

Islamic Perspective

Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities

Volume 24, Winter 2020
Center for Sociological Studies
In Cooperation with London Academy of Iranian Studies

Chairman: Seyed G. Safavi, *SOAS University*, UK.

Editor-in-Chief: Dustin J. Byrd, *Olivet College*, Olivet, MI;

Managing Editor: Vahideh Sadeghi, *Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies (IHCS)*, Iran.

Editorial Board

Rohit Barot, *Bristol University*, England

Kenneth MacKendrick, *University of Manitoba*, Canada

Faegheh Shirazi, *The University of Texas at Austin*, USA

Judith Blau, *University of North Carolina*, Chapel Hill, USA

Warren S. Goldstein, *Center for Critical Research on Religion*, USA

Oleg V. Kuznetsov, *State University of Chita*, Siberia, Russia

Syed Farid al-Attas, *National University of Singapore*, Singapore

Seyed G. Safavi, *SOAS University*, UK

Richard Foltz, *Concordia University*, Canada

John Herlihy, *Petroleum Institute*, UAE

Margarita Karamihova, *Sofia University*, Bulgaria

Gary Wood, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University*, USA

Husain Heriyanto, *ICAS*, Indonesia

Eleanor Finnegan, *University of Florida*, USA

Tugrul Keskin, *Portland State University*, USA

Majid Sharifi, *Eastern Washington University*, USA

Teo Lee Ken, *National University of Singapore*, Singapore

Advisory Board

George Ritzer, *University of Maryland*, USA

Oliver Leaman, *University of Kentucky*, USA

William I. Robinson, *University of California-Santa Barbara*, USA

Omid Safi, *University of North Carolina*, USA

Charles Butterworth, *University of Maryland*, College Park, USA

Mahmud Keyvanara, *Isfahan University of Medical Sciences*, Iran

Zivar Huseynova, *Xezer University*, Republic of Azerbaijan

Yoginder Singh Sikand, *National Law School*, Bangalore, India

Rachel Woodlock, *Monash University*, Australia

Ejder Okumuş, *Eskişehir osmangazi University*, Turkey

Manuscript Submission

Submissions of articles, book reviews and other correspondence should be sent to: Dustin J.Byrd at DByrd@olivetcollege.edu.

Aims & Scope

The Journal of Islamic Perspective is a peer reviewed publication of the Center for Sociological Studies, affiliated to the London Academy of Iranian Studies (LAIS) and aims to create a dialogue between intellectuals, thinkers and writers from the Islamic World and academics, intellectuals, thinkers and writers from other parts of the Globe. Issues in the context of Culture, Islamic Thoughts & Civilizations, and other relevant areas of social sciences, humanities and cultural studies are of interest and we hope to create a global platform to deepen and develop these issues in the frame of a Critical Perspective. Our motto is homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto. Contributions to Islamic Perspective do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the Center for Humanities and Sociological Studies. The mailing address of the journal is:

Dr. S. J. Miri, Islamic Perspective Center for Sociological Studies, 123 Royal Langford, 2 Greville Road, London NW6 5HT, UK, Tel: (+44) 020 7692 2491, Fax: (+44) 020 7209 4727, Email: islamicperspective@iranianstudies.Org

Copyright © 2020 by London Academy of Iranian Studies.

All rights reserved. No part of this journal may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

This Journal was printed in the UK.

ISSN-2046-8946

To order additional copies of this Journal, contact

London Academy of Iranian Studies,

121 Royal Langford, 2 Greville Rd,

London NW6 5HT, UK.

www.iranianstudies.org

philosophy@iranianstudies.Org

Islamic Perspective

Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities

Volume 24, Winter 2020

Contents

Articles

Ali Shariati and the Theology of Islamic Socialism: Towards a Post-Metaphysical Alternative

Dustin J. Byrd / 1

Revisiting the Question of Caucasia as a Post-Turkmenchay Space

Seyed Javad Miri / 29

Coronavirus and our philosophical question

Sayyed Hossein Hosseini/ 41

Revisiting Muhkam and Mutashabih Ayat

Tanveer Azamat / 53

The Truth and Reality of World Views: Methodological Consideration

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali & Shehzadi Madiha / 67

Hilary Kornblith's Stance on Conceptual Analysis and its significance for Islamic philosophy

Houman Afrah'siabi / 97

Ali Shariati and the Theology of Islamic Socialism:

Towards a Post-Metaphysical Alternative

Dustin J. Byrd

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Arabic
Olivet College
Olivet, MI
USA

Abstract

In this essay, I will attempt to argue that the normative foundations for Islamic socialism, as understood by Ali Shariati, were already present within Islam itself, and thus need not be incorporated into Islam via Western thought. The *seerah* of Muhammad, including the most sacred texts of Islam, advance a vision of commerce that is incompatible with Western notions of capitalism. Islam, though it doesn't prohibit commerce, does not advance the private accumulation of collective surplus value as the goal of the market. Rather, it finds that capitalism's ultimate goal, the maximization of profits, is incompatible with Islam's notion of justice, as it creates systems of harm that afflict masses of people. Upon reflection, it is clear that the economic life of Muhammad, his companions, as well as his family, was steered upon the maximization of the good for society at large, as opposed to the maximization of profits for few. Shariati's exposure to Marxian thought allowed him to identify what was already present in Islam: a form of Islamic socialism. Upon this work, I argue that Islamic socialism can be translated into post-metaphysical language, so that the religious nature of Islamic socialism 1) is prevented from transforming into theocracy, and 2) can serve as a defense against aggressive neo-liberal capitalism, and 3) can serve as the basis for a democratic yet Islamically oriented society.

Key Words: Islamic Socialism, Dialectical Religion, Religious to secular translation, Normative foundations of Islam, Ali Shariati.

Introduction

The globalization of neo-liberal capitalism has not only spread advanced industrialization, rampant consumerism, and a pathological necrophilic way-of-being-in-the-world but has also internationalized the angst that Karl Marx once thought was the sole property of the industrial workers of the West. Just as the European proletariat gained consciousness of its exploitation at the hands of its ruling class, so too have industrial workers in the shops and factories of the Restern world begun to identify their exploitation and long for its removal. As it stands, neo-liberalism does not discriminate against from whom it extracts surplus value, as long as that surplus value continues to accumulate within the hands of the few. The reality of global neo-liberal exploitation has led many people in the Restern world to look for emancipation from their exploitation: the socialist alternative. However, the wholesale adoption of socialism as it is so expressed within the Western world causes many problems in Restern societies, as such forms of Western socialism are accompanied by Western biases, cultural norms, and assumptions about human nature, that are incongruent with the polyphony of Restern values, principles, and traditions. Because of this, alternative forms of socialism, which take into account the particularities of culture and social norms of Restern societies, needs to be invented.

One particular Restern form of socialism that stands out as an exemplar in the latter half of the 20th century was devised by Ali Shariati – the Shi’i scholar, socialist, and revolutionary, whose crossover works revolutionized Shi’i Islam with *klassenbewusstsein* (class consciousness) while retaining the authenticity of its foundational sources. In bringing Islam and revolutionary class struggle together, through a determinate negation (*aufhaben*) of both, Shariati produced not only a Shi’i philosophy of socialism but also a method by which other Restern societies can determinately negate and thus create forms of socialism that are more congruent with their cultural and civilizational particularities.

