



# Understanding Worldview & Creativity

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A reflection from an Islamic Perspective

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## Table of Content

Abstract	5
Introduction	5
Part 1: What is Worldview?	6
Part 2: What is creativity?	7
Part 3: The Relationship	8
Part 4: Quran And Creativity	10
Part 5: Obstacles	14
Conclusion	15

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسِبُهَا جَامِدَةً  
وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ  
كُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ  
إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ (النمل: ٨٨)

## Abstract

In today's world, most educational institutions regard the effort to create a positive educational environment as an incubator for the growth of creativity and new ideas. Because of its practicality and efficiency in satisfying human needs in all dimensions, as well as its capacity to solve issues, creative thinking has been seen as the quickest approach to bring about the good changes needed today to sustain development and advancement in all dimensions of human existence. Understanding the phenomenon of creativity and its origins, as well as developing approaches and methods to enhance its learning, would be a critical first step towards any projected success in this approach. This qualitative research investigated the relationship between worldview and human creativity from an Islamic perspective. The outcomes of this study show that creativity, like other aspects of human nature, is sensitive to the direction and worldview assumptions that a person considers consciously or subconsciously when managing his or her life affair. Furthermore, the study explained how the Qur'an being the source of the Islamic worldview, provides an extraordinary platform for the blossoming of human creativity by venturing into issues such as human nature, psychic, mental, and behavioural elements of man. As a means of analyzing the pertinent data, the researchers have used the content and textual analysis methods.

Key terms: Islam, worldview, creativity, values, thinking

## Introduction

The importance of creativity is increasing day by day in all aspects of human life. The rapid development of human society is accompanied by the significant change in thinking methods, skills and approaches. To meet the ever-increasing requirements for development and competitiveness, researchers and scholars in various fields encourage people, institutions, and organizations to take a more creative and innovative approach to achieve greater success in their respective professions.

## Part 1: What is Worldview?

Perhaps worldview or “self-beliefs” as some prefer to call it<sup>[1]</sup>, is one of the most important “subjective” elements that shape human creativity. A worldview is often defined as a set of fundamental perceptions that people accept to be true and valid answers to the big questions of life and existence in its entirety. It is an “all-encompassing perspective on everything that exists and matters to us.”<sup>[2]</sup> As such, a worldview is a profound consciousness and primordial foundation that provides meanings to human life. It directs people at all times and stages of their existence including their emotional, mental, and behavioural states. According to some studies, worldview knowledge is not as simple as being disregarded or substituted by other forms of limited views on human life. It is for some as deeper as “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently)

*Table 2.1 Key components of any worldview<sup>3</sup>*

#	Model	Questions <sup>4</sup>
1	Description of the World (“What?”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the nature of our world?</li> <li>• How is it structured, and how does it function?</li> </ul>
2	Explanation of the World (“Why?”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is our world the way it is and not different?</li> <li>• Why are we the way we are and not different?</li> <li>• What kind of global explanatory principles can we put forward?</li> </ul>
3	Evaluation of the World (“Value?”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do we feel the way we feel in this world?</li> <li>• How do we assess global reality and the role of our species in it?</li> </ul>
4	Action in the World (“How?”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are we to act and to create in this world?</li> <li>• How and in what different ways can we influence the world and transform it?</li> <li>• What are the general principles by which we should organize our actions?</li> </ul>
5	Future of the World (“How?”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What future is open to us in this world?</li> <li>• By what criteria are we to select these possible futures?</li> <li>• How do we get from our current state to the future?</li> </ul>

Source: Eric W. Stein *Fostering Creativity in Self and the Organization, Your Professional Edge*, (2014) p. 8

about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being” .<sup>[3]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> Ronald A. Beghetto • Giovanni Emanuele Corazza (Editors), *Dynamic Perspectives on Creativity New Directions for Theory, Research, and Practice in Education*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2019, p. 17. (<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99163-4>)

<sup>[2]</sup> Anderson, James N. “What's Your Worldview?. An Interactive Approach to Life’ s Big Questions” (USA: Crossway, 2014), p.17.

