

Signs of nature in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A significant contribution to Islamic semiotics

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ABSTRACT

In the life circle, humans always produce, receive, and search for the meaning of signs. The meanings have ultimate value concerning Islamic worldview which then determines human salvation. Therefore, these issues are very important to research. The researchers worked in a deductive-inductive approach: a quasi-qualitative method characterized by the use of theories to be reconstructed after critical dialogues aimed at revealing the meanings of the natural signs based on an Islamic worldview and proposing a model of the Islamic theory of sign. The subject of this research is the books of *Risale-i Nur* as the representation of the Islamic worldview. Further, the techniques of the data collection are (1) preparing the domain (2) constituting the taxonomy of the data; (3) note-taking in the text of the *Risale-i Nur*. Furthermore, the latent content analysis and heuristic was employed. The researchers categorized qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between themes. Finally, the researchers concluded that the meanings of the natural signs in the *Risale-i Nur* are the manifestation of the perfection of God's Names. Moreover, the significant contribution of the *Risale-i Nur* to Islamic semiotics is revealed and proposed.

Keywords: *Signs of nature, Risale-i Nur, Islamic semiotics, Islamic pragmatics*

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INTRODUCTION

A man is a special creature or a new entity who has two souls, i.e. *nafsan*, we refer to (i) the soul of the intellect or reason: *nafs al'aql*, or the soul of discrimination: *nafs al-tamyiz*; and (ii) the vital spirit or the soul of the breath: *nafs al-ruh*, or the soul of life: *nafs al-hayat* (M. N. Al-Attas, 2015; Uthman, 2022). He or she was always undergoing a communication or in semiotic terms called semiosis: meaning-making to other men and also other entities in this world. The ability also characterizes the man's identity as being different from other creatures. In the case of man-to-man meaning-making, it occurs when a speaker sends a "sign" (in the form of words) in an auditory and visual form to the listener. Then, the listener identifies the features as the input. It means that the language works when the perceived features of the "sign" are evaluated, integrated, and decided by the listeners.

In other words, the intended meaning is achieved by producing new words from the dictionary of the listener (retrieving a store of information) and also recalling the ideal prototype in the form of features to decide the ideal meaning or what is meant by the speaker. Further, the meanings are grasped by the interlocutors (Massaro & Cohen, 2000; Massaro, 2012). In reference to the analysis, the process of "perception" ability plays an important role in the "sign" meaning more importantly for the visual entity perception in this world from Islamic worldview. Henceforth, the communication between the man and other entities places special concern in this research. In the Islamic worldview, the world outside the man is a "sign": an ontic relation between God and man. It is a form of real and continuous communication from God to man.

In Islam, the term 'sign' is *ayah* (singular form: sign) and *ayaat* (plural form: signs). The terms *ayah* (sign) and *ayaat* (signs) are mentioned over 400 times in the Quran collectively. The term

sign is a small unit of complete meaning in the Quran. It means that signs are entities that indicate meaning. It covers articulated signs in the book itself or unarticulated experiential signs in nature (Abdul-Rahman and Khan 2023). Al-Attas also emphasized the Quranic concept of *ayah* as referring to “words” and “things”. Therefore, according to him, knowledge is epistemologically defined as the arrival in the soul of the meaning of a thing or the arrival of the soul at the meaning of the thing. The meaning of things means the right meaning of them, and what is considered to be the right meaning is determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth projected by the Quranic conceptual system (al-Attas, 1999).

In conformity with the Quranic concept analysis, perceiving and thinking of the signs in terms of natures or words should reach the ultimate and final meaning; i.e., recognizing and acknowledging God. Moreover, the ‘understood meaning’ did not come from ‘nothingness’ but from the early condition of language exposure during a language acquisition simultaneously with the inculcated values as well as a bio program as an innate condition —an unexpressed sense—of man and his or her covenant with God before being in this world (bin Ramli, 2020).

In the case of signs of nature, the ideal perception within the Islamic worldview is found in Bediuzzaman with Risale-i Nur. Risale-i Nur is the spiritual tafsir (*tafsir ma'nawi*) that takes directly to expound, prove, and explain with powerful proofs the truth of the Quran regarding iman. It is — a 6000-page writing containing thoughts on building a civilization of the faith essence — a *tafsir* of Nur from the *ayats* of the Quran. It consists of proofs relating to the truth of iman and tauhid. An important element in the way of the Risale-i Nur is reflection or contemplation (*tefekkiir*), ‘reading’ the Book of the Universe in order to increase in knowledge of God and to obtain ‘certain, verified belief’ in all the truths of belief (Nursi, 2008; Nursi’s Students, 2016; Gaffar, 2021).