In this essay, I will demonstrate that socialism as a political-economic system is not only compatible with Islam, but best reflects the foundational values of Islam, especially the core notions of justice and equality, whereas capitalism at its best is highly dubious within the Islamic context, and at its worst is completely irreconcilable with traditional Islamic economics and notion of justice. Second, I will demonstrate that Ali Shariati’s political philosophy, informed by Karl Marx and other Left-wing socialists, understood the incompatibility of capitalism with Islam, and thus he turned to socialism not only as a vehicle for his struggle against

imperialism and monarchy, but also as a system by which economic justice could be thoroughly established in his native homeland of Iran. Last, I will address the possibility of forging Restern forms of socialism that are rooted within a religious tradition, especially Islam, and the possible difficulties with such a project. With the help of the critical theorist Jürgen Habermas, I will argue that Islamic socialism must, in the present time, be determinately negated via a process of “translation” into post-metaphysical language, so as to avoid constructing future theocracies, which are often predisposed to unjustly privileging certain segments of the demos above others. Ultimately, the move towards indigenous forms of socialism are attempts to (1) rescue indigenous societies cultural authenticity from its disintegration at the hands of neo-liberal globalization, and (2) to reclaim the surplus value of the Restern workers, so that it may be reinvested within the Restern society for the benefit of the Restern society, as opposed to being extracted and accumulated among the Western ruling classes.

Der Geist des Kapitalismus

According to Karl Marx, the Bourgeoisie has achieved innumerable cultural and civilizational accomplishments. Since it removed the feudal lords and the aristocracy from their august positions, it has created a world that reflected its core values: economic rationalism, industrialism, efficiency, standardization, and the maximization of profits for the owning class. It has created innumerable amount of goods and services, which have benefited much of mankind; It has broken open the barriers between peoples and in the process established global markets for international trade; It has invented and produced communication systems that allow peoples from opposite sides of the planet to communicate with each other instantaneously; It has created the modern cities made of concrete, glass, and steel; It has produced cyberspace, wherein mankind can both live its physical existence but also a connected existence within a virtual realm; The bourgeois society has brought mankind to the outer reaches of our solar system with satellites, telescopes, and probes. Even now, there is talk of colonizing the moon and other nearby planets. By harnessing and maximizing the power of instrumental reason, there seems to be no limits to what the bourgeois societies can do. Yet, according to Marx, despite all the advances that bourgeois societies have accomplished, it has not yet been able to overcome what it inherited from the feudal society: class antagonisms, mainly through class exploitation (Marx, 1988: 209-210). In other words, with the removal of the feudal lords, the revolutionary bourgeoisie created

“freedom for the few,” but not “freedom for all,” for their existence as the new ruling class was also dependent on the subjugation of the masses. However, instead of serfs, tied to the feudal lords’ land, the industrialized bourgeoisie “employed” workers – the proletariat – those who sold their labor in exchange for a wage, that was a mere fraction of the wealth they created via their own labor.

In Marxist theory, at the heart of this exchange of labor-for-wage agreement, lies the *essence of capitalism* (*der geist des Kapitalismus*): surplus value extraction. Capitalism can be defined as the “private accumulation of collective surplus value,” wherein the “surplus” wealth created by the labor of the workers is appropriated by the owners of the means of production. In other words, the working class produces a “net product which can be sold for more than they receive as wages” (Bottomore, 1983: 472). Since wages are an objectified form of labor, the extraction of wealth created by the worker – leaving only a small fraction of that wealth to the worker in the form of a wage – is legalized theft in Marx’s analysis. While it may be legal in bourgeois society, it is not just, as it deprives the worker – the source of the wealth – for the excessive benefit of the capitalist, whose labor, if any, did not create such wealth.

For Marx, those who did not labor to produce wealth should not be able to appropriate it above and beyond their own labor, for to do so deprives the workers of the fruits of their work. In capitalism, the greater the distance between the wage and the total amount of objectified labor produced by workers, the greater the “profits.” The greater the profits, the greater the achievements created by the bourgeoisie, but also the greater the impoverishment created amongst the toiling classes, who are only paid enough to maintain their minimum physical existence and are therefore always on the verge of collapse (Standing, 2017: 1-30). Because workers must conform to this “reified” social arrangement in order to survive, the masses remain wholly dependent upon their “superiors” for their basic needs. Flourishing, for them, is out of the question, as it would mean a greater appropriation of their own collective surplus value and thus the diminishment of the ruling classes’ profits. For Marx, knowledge of this exploitative arrangement leads to *klassenbewusstsein* (class consciousness), and inevitably to hostilities between those who produce surplus value and those who appropriate it (Marx, 1978b: 603-617).

In this analysis, two things are of moral concern: first, that the essential nature of capitalism is exploitative, as it benefits the few at the expense of the many, as the many produce the means of existence by which the few continue to reproduce

themselves and the society that benefit from. Second, that this social arrangement leaves the masses completely at the mercy of a ruling class, who by definition is parasitic. The working masses are unable to achieve any meaningful actualization of their full human potentials (*gattungswesen*) since their material existence is determined by their masters, not by their own autonomy, will, and industriousness. Since this class arrangement is also a matter of social morality, it falls within the general concerns of the Abrahamic religions, as they, unlike many of their pagan predecessors, are sources of moral codes, and are expressly concerned with the plight and predicament of those who have found themselves at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Muhammad and the Spirit of Capitalism

The Qur'an is unquestionably the most authoritative source of Islam. Although there are many "juridical disagreements" (*ikhtilaf*) on the meanings of its many *ayat* (verses), the book itself takes second place to no other source among the believers. Being the *Kalam Allah*, or "speech of God," it is ultimately the final say on where an action falls within the *al-ahkam al-khamsa* (five categories) of permissibility/impermissibility. According to *Usul al-fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), all actions belong within one of five categories: *Fard* (or *wajib*) (obligatory), *Mustahabb* (recommended), *Muhab* (neutral), *Makruh* (disapproved), or *haram* (prohibited). With the use of *'aql* (reason), *qiyas* (analytical reasoning), and *ijma'* (juristic consensus), legal scholars in Islam, both among the Sunni and Shi'a, attempt to use the authoritative source to determine that which is *halal* and that which is *haram*; that which is permissible via both the Qur'an and Sunnah and that which is not. There has been an *ijma'* concerning the issue of "excessive profit taking" in all major *madahib* (schools of law) that stems from certain verses in the Qur'an, including *Surat al-Baqarah*, verses 275-276, which reads:

Those who devour usury shall not rise except as one rises who is felled by the touch of Satan. That is because they say, "Buying and selling are simply like usury," through God has permitted buying and selling and forbidden usury. One who, after receiving counsel from his Lord, desists shall have what is past and his affair goes to God. And as for those who go back, they are the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein. God blights usury and causes acts of charity to grow. And God loves not any sinful ingrate. Truly those who believe, perform righteous deeds, maintain the prayer, and give the alms shall

have their reward with their Lord. No fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. O you who believe! Reverence God, and leave what remains of usury, if you are believers. (al-Qur'an 2:275-278, 2015: 119).¹

It becomes clear from this Qur'anic passage that *riba* has been deemed *haram* in all its forms. Yet, some scholars argue that the Qur'an's prohibition against *riba* only includes the paying of interests on loans (*riba al-Nasi'ah*, or "growth through deferment") and the disparity between things traded (*riba al-Nasi'ah*, or "growth through surplus").² These two categories are congruent with pre-modern trading and loan practices and are still relevant for individual business dealings. However, as they are traditionally understood among the *fuqaha* (jurists), that is within the context of Muhammad's Arabia and pre-modern Muslim world, they shed little light on today's most-pressing issue: the hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism and its global extraction of surplus value from millions of workers. Unlike the localized trading of the bazaars and suqs during Muhammad's life, neo-liberal capitalism is an economic system that not only governs individual transactions, but governs the global economy, government policy, international trade agreements, tax shelters, and international affairs, including war and peace, and has no religious nor secular morality by which it is governed – only the force of law, which is most often feckless in its oversight or deliberately designed to further the goals of capitalism. Such a system inflicts *ḍarar fahish* (exorbitant harm) upon millions of people, as it is a form of *ihtikar* (profiteering) via the "hoarding of wealth" for the benefit of the few.

