, Nurcholish presents the human being as both the *macrocosm* and the *microcosm*. What does this mean? When he refers to humans as the *microcosm*, it implies that the entire universe is represented by the human being, though in a much smaller form. Furthermore, Nurcholish argues that if humans are seen as the *microcosm*, then the value of an individual is equivalent to that of universal humanity, just as universal humanity holds the same value as the cosmic value of the entire universe[11].

On the other hand, the concept of the human being as the *macrocosm* is closely linked to the notion of the *microcosm*. The *macrocosm* is always subject to the interests of the *microcosm*, and the *macrocosm* exists and functions for the benefit of the *microcosm*[12]. Simply put, this idea can be understood as stating that the universe was created primarily for the benefit of humankind, and humanity has a significant responsibility towards the universe. The existence of the cosmos, therefore, is meaningful because human beings live within it, giving it meaning and purpose.

Secondly, Nurcholish Madjid affirms that humans are the pinnacle of God's creation and have been sent to Earth with a divine purpose. This concept is grounded in both the Qur'an and the Christian Bible, particularly in the Book of Genesis, which states that humans were created to tend to and care for the Earth (cf. Genesis 1:28-29). Nurcholish echoes this view, asserting that humans, as God's representatives

[9] Nurcholish Madjid, Masyarakat Religius, Membumikan Nilai-Nilai Islam dalam Masyarakat, Paramadina, 2000, 43

[10] Monib and Bahrawi, *Islam & Hak Asasi Manusia Dalam Pandangan Nurcholish Madjid*, 53.

[11] Karya lengkap Nurcholish Madjid, 8115

[12] Yunasril Ali, *Manusia Citra Ilahi: Pengembangan Konsep Insan Kamil Ibn Arabî Oleh al-Jîlî*, Cet. 1. (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997), 55–60.

(*khalifah*), are obligated to preserve, maintain, and perfect (through *islah* or reform) all the goodness and blessings created for human benefit and needs[13].

Thirdly, every action that contributes to the betterment of humanity holds intrinsic value, extending cosmic significance that reaches beyond the confines of the universe. This action embodies the universal truth and goodness that extends across all of creation[14]. Through this idea, Nurcholish emphasizes that humanity is an inseparable unity with one another and with the universe. Good deeds performed by humans thus carry universal meaning, implying that an action toward one person has significance for all people.

Fourthly, Nurcholish underscores the individual responsibility of each person. He asserts that individuals, as unique and indivisible realities, bear ultimate personal responsibility in the divine judgment before God in the afterlife[15]. Every action performed must be accounted for, both in this world and in the hereafter.

Fifthly, humans are creatures endowed with intellectual and spiritual capacities. While this view is generally accepted—human beings are distinct from other creatures (animals and plants) due to their rationality—Nurcholish emphasizes that these two aspects are crucial in defining what it means to be a complete human. Concerning spirituality, Nurcholish states that humans cannot live fully without a depth of self-awareness tied to their emotions and souls[16]. In a paper commemorating the 50th anniversary of UDHR, he further emphasizes that Allah has granted humans the intellectual and spiritual abilities to understand and utilize their surroundings, symbolized in Allah's teaching to Adam about the essence of all creation[17]. For Nurcholish, the intellectual and spiritual faculties of humans guide them toward an understanding of what is good and bad, what should and should not be done.

[13] Nurcholish Madjid, "Kalam Kekhalifaan Manusia dan Reformasi Bumi (Suatu Pencobaan Pendekatan Sistematis terhadap Konsep Antropologis Islam)," in *Karya Lengkap Nurcholish Madjid Keislaman, Keindonesiaan, dan Kemodernan* (Jakarta, Indonesia: Nurcholish Madjid Society, 2019), 4001–4002.

[14] Monib and Bahrawi, *Islam & Hak Asasi Manusia Dalam Pandangan Nurcholish Madjid*, 54–55.

[15] Monib and Bahrawi, *Islam & Hak Asasi Manusia Dalam Pandangan Nurcholish Madjid*, 55.

[16] Monib and Bahrawi, *Islam & Hak Asasi Manusia Dalam Pandangan Nurcholish Madjid*, 55.

[17] Nurcholish Madjid, Islam dan Hak Asasi Manusia, Menyambut 50 Tahun Deklarasi Hak Asasi Manusia, dalam Monib and Bahrawi, *Islam & Hak Asasi Manusia Dalam Pandangan Nurcholish Madjid*, 56.

The Concept of *Tawhid* and Human Equality Before God

Nurcholish Madjid's thought on human dignity is rooted in the concept of *Tawhid* and the fundamental values of Islam that emphasize equality, freedom, and moral and social responsibility[18]. In Islam, *Tawhid* does not merely mean the Oneness of God but also serves as the foundation for human equality[19]. This understanding of *Tawhid* then has implications for human relationships. First, all human beings hold equal standing before God, regardless of race, ethnicity, or social status[20]. Second, this concept rejects discrimination and supports the principle of universal brotherhood. Third, human dignity is not determined by social background, but by taqwa (God-consciousness) and good deeds (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13).