In those books, the signs of nature are ideally and wonderfully interpreted based on the need of man’s natural inclination (*fitrah*) for the foods of the soul to bring solace and ultimate happiness. It means that in terms of a modern concept, the embryo of Islamic semiotics, i.e., the study of signs pertaining to the type of sign and object relation within Islamic worldview is found in these books. E.g., in the Risale-i Nur, a semiosis of triadic relation: sign vehicle (representamen): signs of nature, interpretant (mental representation in reference to Islam), and object (Islamic ontological scheme including visible-invisible object) obtain “ultimate value” and “finality” pointing to God (*ma'na harfi*) rooted from Islamic dimension of ontology, method, and meaningful practice to evaluate a reality (sign).

Therefore in Islam, the dimensions of the “sign” are cycles of the Islamic semiosis *dhikr* (remembrance to God), *fikr* (reflection of His bounties), and *syukr* (thanks) which leads the human to the recognition of God: love, fear, hope (“*harfi*”: sign stands for God recognition or pointing to God) (Nursi, 2013c). It means that the Islamic semiosis occurs in the following dimensions: a) absolute basis of revelation; b) approach: *tawhidic*, *dhikr*, *fikr*, *syukr*; c) purpose: finality, justice, *adab*; d) meaning and truth: revelation based, *harfi*; e) object: visible-invisible; f) elements: the concept of God, revelation, religion, ultimate value, and belief; g) Islamic prototype of final sign meaning decision; h) Islamic meta illocutionary force: the solace of the human soul.

Whereas, after deep analysis of the Western theory of sign represented by Charles Sanders Peirce, Saussure, and Umberto Eco, fatal academic problems are revealed on the condition of the western semiosis, i.e., the triadic relation of the sign vehicle, interpretant, and object as intermediary of the sign process to search for knowledge (Hamel, 2011; Champagne, 2019). The researchers found that the Western semiosis occurs in the following dimensions: a) basis: mere logico-hypothetico-verify; b) approach: unaided semiosis, philosophy, i.e., without a source of revealed knowledge; c) purpose: infinite, i.e., the search of meaning are perpetual search and dynamic deviating ultimate and final goal; d) meaning and truth: arbitrary, convention, secular, *ismi* (pointing to self), i.e., in the case of a ‘word’ meaning (or other signs), it is not deeply rooted from revelation and the primordial state of God and man relation but pointing to worldly affairs; e) object: mere society, man, environment; f) elements: mere philosophy, politics, humanistic value. It means the fatal problem is that the search for sign meaning (search for knowledge) is aimed at “searching” tension and no orientation of finding the final and ultimate meaning of the sign.

However, from the wide areas of search of the above issues, i.e., Islamic semiosis and Islamic semiotics had not been discussed or proposed by previous researchers. Hasan (2012), the study was concerned with the Islamization of English Literary Studies with a Postcolonial Approach. Kuru (2015) found that for Bediuzzaman Saïd Nursi, a true understanding of the concept of self was essential if the

true potential of an individual was to be fulfilled. The dynamic and ever-changing structure of the self can be understood by *anā*, which is a subjective tool acting as a unit of measure. In other words, it is just an image (*anā*) on the mirror (*nafs*), which reflects and shows the Divine Names and Attributes. Thomas Binti Abdulloh (2017), research aimed at analyzing how rhetoric has managed to reveal the persuasive language in Nursi's Damascus Sermon. Riexinger (2020), the researcher descriptively elaborated on the life: spiritual, and intellectual journey of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi continued with Nurcus (Nursi's followers) concentrated on disseminating his ideas both in print and in reading circles or "lessons". Rizal (2021), this study discusses the division of *tafakkur* in *Rasail an-Nur*, including; contemplation of the universe in *al-Ayat al-Kubra*, *tafakkur Imani*, *afaki tafakkur* (macrocosm), and *anfusi tafakkur* (microcosm) which discusses from the inside of man himself. *Tafakkur* in this research becomes problem-solving for internal problems and strengthens the faith.

Furthermore, Isom Mudin et.al (2021), discussed the principles of ecology according to Sa'id Nursi as the basis for implementing the sustainable living agenda. Özdemir (2022), the research discussed Said Nursi's ethics of compassion and the possibility of a new ethics of compassion derived from the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*. Darda et al., (2023), this study analyzed the reform of Said Nursi's Islamic educational thought. Curriculum reform, methods, and ideal educational goals shape morals and increase spirituality and knowledge. Alfianto et.al (2023), discussed Islamic education based on religious humanists from the perspective of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: a concept that can develop human potential, both worldly and ukhrowi aspects, to create a balanced person about fellow beings (*hablun minannas*) and with the Creator (*hablun minallah*).