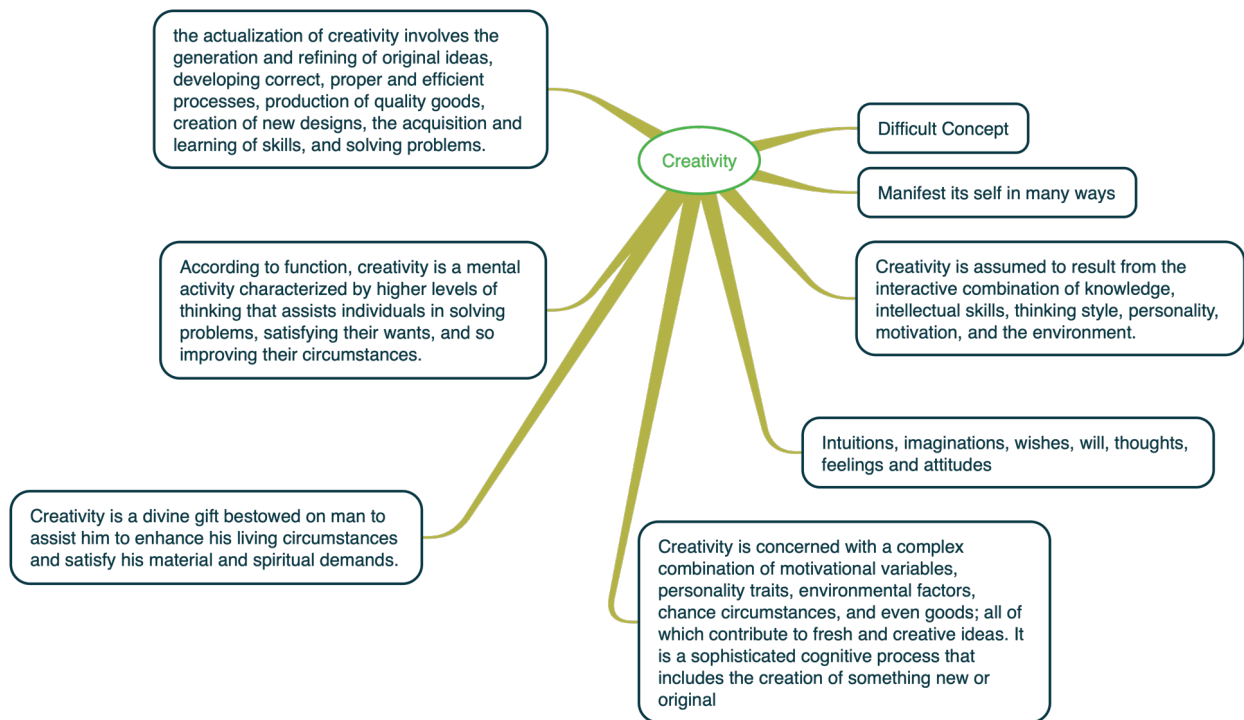
<sup>[3]</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview* (2009), InterVarsity Press, USA, 5th Edition, p. 20

## Part 2: What is creativity?

Creativity is a difficult concept to define; as Brink noted, “it is a notoriously evasive concept, and it is used to cover a lot of different phenomena” <sup>[1]</sup>. Creativity manifests itself in a variety of ways; it may be found in all aspects of human existence and beyond. Intuitions, imaginations, wishes, will, thoughts, feelings and attitudes are all the seeds of creativity. However, the actualization of creativity involves the generation and refining of original ideas, developing correct, proper and efficient processes, production of quality goods, creation of new designs, the acquisition and learning of skills, and solving problems. Thus, “Creativity is assumed to result from the interactive combination of knowledge, intellectual skills, thinking style, personality, motivation, and the environment.” <sup>[2]</sup> According to function, creativity is a mental activity characterized by higher levels of thinking that assists individuals in solving problems, satisfying their wants, and so improving their circumstances. However, at the most fundamental level, creativity may be regarded as a distinctly human characteristic that distinguishes humans from other species. Bandura, the founder of Social Learning Theory, stated that “Creativity is a hallmark of humanity that separates human beings from other animals. While animal behaviour can be explained in terms of instincts and genetic programming, human beings are agents of our action who pursue goals that are meaningful and fulfilling” .<sup>[3]</sup>