What many within the positivistic social science fail to see is that neo-liberal capitalism is a self-propelling economic system that is rooted in a secularized polytheism; it is an apotheosis of greed, wealth, status, and power (Byrd, 2015: 169-184). As such, sources within Islam that are required for a struggle against neo-liberalism may not necessarily be found in its laws against *riba*, but rather could be found in Muhammad's *sunnah* via the *seerah* (prophetic biography), as his struggle against market-based polytheism of Mecca serves as a better example for the struggle against modern neo-liberal polytheism.

What's more, the traditional concerns of *riba* laws - *riba al-Nasi'ah* and *riba al-Nasi'ah* (deferment and surplus) – pertain either to *services* (loans with interest) or *circulation* (disparity in trade), but do not speak to *riba* as a problem of production. However, if the two traditional forms of *riba* are concerned about the immorality of certain forms of profit, i.e. profit that is gained through unjust dealings, then

certainly profits accumulated for the few through the legalized extraction of surplus value of the many, should likewise fall within the purview of *riba* laws. However, as surplus value extraction is a constituent matter of modern capitalism, and not simple trade within the traditional economic ethos (ala Weber), which was normative during Muhammad's life, it is a matter that calls out for both *qiyas* (analytic reasoning) and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) among the *fuqaha*, lest the instrumental reason of capitalism and its relentless drive for an ever-greater accumulation of wealth undermine the spirit of Islam, and therefore the ability of Muslims to not be integrated forcefully into globalized neo-liberalism.

Thus, in order access the proper relationship between Islam and neo-liberal capitalism, it is important to undermine the capitalist ideology that says Muhammad's religion is reconcilable with the spirit of capitalism. In order to do that, we must turn to the *seerah* (prophetic biography) of Muhammad himself.

When discussing whether or not capitalism is justifiable within the Islamic tradition, many capitalists, both Muslim and non-Muslim, point to Muhammad's pre-Islamic occupation as a trader and caravaner as evidence of capitalism's reconcilability with Islam.³ It is argued that Muhammad was a businessman, and that as a businessman he engaged in a life of commerce, the buying and selling of goods for profit. In fact, it is often cited that he traveled great distances from Mecca to Palestine and Syria in order to make the best business deals, for those were the markets wherein the commodities he was selling were most in demand. The pursuit of profit drove Muhammad, the "honest businessman" known as "al-Amin" (the trustworthy), to spend much of his professional life on the road, away from his family (Lings, 2006: 33-36). Indeed, some biographers point to Muhammad's business acumen as a compelling reason why Khadija, his first wife, was attractive to him (Cole, 2018: 28).⁴ Many of these attempts to make Muhammad a "free-market-friendly" religious figure, one that can be reconciled with the neo-liberal capitalism of today, fundamentally distorts the record of Muhammad's economic life, as it unjustly adjusts his trading acumen to capitalism's accumulation of wealth as a necrophilic way-of-being-in-the-world, a worldview that he did not behold.⁵ Indeed, in this vision of a pro-capitalist Islam, Muhammad himself is ideologically functionalized; he becomes a sanctifying tool for the justification of a contrived version of Islam that is compromised by the spirit (*geist*) of greed and exploitation that animates capitalism, and thus remains uncritical of the *mafsadah* (harm) capitalism inevitably imposes on much of humanity. When Muslims engage in the furthering of this ideologically disfigured image of Muhammad they become the

most effective *träger* (social carrier) of an form of Islam open for surplus value extraction, and therefore an Islam not only forgiving of exploitation, but justifying and sanctifying the furthering of it (Weber, 2002: 11, 18, 27).⁶ Ultimately, this capitalized-Islam is a utilitarian adaptation of a prophetic religion to economic neo-liberalism, and functionalized as a mean to legitimate the capitalization of the *dar al-Islam*.

When looking closely at the *seerah* of Muhammad, we see that the claim that Muhammad engaged in what could be called “capitalism,” or “proto-capitalism,” completely collapses. First, Muhammad was not in the production of goods, but rather in circulation of goods via his wife, Khadija, and her caravans. In other words, he was not in a position to exploit those who were producing the goods which he traded in *al-aswaq* (the marketplaces) of the Middle East, as modern “productive” capitalists do. He sold and traded at a fair price, wherein the principle of fairness in the value of goods, not maximization of profit, governed the exchange. It could be argued that those who worked for him on the caravan were exploited, but there is no evidence within the historical record to suggest this was the case. After all, they too, including Khadija’s manservant Maysara, were working for Khadija, not Muhammad (Cole, 2018: 7-8).

It is also clear from the historical record that Muhammad had no *beruf* (calling) for business, regardless of whether he turned out to be a skilled businessman. Rather, caravan trade was taught to him by his adoptive uncle, Abu-Talib, as a means of supporting himself whilst being devoid of a strong tribal support-network.⁷ According to Max Weber, following the religious thought of Martin Luther, a divine “calling” for a life in business is a determining feature of early capitalism, as it is one of the important features that made the capitalist *gesinnung* (frame of mind) possible (Weber, 2002: 179-183). On the contrary, Muhammad did have a *beruf* for the religious life at the age of forty, wherein he “surpassed” (*überbietung*) the utilitarian morality of the *homo economicus* (man defined by market values, self-interest, and greed) and dedicated himself to a religious struggle against the excesses of the market society in Mecca, and the paganism that legitimated it.

Even if we examine Muhammad’s early life as a businessman, and for the sake of argument accept the idea that he pursued profit, it is clear that he was not very successful in the accumulation of collective surplus value, for even before his life as a prophet, he did not live in luxury. Although Khadija was a woman of means, those means were in relation to a patriarchal market-society, wherein a “woman of

means” simply meant “not poor.” In whatever ways she accumulated her wealth, either through inheritance, being a widow, or through business acumen, she may have achieved a middle class (*bürgerlich*) existence, wherein her and Muhammad did not live as precariates, always on the verge of total economic collapse. However, what we could call a “middle class,” even in 7th century Arabia, is still very much a part of the working classes; it is economically more secure because it is more prosperous, and therefore distinguishable from the impoverished working class, but it cannot be considered wealthy.

One of the most important goals of capitalism is the accumulation of wealth to the point where wealth begets wealth, and the owner of the wealth no longer has to labor in order to produce the means for their survival. This was never the case for Muhammad as it may have been for Khadija before her marriage to Muhammad. It was from Muhammad’s own labor that he lived from, first as an employee than as a husband of Khadija. Certainly, he benefited from the wealth that the marriage gave him access too, but he continued to labor on behalf of his wife and his family, wherein the wealth he created stayed with himself and within his family.