From the previous research analysis, the researchers investigated the essential contribution of previous researchers to the *Risale-i Nur* in the work of literary studies, the concept of 'self', language and rhetoric, spiritual journey of the *Risale-i Nur* author, the division of *tafakkur* in the *Risale-i Nur*, ecology, ethics of compassion, and Islamic education reformation. However, these endeavors had not discussed the *Risale-i Nur* and its significant contribution to 'Islamic semiotics'. From the analysis, this research novelty is prominent and very important to carry out. "The researchers believe that the Islamic semiotics should be proposed through the *Risale-i Nur* to release and save the human from the corruption, error, and falsity of knowledge" because, in reference to Islamic worldview, the sign interpretations (nature, words, objects, and entities) have a serious impact for human salvation in this world and hereafter. Henceforth, this research was aimed at revealing the meanings of the natural signs found in the *Risale-i Nur* and proposing a model of the Islamic theory of signs according to modern theory.

METHOD

This research employed a quasi-qualitative method. The method was characterized by the use of theories to be reconstructed after critical dialogues: 1) searching the problem, 2) literature review, 3) founding gap, 4) constructing a hypothesis, 5) planning data sources, 6) constructing data collection methods, 7) using a theoretical framework, 8) data collection, 9) keep themes, 10) trying to find a new source of information, 11) triangulation, 12) constructing theory, 13) confirmation theory, and 14) constructing new theory (Bungin, 2020; Rahardjo, 2023). At this method, the researchers critically analyzed the Western theories of signs from the Islamic worldview (*Risale-i Nur*) to reveal a hidden meaning and to reconstruct a newly proposed theory with reference to Islam to achieve a just knowledge (Jackson, 2003; Fraenkel & E Wallen, 2006).

Further, the subjects of this research are the authoritative books of *Risale-i Nur* which consist of books entitled "The Words, Letters, The Flashes, The Rays, Signs of Miraculousness, and The Staff of Moses. Meanwhile, the object of the research is the theories of sign in the West and Islam. Moreover, the data analysis techniques of this research are as follows: (1) preparing the domain (2) constituting the taxonomy of the data; and (3) note-taking in the text of the *Risale-i Nur*; (3) latent content analysis; (4) heuristic. The heuristic method was employed to obtain the novelty of the theory: describing the context of justification to knowledge, critics of a paradigm, discovery of a new method, and development of creativity (Kaelan, 2010).

Then, the trustworthiness of the research was fulfilled by strategies, i.e., fulfilling the credibility and dependability of the research (Petty et al., 2012; Yadav, 2022). The credibility was acquired by using triangulation of investigators: peer readings and *tullabunnur* readings and theories between Islam and the West, as well as reflexivity: the critical self-assessment of concepts and paradigms. Moreover,

the dependability of this research was also acquired through peer debriefing, triangulation, and reflexivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers revealed interpretations of the signs of nature from the authoritative books of the Risale-i Nur entitled The Words, Letters, The Flashes, The Rays, Signs of Miraculousness, and The Staff of Moses. Then, the researchers compared and discussed the study of signs between Islam and the West difference to propose Islamic semiotics and the branches.

Results

In conformity with the identification, the results of this research showed interpreted natures including signs of animals, plants, inanimate objects, and men found in the Risale-i Nur. Those interpretations were then categorized based on the frequency. Moreover, a critical semiotic comparative analysis between Islam and the West including the semiotic features and scopes is seen in the following tables:

Table 1. The Categorical Analysis of Risale-i Nur and the Natural Signs

Categories	The Words	Letters	The Flashes	The Rays	Signs of Miraculousness	The Staff of Moses	Total
Animals	10	9	14	14	1	24	72
Plants	20	12	13	28	0	29	102
Inanimate object	47	12	14	41	9	66	189
Man	14	5	6	6	1	9	41
Total	91	38	47	89	11	128	404

The data in Table 1 showed that signs of nature are interpreted in all authoritative books of the Risale-i Nur. Moreover, inanimate objects emerged as frequently interpreted signs in the universe. It was because the Risale-i Nur was concerned with proving that signs of nature in the form of inanimate objects were even louder than philosophers to testify the existence of God through His manifestations in the universe to be recognized by men. The data were further discussed to reveal the pattern of interpretations and as critical dialogues to propose Islamic semiosis: Islamic semiotics and the branches.