Not to mention that Creativity is a divine gift bestowed on man to assist him to enhance his living circumstances and satisfy his material and spiritual demands. Creativity may take various forms, appear in different domains, and be interpreted in a variety of ways. Creativity may be defined as a gifted supernatural intuition, a biological heritage, a cognition process, or a social complex. Creativity is concerned with a complex combination of motivational variables, personality traits, environmental factors, chance circumstances, and even goods; all of which contribute to fresh and creative ideas. It is a

sophisticated cognitive process that includes the creation of something new or original (Feldhusen, 2002).<sup>[4]</sup>



[1] Ingar Brinck, The gist of creativity, In “The complexity of creativity” Ake E. Anderson (1997) (editor) Kluwer Academic Publishers), p.5.

[2] AI -Girl Tan (editor), Creativity: A Handbook For Teachers (2007), Singapore, World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd. p. xx).

[3] (Bandura, A (1997). Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control. New York: Freeman).

[4] (Feldhusen, JF and Goh, BE (1995). Assessing and accessing creativity: An integrative review of theory, research, and development, Creativity Research Journal, 8, 231 – 247.

## Part 3: The Relationship

Worldview helps people and societies identify and understand human needs by providing definitions of human nature and what it means to be a human. For professionals such as engineers, “Gaining worldview knowledge helps engineers and technologists make responsible decisions that



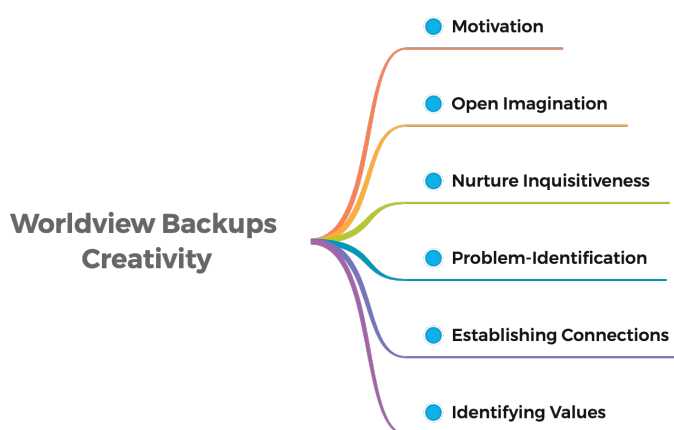
affect our society and the world in which we live. These values are intrinsically embedded in the decisions we make about whether or not to adopt innovation and adapt to change” [\[1\]](#). Furthermore, being effective in creation and innovation requires an understanding of the self. People work under “under certain core assumptions about ourselves, the world, and the places we work and play. To effect change and to be most effective in organizations, or in life for that matter, you and others around you need to examine your core assumptions and, if need be, modify them.” [\[2\]](#)

Understanding the link between worldview and creativity may be accomplished by investigating the functions of worldview in people’s lives. Most of these functions are constructive elements for creativity. One of these functions asserts that a worldview provides a consistent, coherent and comprehensive account of the order of creation, reality, cosmos, life, and human experience. Furthermore, it inspires and motivates people to carry out their acts, plans, and explore things around them. A worldview constructs the core meanings of human existence by supporting and justifying what they do and achieve.

From an ethical point of view, a worldview encourages people to be committed and responsible. It makes them aware of their duty to themselves and their societies. It influences their ways of

thinking, values, behaviour, and attitudes. A worldview is not like “a locked box” -as many people believe, but a spacious sphere that allows one to be conscious of the divine intervention in the creation of the universe with all its beauty and complexities. It inspires admiration for God’s comprehensive system in the universe.