What is clear from the seerah is that Muhammad engaged in what Weber calls “economic traditionalism,” wherein the lifeworld is divided between work time, which is seen simply as a means to survival, and non-work time: family time, devotional time, social time, etc. This *gesinnung* (frame of mind) stands in opposition to capitalism in two ways: early capitalism sanctified all time as being “sacred,” as even the businessman was engaged in perpetual devotion when he engaged in business, simply because being a business man was re-conceptualized in the Protestant Reformation as being a religious calling (*beruf*). Again, Muhammad engaged in devotional practices whilst working, but there is no sign that labor itself was conceived to be acts of devotion. There remains a clear distinction between these two realms of human activity. Second, and more importantly, capitalism is the accumulation of collective surplus value in the form of profit. In other words, amassing the greatest amount of profit is the ultimate object of capitalism; it is the goal in-and-of-itself. This is completely alien to the “traditional economic ethic” as Weber lays out, in that work stops when the requisite wealth needed to reproduce and/or sustain one’s existence is acquired. To put it differently, when the necessary amount of wealth is obtained to fulfill the needs, laboring ends. Therefore, the satiation of needs via wealth acquired through labor determines the length and nature of the labor itself. Whereas in capitalism, the maximization of profit beyond the needs is the motivation for continuous labor or surplus value extraction. Again,

there is nothing in the *seerah* to suggest that Muhammad labored beyond what was necessary to fulfill his and his family's financial needs. The fact that he and his family lived in a simply mud-brick home and slept on straw, amidst a market society of wealth, wherein much of that wealth derived from market exchange, the same type of business Muhammad was in, points in the direction that he embraced a traditional economic ethos, not one that is reconcilable to the spirit of capitalism, and certainly not the hegemony of modern neo-liberal capitalism. As Muhammad's biographer writes, "He did not despise wealth, nor did he seek any vain ideals. He only had a fine sense of proportion. He realized that wealth was not an end in itself. It was means to a higher end" (Salahi, 1995: 39). In other words, when it came to wealth, Muhammad possessed *wasāṭiyyah* (moderation and balance); neither living in self-imposed poverty, nor did he engage in *ẓulm* (oppression) through the "unlawful possession" (*qabḍ al-fasid*) of other people's surplus value.

It's one thing to demonstrate that Muhammad did not engage in anything that is akin to capitalism, including its surplus value extraction, it is another thing to argue that Muhammad fought against the idolatry of the market, i.e. the apotheosis of greed, wealth, status, and power. Nevertheless, I argue that such struggle against the idolatry of the market is precisely what he did.

Centered around the foundational concept of *tawhid*, the oneness of God, Muhammad set Islam against all forms of idolatry (*shirk*). On the phenomenal level, this simply means the false deification (*deificatio*) of wood and stone, i.e. the act of identifying the created in the creator. On the noumenal level, it is the false-absolutization of that which is less-than-absolute: the conditioned as unconditioned, the temporal as atemporal. To push this apophatic theology into the social realm, it is the making of anything other than the divine the ultimate concern of the life. In this latter sense, *shirk* is not only the phenomenal carving of idols from wood and stone and worshiping them, but also a matter of the noumenal; any value, principle, or ideal that – including the desire to accumulate wealth, status, and power – is also *shirk*. This form of *shirk* animates the private accumulation of collective surplus value, as it sets up the goal of life as being the maximum acquisition of wealth, with money being the false-absolute. In this sense, Islam comes to agree with Pope Francis, who writes in his *Evangelii Gaudium*, in the section called "No to the New Idolatry of Money," that

We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lack a truly human

purpose... we calmly accept its [money's] dominion over ourselves and our societies... In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule (Pope Francis, 2013: 29).

In his writings on the deification of the market and the idolatry of money, Pope Francis expresses the same prophetic geist that Muhammad embodied living within the idolatrous market-based paganism of Mecca (Byrd, 2015: 169-184). Yet, it is the Pope in Rome who expresses the *Islamic* critique of *tawhid* more forcefully than any public figure within the traditional *ulama*' (Islamic scholars). It is the Pope who has recently invigorated a religious-based *klassenbewusstsein* (class consciousness) amidst the prevailing conditions of neo-liberalism, as opposed to those who follow Muhammad. The deification of the market, in an attempt to maximize profits for the few and the expense of the many, is a move behind *tawhid*, and as such capitalism cannot be reconciled with Islam, as it violates – and stands in opposition to – Islam's most basic and constitutional tenet. While this analysis does not originate in the Islamic laws against *riba* (per se), it does proceed from the basic tenets of Islamic *Kalam* (theology). As such, the critique of capitalism, as the false-apotheosis of money, must be taken seriously by Islamic scholars, especially the *mutakallimun* (theologians), or risk being “dominated” by false idols of money, capital, greed, and other forms of *shirk*.

Normative Foundations

It may be the case from a secular perspective that the two sources for this understanding of Muhammad's economic life are untrustworthy to the outside observer. The Qur'an, after all, is considered to be “divine revelation” (*wahy*), which since the Enlightenment, especially Kant's demonstration of the impenetrability of the thing-in-itself via reason, the secular sciences cannot account for. The seerah, or sacred biography of Muhammad, could simply be hagiography, an ideal rendering of an otherwise very human, and therefore flawed, life. Nevertheless, for the Muslim believer, these two sources are sacred and God-given, and therefore normative sources of “imitation” (*taqlid*). Without them there is no Islam and there are no Muslims.

Regardless of whether their claims can be objectively verified to the satisfaction of secular social sciences, these two religious sources constitute the moral

foundation of the religious tradition, and therefore govern whether or not something can be found to be reconcilable with Islam. From the perspective of Muhammad's *sunnah* (way), found in the *hadith* and *seerah*, and the Qur'an, an economic system that is based in exploitation and the relentless pursuit of profit, as a complete and total way-of-being-in-the-world, cannot be reconciled with the prophetic values of justice and equality, as the ultimate goals of each are mutually exclusive. Indeed, Muhammad himself rejected the market-society of Mecca and its pagan gods for a society rooted in *tawhid* (radical monotheism), which included the dethroning of the market as a moral-political way-of-being-in-the-world in favor of economic traditionalism, which does not take profit making as an end-in-itself, but rather sees money simply as a means to an ends: the establishment of the just and prosperous society for all.

Ali Shariati's Religion versus Religion: The Theological Basis for Political-Economics

The Iranian revolutionary intellectual, Ali Shariati, understood the theological nature of the capitalist enterprise better than any other contemporary Islamic thinker. His critique of capitalism, *gharbzadegi* (westoxification), imperialism, and class domination, harkens back to Muhammad's struggle against Meccan paganism.⁸ It is rooted in what he saw as the binary opposition between two theological concepts we've previously discussed: *tawhid* (monotheism) and *shirk* (polytheism). In the two lectures that constitute his book *Religion versus Religion*, Shariati lays out the thesis that Abrahamic monotheism has *not* been opposed by irreligion – or atheism – throughout its history, but rather has been opposed by another form of religion: polytheism – the religion of multiple gods (Shariati, 2003: 19-41). However, what's most important to Shariati is not that there is a purely theological contestation between monotheism and polytheism, but rather that that this contestation takes place within history, amidst people. In other words, the realm of the noumenal is expressed positively within the realm of the phenomenal. The theological antagonism becomes a worldly (*innerweltlich*) struggle between the theory and praxis of *tawhid* and the theory and praxis of *shirk*, both of which export their own values and interests into the historical process, and thus shape societies.