Table 2. The Semiotic Features between Islam and the West

Features \ Semiotics	Islam												
	Revelation	Tawhidic (dhikr, fikr, syukur)	finality, justice, adab	Revelation, harfi	Visible-invisible	Concept of God, revelation, religion, ultimate	Semiosis, Philosophy	infinite	Arbitrary, secular, ismi	Society, environment	Philosophy, politics, humanistic	Logico-hypothetic	o-
Basis	+												
Approach		+											
Purpose			+										
Meaning and truth				+									
Object Elements					+					+			
Basis	-												+
Approach		-											
Purpose			-				+		+				
Meaning and truth				-					+				
Object Elements					-					+			
						-					+		

Notes: (+) means ‘available’ and (-) means ‘unavailable’

From Table 2, there are differences in semiotic conceptual features between Islam and the West concerned with the natural sign study. In Islam, the basis of the study is a revelation; the approaches are *tawhidic*, *dhikr* (remembrance), *fikr* (thinking and reflection of God's bounties), *syukr* (thanks to God); the purposes are finality, justice, *adab*; the meaning and truth is revelation based and *ma'na harfi*; the objects are visible-invisible; the elements are the concept of God, revelation, religion, and ultimate value. Whereas, in the West the basis of the study is logico-hypothetico-verificative; the approaches are semiosis and philosophy; the purpose is infinite; the meaning and truth are arbitrary, convention, secular, and *ma'na ismi*; the objects are society, man, environment; the elements are philosophy, politics, and humanistic value. The Western ultimate goal of semiotic research is trapped in mere "worldly affairs" or "lizard hole". E.g., the research carried out by Listiani et.al, (2023) on the semiotic study of lipstick L'oreal Paris product poster advertisement and other similar research on applied linguistics such as gender ideology, media critiques carried out by Siboro (2023) and Wahyudin & Harjanto (2023). It was also the inability to reveal the ultimate meaning of death from a level degree of existence behind the signs as written by Ardhian et al, (2023).

Table 3. The Scopes of Semiotics between Islam and the West

Scopes Semiotics	World (here)	Physics	Non-physics	Pragmatic	Facts	Reality	Truth	Career	Knowledge	Solace	God	Hereafter	Salvation
	<i>Islam</i>												
Purpose	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Object	+	+	+										
<i>The West</i>													
Purpose	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
Object	+	+	-										

Notes: (+) means 'available' and (-) means 'unavailable'

Meanwhile, from Table 3, the scopes of semiotics are also different between Islam and the West. The scopes of sign study in Islam are world (here), physics, non-physics, pragmatics, facts, reality, truth, career, knowledge, solace, God, hereafter, and salvation. Whereas, the scopes of sign study in the West are world (here), physics, non-physics, pragmatic goal, facts, truth, knowledge, and career or profession. Henceforth, from the above analysis, the semiotics in Islam is "beyond" the West in terms of being here and hereafter as well as its ultimate values for mankind and the universe.

Discussion

Meanings of Signs in the Books of Risale-i Nur

In this section, a semiosis of triadic relation: a) sign vehicle (*representamen*) in the signs of nature, b) *interpretant* (meanings and mental representations in reference to Islam), c) and object (Islamic ontological scheme including visible-invisible object) is analyzed and exemplified as follow:

The Words (al-Kalimat)

The Words is a book of the Risale-i Nur which comprises "thirty-three words" and 780 pages unearthing the nature and purposes of man, life, and all things in this world (Nursi, 2008, 2013c).

The second-hand, minute-hand, hour-hand, and day-hand of a clock which tells the weeks look to one another, are examples of one another, and follow one another. Similarly, the alternations of day and night, which are like the seconds of this world –a vast clock of Almighty God– and the years which tell its minutes, and the stages of man's life-span which tell the hours, and the epochs of the world's life-span which tell the days look to one another, are examples of one another, resemble one another, and recall one another.

From the text, the focus or concern is "The alternations of day and night, which are like the seconds of this world –a vast clock of Almighty God– and the years which tell its minutes, and the stages

of man's life-span." From this statement, day and night are not sole astronomical or physical matter, but both inform mankind about the truth of "unstoppable" time from the beginning to the end of his or her journey. Day and night are signs which mean "a vast clock of Almighty God— and the years which tell its minutes, and the stages of man's life-span." It is a threat for mankind that the signs continually show a "danger" or "tragedy" of ending mankind's time without any provisions for hereafter. The signs speak, "You are the impotent guest coming to this earth and will be displaced with a new guest soon. Therefore, submit yourself to Allah Almighty God.