Perhaps another way to understand the relationship between worldview and creativity is to highlight the nice comparison Bennabi (1905-1973) made at the start of his book "Le problème des idées dans le monde Musulman" between the two modes of thinking, Islamic and Western, in response to what he called "the cosmic vacuum" that generates culture and civilization. In this vacuum, the Muslim way of thinking is defined by seeing the heavens and synthesizing the right and the good, whereas the western way of thinking is directed to the ground and synthesizing the item and the form; technique and beauty. The



narrative of Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan (the son of the vigilant) by Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail (d. 1185) and the story of "Robinson Crusoe" by Daniel Defoe (d. 1731) are two major works of art that illustrate how human intellect and creativity follow the grand vision (worldview).

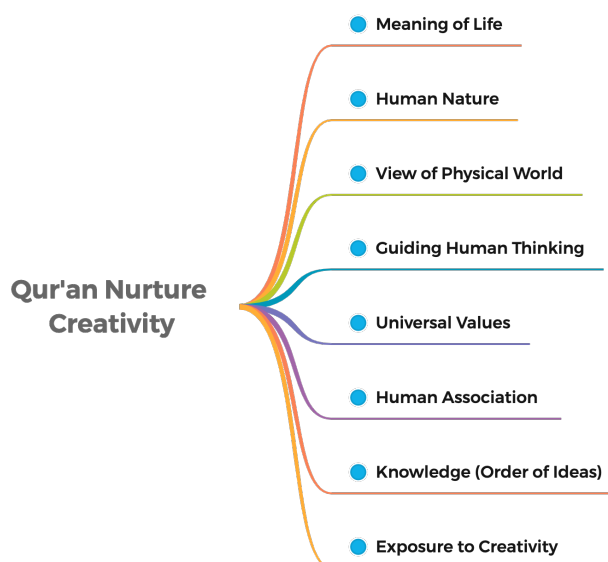
[1] La Verne Abe Harris, Idea Engineering: Creative Thinking and Innovation, p. 157.

[2] Eric. W. Stein, Fostering creativity in self and organization: Your Professional Edge , New York: Business Expert Press, LLC, 2014, p. 9.

## Part 4: Quran And Creativity

Anyone who studies the Qur'an will undoubtedly come across passages that directly or indirectly address the issue of creativity. The first reference to creativity is found in Allah the Almighty's attribute. Attributes of God, such as al-Khaliq (The Creator) (Qur'an, 59:24), khaliq kulla shay' (al-an'am: 102, al-zumar: 62; ghafir: 62), Ahsan al-Khaliqin (The Best of the Makers) (al-safat: 125), Badi' (The Creator) (Qur'an, 2: 107; 6: 107), Mussawir (The Designer) (Qur'an, 59:24), al-Bari' (The Creator) (Qur'an, 59:24) describe His Omnipotence of bringing something into existence out of nothingness.

In the Qur'an, Allah encourages humans to investigate His creation and find its hidden and evident beauty. The expressions used by the Qur'an to inspire individuals to seek knowledge and insight are intriguing and significant. Such phrases compel us to examine things more closely and critically. For example, the call that is given in Surah 29:20 "journey about the land and observe" reflects the notion through which God urges individuals to move in their lives and acquire information, develop their thinking, and experience the world around them. Mobility is very crucial for creativity because it brings in new ideas, opportunities, cases, and so on.



### a. *Understanding and Defining Human Nature*

Creativity research has focused on a few areas of human life as it has evolved over time personality (creative person), cognition (creative process), promoting creativity (environment), and social theories (the outcome)<sup>[1]</sup>. Many consider "the creative person" to be the primary actor in the realm of creativity. Understanding human nature is thus critical for understanding creativity and promoting it in the community. Human nature philosophy and personality theories are firmly rooted in the worldviews of their founders.