Shariati rejects the common idea that the Islamic term “*kuffar*” designates the “godless”; rather, he argues that *kuffar* corresponds to the *mušrikun* – those who engage in *shirk* (polytheism), and who worship idols of their false-gods (Shariati, 2003: 24-25, 45). The apotheosis of the temporal is the determining essence of

idolatry, which, Shariati reminds his readers, is condemned by the Qur'an's (37:95) rhetorical question: "Do you worship that which you carve" (Nasr, 2015: 1093). Shariati takes this condemnation as a "general principle," by which he will interrogate the polytheistic nature of modern capitalism, imperialism, and class domination (Shariati, 2003: 25). This is important precisely because Shariati believes that polytheism was not annihilated by the advent of monotheism, rather it "moved forward, throughout history, side by side and step by step, exactly parallel with the religion of monotheism and it continues to move forward with it" (Shariati, 2003: 25). As such, we can argue that in the modern secular society, polytheism took on a secular form. It no longer "carved" its deities out of wood and stone *per se*, but rather it molded its deities out of the substance of capitalism: greed, wealth, power, and status. What remains congruent from older and more explicit forms of polytheism is that idols are still worshipped; they are still the utmost concern for the polytheists, and therefore in contradistinction to monotheism. For Shariati, polytheism is essential to the reproduction and reification of the status quo, which is determined by the domination of the *mala'* (wealthy aristocrats) and *mutrif* (insatiate rulers) over the wretched and abased masses (Shariati, 2003: 34-35, 40). Capitalism's apotheosis of false gods, its essential polytheism, being its animating spirit, as well as the spirit of sycophantic imperialism, justifies, legitimatizes, and sanctifies a world that is structured by class hierarchy, class domination, and the perpetual debasement of those who produce the surplus value through which the *mala'* and *mutrif* continue their privileged existence. "The roots of this [polytheistic] religion," Shariati says, "are economic. Its roots are in the ownership of a minority over the abased majority. It is this very factor of economics and the seeking of superiority which requires a religion in order to preserve and legitimate itself and eternalize its way of life" (Shariati, 2003: 34). Here, Shariati comes to agree with Immanuel Kant, Georg W. F. Hegel, and Karl Marx, all of whom claimed that religion – in its ideologically distorted form – produces narcosis: an opium induced stupor which allows the exploited to cope with their exploitation and wretchedness, as it makes their existence meaningful and bearable without ever challenging the status quo (Shariati, 2003: 35, 49).⁹ Yet for Shariati, the narcotic religion is specifically polytheistic, as opposed to monotheistic. Nevertheless, this narcotic religion is *affirmative* religion, as it attempts to affirm and thus preserve the world-as-it-is. This affirmative nature is what Marx and other critics saw as the essence of "Bourgeois" religion – a religion that cements the status quo through an "appeal to nature" (reification) or as a "divine decree" (*al-qaḍa' wa l-qadar*) (Marx, 1978c: 35-36; Marx, 1978a: 54; Horkheimer, 1978: 58-59, 163).

Yet for Shariati, affirmative religion is only half of the dialectic of religion, as it is only one tendency within the struggle of religion vs. religion. There is another form of religion that is not in the business of social statics, but rather demands social dynamics: The religion of tawhid.

In *Religion versus Religion*, Shariati highlights the concept of tawhid for a couple of reasons: (1) it is the theological essence of Islam and the antithesis of polytheistic paganism, and (2) the tawhidic way-of-being-in-the-world is in stark contrast to the dominance of shirk within modern neo-liberal political-economics, including Western imperialism. Having first expressed itself with the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic prophets, the radical emancipatory nature of “divine oneness” (*tawhid*) translates into the social-political and economic realm as the demand to abandon and/or destroy the idols – that which was “carved” by the hands of man. Just as the idols of wood and stone were destroyed for the unseen, eternal, and wholly other, so too must the modern idols associated with the false apotheosis of greed, wealth, power, and status, be destroyed. In place of the polytheistic society, Shariati does not call for an atheistic dictatorship of the proletariat, as many of his fellow anti-capitalists do, but rather he attempts to determinately negate (*aufheben*) Western agnostic/atheistic socialism for an alternative Islamic form of socialism rooted in and defined by tawhid.

Just as Marx followed Feuerbach down the road of dethroning religion before the transformation of society, so too does Shariati wish to attempt to dethrone what he sees as affirmative religion while in the process of transforming society, in his case Pahlavi Iran (Feuerbach, 1989: 1-32; Marx, 1978a: 53-54). However, unlike Marx, Shariati *determinately negates* religion, wherein the revolutionary and emancipatory potentials within religion, especially within its prophetic core, are allowed to migrate into a newer and thus more prophetic and critical form of religion – one closer the primordial Islam of Muhammad and the first Islamic city: Medina (Hegel, 1993: 54; Shariati, 2003: 49). This is different than Feuerbach and Marx’s *abstract negation* of religion, wherein the entire phenomenon of religion had to disappear – both the good and the bad elements had to be sacrificed for future emancipation. For Shariati, emancipatory, progressive, and liberational elements of religion should be preserved, augmented, and fulfilled (*dialektiké*). He argues that the critical role of the *prophets* has to migrate into the realm of the *prophetic*, especially with the organic intellectuals, who not being prophets, nevertheless can be *prophetic*, as they embody certain aspects of the prophets’ mission. He writes,

Our mission is to continue the mission of the divinely-appointed prophets who were the rightful prophets, who had arisen from the fabric of the people, who were ummi and who confront the pseudo-priests who were attached, affiliated to and dependent upon the rich aristocrats and people who live in ease and luxury, who confronted the self-appointed prophets who were, without exception, from among the aristocrats or the feudalists or who acted on behalf of the princes (Shariati, 2003: 60).

If Shariati is going to advocate for an Islamic way-of-being-in-the-world steered on the basis of tawhid, we must identify what social, political, and economic export this theological concept has. After that is made clear, we can ask how tawhid can be translated into post-metaphysical language so that it may migrate into the modern secular world?

For Shariati, Islam is a religion that protests the status quo, not a religion that affirms the status quo, with the understanding that any societal configuration will continue to be less than utopia. Thus, its prophetic core serves as the grand inquisitor to all dysgenic social tendencies, i.e. class hierarchy, racial hierarchy, socio-economic and political oppression, etc., and the polytheistic religion that legitimate such social tendencies. Harkening back to the sunnah of the Prophet, it is clear that the adoption of tawhid goes beyond the theological; it reformulates the lifeworld in such a way that the believer turns away from the polytheistic world-as-it-is and embraces an ethos determined by the monotheistic world-as-it-should-be, just as Muhammad turned from being merely troubled by the polytheistic world-as-it-is during *jahiliyah* (age of ignorance), to being monotheistically *contra mundum*, against-the-world-as-it-is, when his prophethood began. Believers who embrace such an ethos do not turn to asceticism and retreat from the world, but rather remain deeply connected to the social realm while simultaneously enrooting themselves in the prophetic tradition. Thus, it is a critical engagement with the world while remaining committed to a vision of the world that is rooted in the other-worldly, so that the ideals of the other-worldly can serve as critical benchmarks for the really existing societies, with the understanding that such societies may never reach the ideal, but nevertheless strive for the ideal.

If capitalism is steered over the principles of greed, wealth, status, and power, and promotes necrophilic consumerism as a totalizing way-of-being, and at its heart lies the unjust extraction of surplus value, then it cannot be reconciled with the concept of tawhid and monotheism's social expression as the just and equal society,

which was first exemplified, according to Ali Shariati, by Muhammad's Medina. Regardless of the pro-capitalist Muslims' argument, Muhammad's Medina was not a capitalist enterprise, although it did engage in market exchange. However, the relentless pursuit of profit, which was exemplified by the polytheistic Mecca, was wholly absent in Medina amongst the Muslims. Therefore, it is clear from Shariati's philosophy that capitalism and Islam (in its non-compromised prophetic form), are mutually exclusive. As such, the theological concept of tawhid, and the social exports it delivers, must be translated into a wholly different form of social organization, i.e. one that is congruent with the prophetic nature of Islam and tawhid and yet appropriate for the modern world and its post-metaphysical condition.