Letters (al-Maktubat)

In the book "Letters", the researchers take examples of how natural signs are interpreted to unveil the varied ideal meaning to grasp the condition of truth (Nursi, 2014). The first is about time, time is not only viewed from an ordinary level of meaning. Time is interpreted as "*a mighty river flowing through the universe, is like the page and ink of power as it writes on the Tablet of Appearance and Dissolution*". The sign also speaks up to mankind indicated as a "warning": Alas mankind! you can't stop the flow of the Appearance and Dissolution nor write the page of life. The flow can't be closed by everything you have. Therefore, you need The Almighty God who writes the pages to save your life.

The Flashes (al-Lama'at)

The signs of nature are also abundant in the book of The Flashes. The meanings are also different from the preceding books. For instance, the meaning of the world. The world is interpreted as follows (Nursi, 2009):

It is a mirror subject to divine creation through preeternal power. In one respect, each being is a sort of mirror to one of the names of the Pre-Eternal Sun, displaying its embroideries;

It is the exhibition, display, gathering place, and center of countless divine artifacts, as the heart and immaterial center of the vast, endless heavens;

Stamp of dominicality one within the other and each showing samples of the others;

It is transient, for "contemplation of death";

Guesthouse: "Have a good journey!", and was warning me that I would be leaving this guesthouse. It too was saying "Good-bye," and was preparing to depart!

Referring to the above lists, the meaning expresses Islamic eschatology. Guessoum and Bigliardi (2023) in their research mentioned that the concern of Islam is about inseparable dimensions among the past, present, and future as an essential part of the human condition, 'more deeply rooted'. The meanings are fastened by a belief condition of the Islamic worldview. The concepts of the sign world are about mirrors, countless divine artifacts, the stamp of dominicality, a transient of death contemplation, and a guesthouse. The importance of the various meanings is about the sameness of a pattern, i.e., mankind should recognize God and prepare to depart to the endless life of hereafter. The acts are concerned with stating, warning, etc. The interpretations of the world are completely different from the secular approach restricted to secular physics and astronomy. Eg. The world is a condensation of interplanetary dust, hostile environment, etc. (Reichenbacher, 2006; Murphy & Nance, 2009).

The Rays (asy-Syu'aat)

In the Book of the Rays, various signs are found including types of inanimate entities, animals, and plants (Nursi, 2013b). E.g., the sign "spring" also draws important interpretations in this book as follows:

It is the successive caravans of beings, and especially living creatures and the small young ones at that, which followed on one after the other and in a flowing torrent displaying hundreds of thousands of samples of the resurrection of the dead and Great Gathering on the face of the earth;

It is (a display of) the resurrection of the dead and Paradise and will bestow eternal happiness as easily and definitely as He will create next spring which told me: "Study my meaning and look through the telescope of belief!"

The diverse interpretations of the sign "spring" promote perfection and inculcation of varied values to a soul. The sense and reference are very fundamental showing a bond between here and hereafter in response to the created revelation through semiotic mediation. The meanings of the springs are a caravan of beings, resurrection, eternal happiness, and Supreme gathering. All of these truth proves God's mercy and power over all things. The transcendental meaning of the routine signs of spring is important since mankind is a frequently negligent being. Equally, the invisible meaning of the spring is revealed in the Quran (al-Hadid: 17): "Know that Allah revives the earth after its death. We have certainly made the signs clear for you so perhaps you will understand (*ta'qilun*)." The word "*ta'qilun*" here is to "understand" which means a cognitive and articulate power: grasping, withholding, and binding the meaning of objects (Al-Attas, 2015).

Signs of Miraculousness (Isharat al-I'jaz)

In the book Signs of Miraculousness, the miraculously interpreted signs are also shared. The inanimate signs and meanings are as follows (Nursi, 2013a):

The days and the years: it testifies to the resurrection of the dead;

Morning and night: it is a concealed sign and subtle hint that the morning of the spring of resurrection will come, breaking forth from the vast clock of the universe;

Thunder and lightning: a) those indicate promise and threat; b) two clear signs from the World of the Unseen which are in the hands of the angels appointed to the world of the clouds to oversee the ordering of its laws;

Terror of death (hadhara al-mawt): it (thunder) hints that calamity has reached its final point and the knife has hit the bone. Everything is finished except life, and now they are concerned with nothing except the fear of death and the wish to save their lives;

Darkness: it shows the doubts of disbelief and skepticism of dissembling.

The meanings built from the sprinkling light positively illuminate the soul of mankind because the signs mean "finality" and "clarity" in pursuit of knowledge in this world. In other words, it is the Law of God (with the uppercase "L"). From the data, the alteration among the days and the years as well as the morning and the night are a gold ticket coming and going at one time in the moment of life. It means today is not yesterday. Therefore, the condition is a loud hint: remember! the resurrection of the dead, the alteration between an old visitor and a new visitor in this world. Pay attention! That the world is like a vast clock counting a time and an end of living beings. Additionally, the thunder is also a threat that "calamity has reached its final point and the knife has hit the bone". Indeed, the quiet, calm, low noisy world truly deceives mankind into negligence. In this case, the thunder means a remainder: breaking the silent world and recalling man's memory to think of the spiritual message.