Human nature, or *al-Fitrah* in Islam, refers to a natural predisposition reflecting a state of perfection according to which Allah created man. It is made up of several aspects that cannot be separated from one another. Human nature is presented in the Qur'an as a complex made of different elements including Spirit (روح) soul (نفس) /heart (قلب), and body (جسم). With these features, the essence of human nature aligns with its physical origin (human sperm) which the Qur'an has described as mingled fluids (أمشاج) (Qur'an: 76, 2). Al-fitrah is the distinguishing feature of a person that distinguishes him or her from other humans. The spiritual origin and status, inner and outside regulations/habits, and existing or potential skills are all interconnected components of the human *Fitrah*.

<sup>[1]</sup> See, *Bob Jeffrey and Anna Craft* Universalization of creativity, in Anna Craft, Bob Jeffrey and Mike Leibling (editors) creativity in education (UK: Continnum, 2001), p. 2

### ***a. Teaching The Meaning of Life***

A worldview is beneficial to an individual because it offers meaning and purpose to one's existence. It also gives evidence that we are linked to all other creatures of God. Besides offering beliefs and knowledge, a worldview also shields people from unpleasant thoughts such as worry. If we take, for example, the fact of death that elicits "elicits crippling existential anxiety, which must be dealt with if we are to function in the world. We are therefore motivated to accept and embed ourselves in cultural worldviews that allow for immortality, either literally (via afterlife provisions) or symbolically (via memberships in groups that are larger and more enduring than any particular member). In this view, religious worldviews are particularly effective at relieving existential anxiety by providing both literal *and* symbolic immortality"<sup>[1]</sup>

Islam provides a very comprehensive and detailed view of life. With its unique respect for human-made worldviews, Islam considers life a field of competition (التنافس), a race for good (التسارع), hardworking (الكبد), a task (التكليف), and a test (الابتلاء), all of which demand various types of creativity such as imagination, thinking, attitude, work, and product. The notion of 'Umran (العمران) has a wide range of interpretations. When a person inquires about the significance of his creation and existence in this world, he is inquiring about the meaning of his life. Being aware of the meaning of life allows people to have a clear vision, which can lead to better planning and management of their activities. The idea of life's meaning necessitates a foundation of conviction rather than doubt and scepticism.

[1] Jamin Halberstadt And Jonathan Jong “Scaring the Bejesus into People: *The Role of Religious Belief in Managing Implicit and Explicit Anxiety*” in motivation and regulation: the control within, edited by Joseph P. Forgas and Eddie Harmon-Jones (New York: Psychology Press, 2014), p. 333.

#### ***a. Fostering Straight Thinking***

According to Islam, man is created in a most perfect form (أحسن التقويم) and he is endowed with perfect senses and perception abilities. The Qur'an often reminds people about the use and the values of those perception tools which they use to understand and acquire the knowledge and wisdom they need in life. The first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad was “*Iqra*” (read). Linguistically, the term denotes various meanings like understanding, conveying, conception, path, ritual, collection, study, time, recitation, getting closer, etc.[1]

Although that is the case, in some parts of the Qur'an, Allah questions human beings about the usage of those abilities. One of the God-given abilities of man is thinking. If human beliefs and behaviour are subjected to questioning, then thinking will be subjected to the same process. For this reason, it becomes very clear why the subject of human thinking is given serious attention in the Qur'an. Among the 40 styles of thinking identified by Badi in the Qur'an, they are used “carefully and effectively to fulfil certain objectives... to widen the scope of human perception in order to better understand the divine message and to live a better life”.[2]

[1] Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon.

[2] Jamal Ahmed Badi, Creative thinking in Islam: concepts and issues (IIIT & IIUM, 2018), p. 80.

#### a. *Laying Down Principles and Rules for Human Association*

Another aspect of creativity can be seen in how the people organise their social life, build positive relationships with the community and maintain it for the benefit of all. This is why the value of creativity mainly depends on the appraisal of the community. Creativity in this sense, “is the interaction among aptitude, process, and the environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context.”<sup>[1]</sup>

The new ideas and concepts should be cost-effective, realistic, manageable, and deliver the most value to humanity. It should not endanger human life. In certain ways, creativity should enable people and communities to engage, communicate, and collaborate. Cooperation in this context refers to communal togetherness, collaboration, and supporting one another in whatever is good and helpful, but at the same time not submitting to the will of others<sup>[2]</sup>.