Translating Tawhid into Secular Socialism

Outside of a small minority, the idea of returning to a theocratic form of government is not appealing in much of the world, including the West and the Muslim world. Libraries are filled with books documenting the long and bloody history of theocratic rule. When religion is explicitly invoked as the ruling ideology it tends to (1) either corrupt religion with the trappings of power, or (2) corrupt the state with a sense of divine entitlement, and thus become unresponsive to their population. Either way, in the modern world, the notion of theocracy has grown ugly, as it conjures up visions of utopians gone wrong, with their religious police, barbaric capital punishment, obscurantist authoritarianism, and repression of individual autonomy. The latest theocracy, the short-lived "caliphate" of ISIS (Daesh) comes to mind as being especially egregious in its embodiment of all thing despotic.¹⁰ This causes quite a problem for thinkers like Ali Shariati, who see in tawhidic religion the very basis for a just and equal society, one that produces the greatest amount of happiness and well-being for the greatest amount of people, with strong protections for minorities, the balance of autonomy and solidarity, eschatological motivation for moral behavior, and a strong sense of identity, mission, and meaning. Yet, Shariati is well aware of the dysgenic tendencies within theocracies, as he documents many of them in his *Religion vs. Religion*. How then can Shariati's "Islamic utopianism" be brought into fruition within a world that remains deeply suspicious of theocracy, even within countries that are highly religious?

Just as Shariati attempts to determinately negate the ossified and routinized form of Shi'ism of his day, negating the affirmative side of the traditional 'ulama', whose

political “quietism” during the Iranian revolution led them to tacitly support the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Shah, and simultaneously elevating and fulfilling its revolutionary side, so too must his Islamic utopianism be translated via determinate negation into a secular political philosophy, one that preserves the basis for the Islamic society within the medium of post-metaphysical language (Byrd, 2011: 92-98; Habermas, Habermas, 2017: 210-226). He must allow certain semantic and semiotic materials to migrate from the depth of the Islamic tradition into language that renders such material accessible to the universal discourse community, i.e. all members of a given society regardless of their religious affiliation. When social legislation is put forward on the basis of religious revelation or tradition (Qur’an, Sunnah, Hadith, stories of the *Ahl-Bayt* (family) and *al-sahabah* (companions)), such legislation does not penetrate into the consciousness of those outside of the Islamic tradition. In other words, since the language that expresses such materials is explicitly Islamic, it cannot be adopted as their own by people outside of the Islamic faith community, since such particular language belongs exclusively to the closed semantic universe of Islam (Habermas, 2011: 20-21). When this gap isn’t bridged, it creates parallel societies: one that can assent to social legislation because they recognize *as their own* the basis for such legislation, and those that cannot, since the basis of the legislation is sourced outside of themselves or outside of their constitutional and/or sacred documents. If such social legislation can be translated into post-metaphysical language, i.e. language that does not refer to a particular religious source, group, or identity as its legitimation, then such religious-inspired yet secular legislation can be offered into the universal discourse community, wherein all members of the nation, including its minorities, can engage in a robust dialogue, discourse, and debate, through which the legislation can find universal or near-universal consent. Members of the Islamic community can see the lineage of Islam within the secularized social legislation, while members outside of the Muslim community can see that it is not only respectful of their tradition because it does not appeal explicitly to Islam for legitimation, but also that they can consent to it without trepidation, for it too can find legitimation for the legislation within their own faith resources while it remains in post-metaphysical language.

However, another burden must be made clear: the majority identity, i.e. religious community, ethnic group, etc., must abandon the right of exclusivity and embrace and ethic of inclusivity via democratic discourse, in order for post-metaphysical language to remain the vehicle for democratic contestation. In other words, the majority has to be open for amendments by the minority that might not be

reconcilable with explicit religious doctrines. Within post-metaphysical language, the authority of doctrine cannot eclipse the authority of the people or its constitution. Rather, the authority of doctrine rules within the particular religious community, as it is there that the people willingly submit to such particular authority. Within the post-metaphysical realm, authority remains within the demos and the constitution, and thus within democratic consent in conjunction with constitutional norms and ideals.

What kind of elements of religion could be rendered into post-metaphysical language? From the perspective of Jürgen Habermas, those aspects of religion that are most translatable are what he calls the “moral-practical” aspects of religion, as opposed to the expressive arts, eschatology, ritual, etc. (Habermas, 1984: 240). The moral-practical covers issues such as charity, brotherhood, equality, and other ideals that animate communicative praxis. For example, in Islam, Muslims believe in monogenesis: the origins of all humanity from a single pair of male and female, Adam and Eve. Regardless of whether this belief is justified by scientific analysis, or whether the Islamic articulation of that Abrahamic belief are identical, the idea of monogenesis can be translated into the ideal of equality – as all descend from the same primordial parents and thus all remain constitutionally equal. Grounded in that ideal, it can be translated into equal rights for all citizens. Although the idea began deep within an Islamic mythos (monogenesis), its migration into post-metaphysical language provided the foundation for equal political rights that all members of the polis can assent to regardless of their religious, ethnic, traditional affiliations. Additionally, *zakah*, or the Islamic injunction that the Muslims must provide a portion of their excess wealth to the poor, needy, and fellow citizens who are struggling to provide for their basic maintenance, can be translated into the welfare state, wherein the state fulfils the requirements of *zakah* via a strong social network so that members of the polis do not need to rely on individual charity (*sadaqah*), but rather have the secular state fulfilling those requirements of *zakah* on behalf of the Muslim community through taxation.

Lastly, Islam’s prohibition on *riba* can be translated into social legislation that allows for robust commerce but not the unjust exploitation of workers through excessive surplus value extraction. The Islamic sense of justice, fairness, and equality does not permit one segment of mankind to unjustly live off the labor of others. Rather, like secular socialism, it demands that economic relations between fellow citizens be based on fairness, and the free exchange of “equal” goods. The exchange of small wages for exorbitant amounts of surplus value does not fulfill the

requirements of justice in Islam, and therefore would not translate into Islamicly-rooted post-metaphysical language. In such language, the injunction against excessive profit taking translates into a well-regulated economy, wherein surplus value extraction is limited, or the condition of which are agreed upon by the affected members of the surplus value extraction. A system that benefits only the owners is alien to Islam, and therefore could not translated into post-metaphysical language and stay true to its Islamic genealogy. To remain congruent to Shariati's view of Islamic socialism, any secular translation must not further class exploitation but rather diminishment such class antagonisms for the benefit of all.

Through this dialectical method of translation, a secular state can be founded upon religious ideals, values, and principles. Ali Shariati's Islamic utopianism can be articulated within language devoid of religious legitimation, whereupon it can find a home within the modern secular nations simply as a socialist state. It would not be a theocracy, but rather an Islamically-inspired secular-democratic form of government. As such, as we've demonstrated throughout this essay, such a secular society, rooted in Islam and Muhammad's own religious praxis, could not be a capitalist society, for its essential feature – the unjust extraction of surplus value – would not be reconcilable with the secularized-Islamic nature of the state. This determinate negation of religion, by which the moral-practical elements of religion migrate from their explicit religious semantic and semiotic materials into post-metaphysical language, can serve as the template for all Restern societies to a form of democratic-socialism without (1) abandoning their traditional identity, and (2) without succumbing to the extreme wealth extraction by globalized neo-liberalism. Just as Shariati's Islamic utopianism was a defensive measure against imperialism and internal colonization via a monarchical ruling class, so too would Restern societies adoption of democratic socialism through the translation of their own native resources be a defensive measure against neo-liberal colonization.