Even the silent world is also identified as an overview effect in astronaut tradition as stated by Yaden et.al, (2016) that the overview effect appears when a man thinks and stands like the smallest being compared to great universes. It is a profound reaction to viewing the Earth from outside its atmosphere. Astronaut Edgar Mitchell described it as an "explosion of awareness" and an "overwhelming sense of oneness and connectedness . . . accompanied by an ecstasy . . . an epiphany. Henceforth, in line with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas who maintained that the world of nature is another form of the Divine revelation analogous to the Holy Qur'an itself, only that the great, open book of nature is something created; it presents itself in multiple and diverse forms that partake of symbolic existence by virtue of being continually "articulated" by the creative word of God (Al-Attas, 1995).

Proposed Model of Islamic Theory of Sign

In this section, the positive concepts of the Western and Islamic theories of sign are abstracted and integrated.

Positive Concepts of the Western Theory of Sign

Referring to critical analysis of the Western theories, the negative concepts are removed (Durst-Andersen, 2008; Jappy, 2013; Champagne, 2018; Hebert & Desmedt, 2020). Those are a) basis: *mere logico-hypothetico-verify*; b) approach: unaided *semiosis, philosophy*; c) purpose: *infinite*; d) meaning and truth: *arbitrary, convention, secular, ismi*; e) object: *mere society, man, environment*; f) elements: *mere philosophy, politics, humanistic value*. However, there are also positive aspects in the form of the search for sign meaning including concepts, methods, and applications. The positive aspects include a) the nature of sign as “indicative meaning”: Peirce’s concept of a sign vehicle (*representamen*), *interpretant* (mental representation), object, and Saussure’s concept of signifier (sound image), signified (mental concept); b) theories of semiology: the unity of sign, signifier and signified; c) and theories of semiotics: firstness, secondness, thirdness, kinds of signs including sign-inherent (first trichotomy: qualisign, sinsign, legisign), sign-object (second trichotomy: icon, index, symbol), sign-interpretant (third trichotomy: rheme, dicent sign, argument), semiosis, triadic relationship (a sign or *representamen* (a first), an object (a second), and an *interpretant* (a third)), dyadic relationship (sign-object as semantics, sign-interpretant as pragmatics, and sign-sign as syntax). It means that these positive concepts can be developed and integrated within the Islamic framework.

Positive Concepts of Islamic Theory of Sign

In Islam, the sign is not a triviality for mere worldly affairs. Indeed, the surrounding signs are “deep messages” and loudly speaking more than an active speaker for humans which cover “declaring or stating, threatening, entertaining, advising, apologizing” etc., as found in the Risale-i Nur. Those ontological truths are real “speech acts” encoding illocutionary acts on another level beyond visible words; that is a metaphysical level of existence. Even, the study of signs in Islam is aimed at an ultimate and final goal of recognizing the Creator of the world and acknowledging rules (cosmos instead of chaos) as testified and displayed by the universe as a veil of God (Aydin, 2019; Kirkinci, 2019). In summary, the positive concepts of Islam include a) the absolute basis: revelation; b) approach: *tawhidic, dhikr, fikr, syukur*; c) purpose: finality, justice, *adab*; d) meaning and truth: revelation based, *harfi*; e) object: visible-invisible; f) elements: the concept of God, revelation, religion, ultimate value, and belief; g) Islamic prototype of final sign meaning decision; h) Islamic meta illocutionary force: the solace of the human soul (bin Ramli, 2020).

To this point, the positive concept of sign perception from the Islamic worldview (“absolute basis”) is a “postulate” from revelation being significantly ultimate and invaluable for man’s salvation as a traveler in this world to achieve the correct and final goal before death. His or her natural tendency (*fitrah*) was to search and search for “meaning” to reveal the truth: from where do they come and to where do they go. It means the search and search are aimed at recognizing God back as declared in the primordial covenant with God before being conscious of this world (Al-Attas, 2023) In this primordial covenant, fundamental properties were revealed; that is, the origin of such endowed properties of human such as “speech ability” (*aql*), sense of the heart (*qolb*): love, sadness, happiness, fear, and bravery.