In this sense, Islam positively preserved the practice of this notion by making it necessary to undertake mutual consultation, provide advice "nasiha," supporting what is good and discourage what is harmful. The Qur'an has highlighted broad principles as well as other important facts concerning human relationships in various situations. Such a friendship should allow them to get to know one another (ta'aruf) and work together for the greater benefit of the Ummah. In describing the theoretical underpinning of human association, Ibn Khaldun (d. 1438) provided a highly relevant instance of how collaboration is necessary at all times among individuals not only for survival but also for accomplishing greater goals in life via the use of creativity.

[1] Jeffrey K. Smith and Lisa F. Smith “The Nature of Creativity: Mayflies, Octopi, and the Best Bad Idea We Have” in Ronald A. Beghetto, Bharath Sriraman (Editors), Creative Contradictions in Education: Cross Disciplinary Paradoxes and Perspectives (Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2017), p. 23.

[2] Jamal Ahmed Badi “Creative Thinking Among Today’s Muslims: Barriers And Breakthroughs (al-Tafakur Journal, vol. 8, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-36.

## Part 5: Obstacles

Creativity presents itself in a variety of ways for a variety of causes and aims. It is comparable to a plant in that it requires a certain environment to grow. Some forms of creativity arise or occur naturally, such as when a child is creative under the guidance of its parents. Other types, on the other hand, reveal themselves in critical and exceptional events and surroundings, such as difficulties, crisis, dilemmas, insecurity, and so on. As a result, some of the obstacles to creativity should be considered a subset of difficulties rather than a problem. However, in this case, by barriers we mean those circumstances and aspects, adopted dispositions that block individuals and distract them from thinking and doing things differently from what is now available in the form of habit, routine, taboos, constraints, unjustified judgements, customs, traditions, and so on. In fact, there are two kinds of obstacles to creativity. The first is the underlying or intrinsic cause of human frailty. The most dangerous obstacle to mention here is "blind imitation," which occurs when people fail to question their assumptions, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours. Due to its negative effects, the Qur'an forbids such mental inactivity and explains the factors that cause people to imitate instead of learning and use actively their natural thinking ability while making decisions and building their lives.

The barriers to creativity according to the works of Malek Bennabi (d. 1973)- can be found in three different realms. The first realm of the human self (*le monde des personnes*), the realm of ideas (*le monde des idées*), and the realm of things (*le monde des choses*). In looking into the realm of the self or figures, some have considered that the most obvious barrier to creativity is human habit.

Bennabi refers to this passive thinking condition as Colonialisability, which he describes as a type of saturation generated mostly by internal influences that surround the self. It's a complicated problem that stems from a lack of knowledge and comprehension of the Islamic worldview and the meaning of life. Muslims currently stress the battle for the world of things above meaningful involvement to fix the selves, despite the Qur'an's guidance stressing that transformation begins inside the self, not outside it (Qur'an, 13: 11). Fostering a culture of innovation is achievable, but the improvements we can make must begin with ourselves.



## Conclusion

To summarise, creativity is a sophisticated activity based on human nature. It is an action carried out in the context of an individual's worldview. The many worldviews individuals hold significantly support the endless and diverse forms and manifestations of creativity. Human religions and their origins are important factors in the development of creative outcomes. Varied religions may have different perspectives on creativity and its expressions, as they do on the amount of freedom provided to this form of human activity. When it comes to Islam and its revealed source, creativity is given top importance and unrivalled support, beginning with fundamental conceptions of life and progressing to the most precise knowledge about man and his potential, higher aims, and comprehension of the external universe. As a result, further research is required to investigate the link between Islamic revelation and human creativity on several levels, including spiritual, emotional, feelings, mental, and social.