Conclusion

In this essay, we demonstrated the following: (1) that Islam and capitalism are not compatible, despite the fact that Muhammad himself was a man of commerce in his pre-Prophethood days. By referencing Islam's foundational resources, especially the Qur'an, the seerah, and the Sunnah as our guide, we have also shown that Islam's objection to capitalism is a matter not just of law, but of theology: capitalism's inherent polytheism (*shirk*) is irreconcilable with Islam's radical monotheism (*Tawhid*). Since there is no reconciling tawhid and shirk on the theological level,

there is not reconciling them at the level of political economy. Additionally, we demonstrated that Ali Shariati, one of Shi'i Islam's greatest intellectual of the 20th century, understood most clearly the dialectical nature of all religion: it is often internally divided against itself in the form of affirmative religion and negative religion. We showed that within his own political philosophy, Shariati wished to *determinately negate* Shi'i Islam so that its revolutionary and emancipatory elements would be rescued from its affirmative form, and thus serve as the basis of a new Islamic society. Lastly, we demonstrated that such an explicitly religious political-economics system would be anachronistic within the increasingly secular modern societies, even in the heart of the Muslim world. Therefore, we put forward the possibility of translating such an Islamic socialism via the non-destructive form of determinate negation (*aufheben*) into a post-metaphysical form of socialism, so that the Islamic genealogy of Islam's social teachings may continue to animate a secular form of political economy. While such a program remains merely aspirational at this point, it serves as a possible alternative to the Restern world's capitulation to globalized neo-liberal capitalism.

Note

1. One can also find the discussion of *riba* in the Qur'an in 3:130, 4:161, 30:39, as well as Muhammad's "Farewell Speech."
2. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr's comments on al-Qur'an 2:275-281 (al-Qur'an, 2015: 119-121).
3. For very contrived attempt to reconcile Islam and capitalism, see the former banker Benedikt Koehler's 2014 book, *Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism*. Lanham, MA: Lexington Books. Koehler argues that capitalism had its roots not in the Reformation as Weber thinks, or even in Europe as Marx demonstrates, but rather with Islam. Koehler has numerous overlaps with Maxime Rodinson's 2007 book *Islam and Capitalism*. Berkeley, CA: Saqi Books. Neither book deals with capitalism as a theological problem or the fundamental unjust nature of surplus value extraction.
4. According to Ibn Ishaq, Khadija's professed love for Muhammad didn't specifically include his business acumen. Khadija is reported to have said:

“Son of mine uncle, I love thee for they kinship with me, and for that thou art ever in the center, not being a partisan amongst the people for this or for that; and I love thee for thy trustworthiness and for the beauty of thy character and the truth of thy speech” (as quoted in Lings, 2006: 35).

5. For the record, I do not think Juan Cole’s book on Muhammad distorts the history of Muhammad in this way. Rather, he does, like so many other biographers, make a point to say that Muhammad’s business success was one of the things that attracted Khadija to him, and so it may have been. However, this shouldn’t be used as evidence that Muhammad or Khadija would have justified the level of wealth extraction typical of modern neo-liberal capitalism.
6. For Max Weber, every influential idea that bears the capacity to define civilizational norms must have an influential “carrier” group. In the case of Islam and capitalism, it is the successful Muslim capitalist that is able to legitimate a pro-free market form of Islam to the Muslim world, despite the evidence that Islam began in protest against certain market features that are constitutional to capitalism.
7. We should remember that Muhammad was orphaned at a young age and was a member of a relatively unimportant sub-tribe of the Quraysh, the Bani Hashem. As such, his tribal situation was tenuous. Additionally, when he married Khadija, he became even more of a pariah, as a man working for his wife in a deeply patriarchal society. See Martin Lings (2006) *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
8. For more on *gharbzadegi*, see Jalal Al-i Ahmad’s *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell. Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1984.
9. In his second lecture in *Religion versus Religion*, Shariati says, “we must say that those who say that religion was a factor to justify the social and economic domination of the minority over the majority are correct. It is true that this religion in the age of feudalism religiously legitimated the status quo, the enslavement and ownership of slaves. In the society of the age of feudalism, in every form, in every age, in every class, in every shape, when economics ruled in a society, religion was to justify the status quo by misusing the religious beliefs which are based in the primordial nature of people.” (Shariati, 2003: 49-50)
10. ISIS, or *Daesh*, is an acronym for *al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi 'l- 'Iraq wa al-Sham* (The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)

References

- Ahmad, Jalal Al-i. *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell. Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1984.
- Bottomore, Tom (ed.) et al. "Surplus Value" in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Byrd, Dustin J. *A Critique of Ayn Rand's Philosophy of Religion: The Gospel According to John Galt*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015.
- Byrd, Dustin J. *Ayatollah Khomeini and the Anatomy of the Islamic Revolution in Iran: Toward a Theory of Prophetic Charisma*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011.
- Cole, Juan. *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace amid the Clash of Empires*. New York: Nation Books, 2018.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. Translated by George Eliot. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989.
- Francis, Pope. *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*. Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *An Awareness of What is Missing*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Postmetaphysical Thinking II*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.
- Hegel, Georg W. F. *Hegel's Science of Logic*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1993.
- Horkheimer, Max. *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926-1931 & 1950-1969*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1978.
- Koehler, Benedikt. *Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism*. Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2014.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party." In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*. Translated by Martin Milligan. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc, 1978a.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978b.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "On the Jewish Question." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978c.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed). *The Study Qur'an*. New York: HarperOne, 2015.
- Rodinson, Maxime. *Islam and Capitalism*. Berkeley, CA: Saqi Books, 2007.

Salahi, Adil. *Muhammad: Man and Prophet. A Complete Study of the Life of the Prophet of Islam*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1995.

Shariati, Ali. *Religion vs. Religio.*, Translated by Laleh Bakhtiar. Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 2003.

Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Stephen Kalberg. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2002.

Revisiting the Question of Caucasia as a Post-Turkmenchay Space

Seyed Javad Miri

Associate Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies
Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies
Tehran-Iran

Abstract

In this article the question of Caucasia is revisited based on a critical approach in terms of the Post-Turkmenchay Space. Here it is argued that there are three different approaches to Caucasia which is one of the most important hotbeds of the Islamicate World; the first approach considers Caucasia as a Post-Soviet Space; the second approach looks at Caucasia as a Russian Backyard Space; and the third outlook focuses on Caucasia as a Post-Turkmenchay Space. In the article, all the three approaches have been thoroughly discussed and the third approach is considered of great significance as far as the Islamicate Civilization is considered. At the end the author has attempted to reflect upon the internal obstacles as far as Iran (as the heir of the post-Turkmenchay Space) concerned and possible strategies are proposed too.