Integrating the Concepts

After the critical dialogues of the sign study between Islam and the West, a proposed model of Islamic semiotics is urgent and obligatory. Syamsuddin Arif explains that the *raison d'être* of Islamization is based on emerging problems; i.e., knowledge purposes are corrupted and deviated. The problems of knowledge fall into problem of scientism, secularism, and pragmatism. Moreover, the distortion of elements from the West includes 1) the concept of dualism; 2) the dualism of mind and body, their separation of intellectus and ratio, and their stress upon the validity of ratio; their methodological cleavage pertaining to rationalism and empiricism; 3) their doctrine of humanism, the secular ideology; 4) their concept of tragedy, mainly in literature (Al-Attas, 1985; Arif, 2023). Those problems are objects to remove from the body of Islamic science. The problematic conditions are found in present common activities of knowledge learning where a gap between class and ultimate meaning of students are widely separated and they are trapped in a lizard hole. The results are unlimited “recurrent

search”, “relativity of knowledge”, and “worldly rivalry” to fulfill the tension of mere mechanistic curiosity. Therefore, the food of the soul is ignored.

Al-Attas stated that the Islamization of knowledge is a reversed endeavor or goal; i.e. the liberation of man first from magical, mythological, animistic, national-cultural tradition, and then from secular control over his reason and his language (Al-Attas, 1985; Denisova, 2022). In other words, it is the liberation of man from partiality; i.e., scientism, secularism, pragmatism, and also dualism, humanism doctrine towards “unity” of worldly and afterlife aspects. The fundamental notion of Islamization of modern knowledge is to perform surgery to modern knowledge whereby the bad elements and impurities are eliminated, amended, reinterpreted, or adapted to be in accordance with the dictate of the Islamic worldview or values (al-Faruqi’s term) or isolated or removed and then infused with Islamic elements and key concepts (Rosnani & Rossidy, 2000). The result of the liberation is surely an Islamic science.

The Islamic science is the product of a *tawhidic* approach to the study of nature that does not exclude its spiritual dimensions (Hilmy Baihaqy bin Yussof & Bakar, 2016). From this statement, the *tawhidic* is a “yard of the stick” of properly constructed knowledge. It implies that knowledge is not aimed merely at knowledge itself but for *tawhidic* purposes. Further, Islamic science is a long-term, practical empirico-conceptual research program (Setia, 2007). It has been commonly understood that the product of the corrupted sciences had been widely distributed across nations and geography within a systemic approach for centuries. Henceforth, the research of making knowledge be in justice criteria is not a long-short term program but rather a long-term of Islamic scholar works.

Islamic Semiotics

In the extent of Islamic semiotics, the researcher should distinguish the existence of “semiotics as an area of study”: how the studies are justified as the work of semiotics, its tendencies, and therefore unified model and “semiotics as a discipline”: to investigate the existence of sign in the universe by proposing semiotic model deductively as a parameter.

Semiotics, as an “area of study” in a language concern, has three branches of study; i.e., “semantics” (relation between sign and object); pragmatics (relation between signs and interpreters); and syntax (relation between signs and signs). Even, the areas of semiotics include linguistics and branches, humanities, sciences, biology, linguistics or biosemiotics, physics, arts, pictorial semiotics, gesture studies, cultural semiotics, and relevant areas of meaning signification (Sonesson, 2008). It is because humans are always doing meaning-making approaches for an investigative endeavor in his or her life span: to receive signs and to make signs. In other words, the impressive domain of the Islamic semiotics is “living systems” (Kull et al., 2011). Therefore, semiotics, in this perspective is not a discipline but an interdisciplinary endeavor (Cobley, 2019). For these reasons, semiotics is the father of all disciplines.

In this research concern, the Islamic sign study brings forth the study scientific study of language to solve a real-world problem. Now, the case has been more serious; that is, to solve the real world and hereafter problem in the form of proposing an “Islamic dimension of semiosis”: how semantics (sign-object), pragmatics (sign-interpreter), and syntax (sign-sign) were formed which is then born linguistic discipline within the Islamic thinking framework which means meaning-making aided by revealed knowledge and intuition (gifted knowledge from God). The process by which anything serves as a sign (semiosis). Finally, the result of the aided semiosis is Islamic semantics, Islamic pragmatics, Islamic syntax, Islamic humanities, Islamic sciences, Islamic biosemiotics, Islamic physics, Islamic arts, Islamic pictorial semiotics, Islamic gesture studies, Islamic cultural semiotics, and relevant areas.