Nurcholish Madjid sees *Tawhid* as a principle that liberates humans from all forms of oppression, whether political, economic, or social. He emphasizes that a just social system must reflect the values of *Tawhid* that uphold humanity. Humans should live in equality, not in social strata that allow for oppression.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE COUNCIL OF NICEA AND THE THOUGHT OF NURCHOLISH MADJID USING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY METHOD

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a method that emphasizes the exploration of the positive aspects of an idea or system to encourage change and foster better understanding. AI emerged in the late 1980s as a reconfiguration of action research[21]. This method is used to view something as an opportunity and potential, rather than seeing it as a problem to be solved. The model used in AI is the 4D model (Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny). This model bears resemblance to other approaches, such as action research's "spiral steps," which consist of cycles of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the actions[22].

In the context of the dialogue between the Council of Nicaea and the thought of Nurcholish Madjid, the AI approach can be used to find common ground and collaboration opportunities in the concept of human dignity, focusing on the

[18] Nurcholish Madjid, Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan, Bandung: Mizan, 1998, h. 208.

[19] Didik Luthfi Hakim, "MONOTHEISME RADIKAL: Telaah Atas Pemikiran Nurcholish Madjid," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 25, no. 2 (March 7, 2016): 8, https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2014.25.2.383.

[20] Hakim, 13.

[21] Cram, Fiona. "Appreciative inquiry." *MAI review* 3.1 (2010): 1-13, 1

[22] Clouder, Lynn, and Virginia King. "What works? A critique of appreciative inquiry as a research method/ology." *Theory and method in higher education research*. Vol. 1. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2015. 169-190, 174

principles that inspire and build mutual understanding. These points of convergence can be examined through the 4D cycle.

Discovery (Finding Shared Positive Values)

The Council of Nicea (325 AD) affirmed the inherent dignity of every human being by emphasizing the theological concept of *Imago dei*, the belief that humans are created in the image of God. This concept provides a foundational basis for understanding human worth, as it implies that every person, regardless of their condition, reflects something of the divine. Furthermore, the Council declared that Jesus Christ plays a redemptive role in restoring human dignity, which has been distorted by sin. Through Christ's salvific work, human beings are not only redeemed but also reaffirmed in their original worth and vocation. Additionally, the Nicea perspective underscores the equality of all people before God, making no distinction based on social class, ethnicity, or any other human categorization.

In a different religious and cultural context, Nurcholish Madjid, likewise rooted his vision of human dignity in a Islamic theological foundation, namely the concept of *Tawhid*, the oneness of God. For Madjid, *Tawhid* implies the radical equality of all human beings before the Creator, as no one can claim superiority in a universe governed by a singular divine authority. This belief leads him to advocate for a spirit of inclusivism, where diversity whether religious, cultural, or ethnic is not a threat but a sign of God's majesty and creativity. Furthermore, Madjid strongly promotes freedom of thought and social responsibility as essential expressions of human dignity. For him, to be truly human is to engage with one's intellect and conscience in ways that contribute positively to society, grounded in the awareness of one's responsibility before God.

These two perspectives on human equality are a positive discovery and can be followed up as the next step toward dialogue. As Hans Kung states in his book Christianity and World Religions: Dialogue with Muslims, there can be no interreligious dialogue without an effort to understand each other's religious traditions.[23] Understanding each other's beliefs is a good starting point for interfaith dialogue.

[23] Hans Küng, "Christianity and World Religions: Dialogue with Muslim," in Leonard Swidler (Ed.), Toward a Universal Theology of Religion, (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), pp. 192-209

Dream (Imagining a Shared Future)

In the Dream phase of Appreciative Inquiry, the focus shifts toward envisioning how the shared values identified from both theological traditions might shape a more inclusive and elevated understanding of human dignity in the contemporary world. From the perspective of the Council of Nicea, the doctrine of *Imago dei*, the belief that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God offers a profound affirmation of the equal dignity inherent in every person. This theological foundation encourages communities to embrace love, compassion, and reconciliation as essential principles in social interactions, fostering environments that prioritize healing and mutual respect over division and hostility.

Likewise, Nurcholish Madjid's articulation of *Tawhid* provides a powerful Islamic framework for human liberation and social ethics. By emphasizing the oneness of God, *Tawhid* inherently rejects all forms of human domination, oppression, and injustice, asserting that no authority in social, political, or religious can override the divine equality bestowed upon all human beings. Moreover, Madjid's interpretation of *Tawhid* extends beyond metaphysics into tangible social realities by promoting principles of justice, equality, and shared humanity as the ethical foundations of collective life. These converging visions are rooted in Christian and Islamic thought offer a hopeful imagination for societies that uphold the dignity of every individual, regardless of background, and are committed to fostering peace through justice, solidarity, and love.

Design (Forming a Dialogical Framework)

Based on the shared values previously identified, this stage seeks to design pathways for constructive dialogue between the theological perspectives of the Council of Nicea and Nurcholish Madjid's understanding of *Tawhid*. A key point of convergence lies in the affirmation of human equality before God a foundational tenet in both the Christian doctrine of *Imago dei* and the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*. Both traditions uphold the belief that every human being possesses inherent dignity, not by merit, but by virtue of their creation by a just and loving God. This shared foundation underlines the importance of love, compassion, and social justice as vital expressions of that dignity in daily life.