On a different angle, “Islamic semiotics as a discipline” necessitates a “parameter” of work as a model to be used deductively in a study. In this case, “pictorial semiotics” as a part of visual semiotics has a good characteristic instance of being (approaching) dependent discipline of the sign study. The pictorial semiotics can be defined as the study of the pictorial signs, or to the extent, can be identified as the science of depiction, considered a peculiar mode of conveying information, its purview will involve a demonstration of the semiotic character of pictures, a study of the peculiarities which differentiate pictorial meanings from other kinds of signification (particularly from other visual meanings, and/or other meanings based on iconicity or intrinsic motivation), and an assessment of the ways (from some points of view or others) (Sonesson, 1995; Zantides, 2014; Sadowski, 2019).

On that account, a counterpart of such “Islamic semiotics as a discipline” is what had been carried out in the preceding the Risale-i Nur as visual and auditory semiotics in Islam. It provided a “prototype” and “deep insight” of exploring the universe (signs) from the Islamic worldview: being comprehensive, final, and ultimate from its *ontological schemes, episteme, and values*. From the ontological schemes, Islamic semiotics in the Risale-i Nur is an investigation of the “reality of reality” since it covers visible-invisible objects of discussion and fulfills the *fitrah* of mankind (natural inclination) who is not a mere pattern of behavior but beyond the condition; i.e., abiding dimension of the soul. E.g., how the structure of Islamic semiosis, found in the Risale-i Nur, results in the highest and final meaning. In meaning-making, the position of sign-object-interpreter is vital (the elaborated concepts of the terms have been previously discussed). *Signs and natural signs* are visible in this world, e.g., “day and night” (*immediate object*). The phenomenon first appears as the normal law of nature investigated by ordinary science (physics). Then, the *man or interpreter* perceives the signs and deeply thinks of the meaning. In such thinking activity, he or she necessitates a “*dictionary of knowledge*” from accumulated experiences and information from revelation and scholars as well as prepares his or her “*endowed innate ability*”, i.e., soul from God from primordial states: eyes of the heart (*dynamic interpretant*). Finally, the interpreter is going to make interpretations that “day and night” meaning is beyond what is visible. It means “A vast clock of Almighty God— and the years which tell its minutes, and the stages of man’s life span”. The mature interpretation is ideal and final (the so-called *final interpretant*) when the interpreter recognizes attributes of God being manifested in His creations.

Moreover, in a view of episteme, the investigations of Risale-i Nur in the natural signs are diverse and systematic endeavors because the process of thinking reflects the unity of Islamic worldview: “logic” and “method” to reveal the deep meaning of the universe instead of solely its surface meaning structure. The Islamic semiotics is an urgent need for education in this age to inculcate ‘justice, recognition, and acknowledgment to the Creator of the world. Finally, from the perspective of values, the Islamic semiotics provide a wide range of solutions to human life: from the basis of perception to real application in life and education to produce different approaches, methods, techniques, and media (books and relevant sources) to tackle scientific study of sign. It also fulfills the “innate and inseparable” need of humans, i.e., ultimate and eternal happiness, loving and loved as well as food of the soul for solace (Zarkasyi, 2018; Badri, 2019).

CONCLUSION

After analysis, the researchers concluded that the ultimate meaning of the signs of nature is manifestations of the perfection of God’s Names: the same theme of the different interpretations of the natural signs (universe) found in the Risale-i Nur to signify, recognize, and acknowledge One God, Allah The Almighty God. In other words, understanding signs should always point to God the so-called *ma’na harfi* (letters pointing to God or God recognition) so that it leads the human to salvation here and hereafter.

Furthermore, the world is like a book, i.e., a created revelation that contains a “message from God” as a performative verb like a “speaker” i.e., encoded by an illocutionary force containing performative verb covering (1) assertives: state, suggest, warn; (2) directives: order, command, beg, advise, warn; (3) commissives: promise, vow, offer, threaten. It means that evaluating the signs in this universe should not be merely a pragmatic and worldly level of analysis as carried out by the Western tradition and the followers. From the realities, the theory of signs in Islam should be established such as (1) “Islamic semiotics as an area of study” including Islamic applied linguistics, Islamic semantics, Islamic pragmatics, Islamic syntax, Islamic humanities, Islamic sciences, Islamic biosemiotics, Islamic physics, Islamic arts, Islamic pictorial semiotics, Islamic gesture studies, Islamic cultural semiotics and relevant areas; and (2) “Islamic semiotics as a discipline” carried out in the Risale-i Nur as visual and auditory semiotics in Islam.

The implications of the research have a wider impact on the study of signs in all aspects of life which is based on Islamic worldview because all disciplines are linked to the process of interpretation of the signs (meaning-making) done by a subject or scientist. Therefore, for further researchers, the Islamic semiotics and the branches are “special and fundamental research programs” across generations to maintain justice (*‘adl*) and proper deeds (*adab*) towards the study of signs in this universe.

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