Furthermore, both perspectives strongly reject discrimination and injustice, whether rooted in social structures or religious interpretations. Such shared commitments can serve as a strong ethical basis for interfaith dialogue. Rather than

focusing on theological divergences that may divide, this dialogue can instead prioritize universal values that unite such as justice, mercy, equality, and the sacredness of human life. By fostering a shared awareness that human dignity is a divine gift entrusted to all humanity, both traditions are called to respect and uphold it beyond confessional boundaries.

Consequently, an inclusive and pluralistic approach becomes essential in building a just and harmonious society. Interfaith dialogue shaped by these values is not merely theoretical but has concrete potential for transforming social relations, healing historical wounds, and promoting peace in increasingly diverse and complex societies. By embracing common ethical ground, communities of faith can collaborate to confront shared challenges and co-create a future where every person is treated with the dignity they deserve.

Destiny (Realising the Shared Vision in Social Reality)

In the final stage of Appreciative Inquiry is destiny. At this point the focus shifts toward translating shared theological visions into concrete and sustainable actions within society. Realising the convergence between *Imago dei* and *Tawhid* in affirming human dignity and justice calls for practical strategies, particularly in the realms of education and public life. In educational settings, an interfaith approach that integrates the values of human dignity, social justice, and universal brotherhood can become a transformative force. Schools and universities can incorporate these values into curricula on religion and philosophy, ensuring that dialogue and tolerance are not merely discussed abstractly, but cultivated as core competencies. This not only fosters mutual understanding among students of different faiths but also equips future generations with the ethical literacy to navigate religious and cultural diversity.

In the broader social sphere, the active involvement of religious leaders, educators, and public intellectuals is essential in building widespread awareness about the sacredness of human dignity. By using their platforms to advocate for compassion, equality, and justice, these figures can help shape public discourse in ways that align with shared moral values across traditions. Additionally, the establishment of interfaith and intercultural dialogue programs both at the grassroots and institutional levels can serve as vital instruments for peacebuilding. Such programs should intentionally emphasize common values such as compassion, mutual respect, and the intrinsic worth of every person, rather than focusing on doctrinal differences. Through sustained collaboration and a shared ethical vision,

these initiatives can contribute meaningfully to the creation of a more just, harmonious, and humane society.

Through the Appreciative Inquiry method, we can see how the Council of Nicea and Nurcholish Madjid's thought have similarities in promoting human dignity. *Imago dei* in Christianity and *Tawhid* in Islam both affirm that all human beings are equal before God. By focusing on the values of equality, love, justice and inclusivism, these two perspectives can contribute to each other in creating a more harmonious society that respects human dignity.

THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF *IMAGO DEI* AND *TAWHID* TODAY

To deepen the analysis of *Imago dei* and *Tawhid* in a modern context, this article could benefit from the inclusion of practical examples or real-world challenges that these theological concepts might help address.

Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

The idea of *Imago dei* that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*, which affirms the oneness of God and the equality of all human beings before Him, both offer strong theological foundations for resisting racism and ethnic prejudice. In the face of growing xenophobia or ethnic tensions, these concepts can inspire narratives of inclusion and human dignity.

Social and Economic Inequality

Both traditions emphasize the inherent worth of every individual. *Imago dei* asserts that human beings carry divine dignity, while *Tawhid* reminds us that no one is superior to another in the sight of God. These principles can be used to critique systems that perpetuate injustice, such as exploitative labor practices or the structural marginalization of the poor.

Gender Justice and the Dignity of Women

The belief that both men and women equally bear the image of God in *Imago dei*, and the emphasis in *Tawhid* on human equality before God, challenge patriarchal attitudes and support efforts toward gender justice. These perspectives can offer spiritual and ethical grounding for advancing the rights and dignity of women in societies where inequality persists.

Ecological Crisis

Both concepts also have implications for environmental ethics. *Imago dei* calls humans to stewardship of creation, while *Tawhid* teaches that all of nature is part of God's unified creation and should be respected. Together, they can inspire interfaith efforts toward environmental care and responsibility.

These four points exemplify how the theological concepts articulated in the Nicea Council and the Islamic doctrine of *Tawhid* can be practically applied to engage with and respond to the complex challenges and pressing issues of the contemporary world.

CONCLUSION

Dignity is a fundamental thing that every human being has. This dignity makes humans valuable beings. Both the Council of Nicea and Nurchlish Madjid in their thinking based on Islamic values see that humans are created with equal dignity. Thus, there should be no oppression and humiliation among fellow human beings because everyone is created with the same dignity. This common view can also be a door to dialogue between the Christian and Islamic traditions that everyone is created equal despite having different beliefs. This view of equality is an idea that becomes an important point in interfaith dialogue. The Appreciative Inquiry method helps us to see the good things in both Christian and Islamic traditions and thought rather than arguing with each other about which teachings are right or wrong.

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