Keywords: Iran, Post-Turkmenchay Space, Post-Soviet Space, Russian Backyard Space, Axis of Candle

Introduction

Caucasia has been a significant region in the history of Iran from time immemorial. But with the emergence of Russian colonialism, and its brutal ethnic cleansing policies, in the 19th century (Kreiten, 2009. 213), Iran lost all her Caucasian territories, which she held for 162 years. This situation lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, Iran has become a Caucasian state again thanks to her proximity to the Caucasian states both by sea and land. However, during these past three decades, the question of Caucasia has not been pondered upon by Iranian scholars and academics. Those who have written or thought on this problem have done so through non-Iranian perspectives and conceptual categories. I will explain these non-Iranian perspectives in detail and afterwards I will put forward an Iranian perspective on Caucasia through the concept of *post-Turkmenchay space*. However, let me explain at the outset that my approach is not based on a political activism position, but rather I will look at the question of Caucasia through a critical point of departure which, in my view, has been neglected within current scholarships.

In my perspective, there are three grand positions on Caucasia in the contexts of social sciences in general, and security studies in particular, and as far as the Iranian academic context is concerned, two of them are overriding and exert intellectual dominance on Iranian scholars as well as the Iranian foreign policy architects. I classify these three positions vis-à-vis the Caucasian question as follows:

1. In the first position, the scholars and analysts consider Caucasia as *Soviet Space*
2. In the second perspective, we can discern discourses where scholars and social scientists within security studies argue that Caucasia is a *Russian Backyard Space*
3. In the third category, we can see Caucasia as a *Post-Turkmenchay Space* and an inalienable part of the *Cultural Continent of Iran*

Caucasia as a Soviet Space

This concept is invented by Russian scholars who inherited the Soviet outlook on the occupied Iranian territories during the Russian Tsarist Empire through *Gulistan Treaty* (1813), *Turkmenchay Treaty* (1828), and *Akhal Treaty* (1881) whereby Caucasia and Transoxiana were separated from Iran. By the establishment of the

Soviet state, all these regions were renamed and reshaped as well as demographically deformed in accordance to the Soviet colonial policies. These colonial policies are similar to the French and British colonial designs and strategies in other parts of Asia and Africa. By the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian diplomats and security scholars came to redefine the strategic depths of Russia in relation to Caucasia and (what they term as) Middle Asia by a novel concept that is formulated as the *Post-Soviet Spaces*. (Markedanov, 2014) In other words, although the official colonialism of Russia has come to its end, unofficial bullying of Russian imperialism in these vast regions has not yet stopped but shall continue through other means and *smart strategies*. This is to argue that one can discern a form of *Captive Mind* patterns among the elites of these newly emerged states in Caucasia and Middle Asian countries who have not been able to free themselves from Russian cultural imperialism as well as security threats of the Russian state thus far. To put it differently, the concept of the *post-Soviet Spaces* is to designate the forms and contours of these regions based on a Russian perspective without taking into consideration the significance of 4,000 years of cultural and political links of these territories with the Iranian cultural continent. This is to assert that this concept of post-Soviet space appreciates solely the *colonial history* of Caucasia, and whatever lies beneath or beyond that history has no value whatsoever by intellectual architects of this perspective. Here we are faced by a Russo-Centrism outlook that values the towering position of Russia in constructing the future of this region based on Russian needs, exigencies, interests and ambitions. Certainly, this approach cannot and should not be accepted by an Iranian scholar who is interested in security studies and cultural studies of Caucasia based on an Iranian perspective.

Caucasia as a Russian Backyard Space

This concept cannot be ascribed to the Russian scholars, as they consider Caucasia as an extension of Russia's post-Soviet vital sphere, and in this sense, it would not be appropriate to designate these spaces as a backyard, which by definition refers to the rear of a place. In other words, Caucasia cannot be the rear of Russia. The very conceptual framework demonstrates that this concept is based on a *geopolitical perspective* without taking into consideration the Russian frame of reference or *Russian Subjectivity*. This is to argue that the concept of *backyard space* (De Wall, 2019) is an attempt to construct an unimportant sense, from the viewpoint of designers, which cannot be the Russian point of view, as this area is the *soft underbelly* of the Russian state due to various historical, cultural, religious, ethnic

and civilizational indices. This is to argue that Caucasia as a backyard space derives from a Euro-Atlantic point of departure that reads the history of Caucasia from the historical instant that it was constructed within the Russian world and as such it became part of the world history as though prior to this moment Caucasia did not exist. In this reading, Caucasia loses its cultural significance and turns into an *object* of geopolitical significance, and as such it appears as a *backyard space* and an object of insufficient significance. This is a *eurocentric interpretation* of Caucasia that reduces the complexities of this region into an appendix of Russia, and also renders it an insignificant locus as far as Europe and America are concerned. In this reading, Europe and America are the centers of the world, and in relation to the centering of the Euro-American axis, the Caucasian space is of no significance. The only importance that we can attach on it is to conceptualize it as a *backyard space* of Russia that could be used occasionally as a bargaining chip. This form of interpreting the history of non-western geography-cum-history is what one could conceptualize as a eurocentric vision of reality that is embedded in the *colonial form of historiography*. In this form of envisioning the non-western world, value is measured in terms of its proximity or remoteness to the West and hence Caucasia has only meaning as far as it is in the backyard of Russia, which is the rival of Europe and America. In other words, Caucasia has no significance by-and-in-itself and cannot have a historical importance as such. American and European analysts and security studies scholars read and construct Caucasia in terms of a *backyard space of Russia* and completely exclude Iran as the *cultural focus* of Caucasia. Said differently, Caucasia is not an appendix of Russia or a remote region *out there* in relation to Europe and America, but rather it is a region that needs to be rediscovered on its own terms and in relation to its internal dynamics in regard to the cultural continent of Iran (not the current Iranian state). When one analyzes Caucasia through the lens of this concept, one can realize that the point of departure where one stands and realize that certain approaches to Caucasia *are* not based on an *emic perspective*, but rather are premised upon an *etic point of departure*. In my view, the eurocentric vision of Caucasia cannot explain the complexities of this region that is an inalienable dimension of *Iran as a cultural continent*. I will explain this concept in detail further in this article.

Caucasia as a Post-Turkmenchay Space

In current scholarship there is no reference to this concept. By this concept, I am trying to make a point with reference to the Iranian presence in Caucasia. But we

need to make a distinction between Iran as a nation-state and the concept of Iran as a *cultural continent*. (Kafkazli, 2014) What does Iran as a cultural continent mean? In 1948, Karl Jaspers wrote a small book entitled as *The European Spirit*, and in this book, he reflected upon the idea of *Europe*. He posed the idea that what Europe is and how this mythological concept, which was pregnant with great ideas, grows gradually in the course of history and eventually became what she is today. In other words, Europe as a concept was born at the borderlines of *mythistory* and *history* and today is not equivalent solely to the name of a country, but it represents a *cultural continent*. In my understanding, Iran (along with *India*) *occupies* such a position in the history of world civilizations. However, the colonial era has transformed the contents of both of these mythological realities by reducing their significance in terms of their respective ability in regard to *inclusiveness*. This is to argue that *Iran* as a *general concept* covered vast diversities and multiplicities prior to the emergence of colonialism in this cultural continent. It is often argued that Iran and Turkey have not been colonized by Russian and European powers, but this historical statement is merely half-truth. This is because the Iranian cultural continent was indeed colonized by Russia and Britain, and many parts of this vast cultural empire was separated through various treaties starting from 1813 to 1971 (which is the year Bahrain separated from the Iranian state). However, mental colonization is even deeper than the political and military dimensions of colonialism, which put an end to Iran's sovereignty in Caucasia (and many other parts in the Indian subcontinent and Transoxiana). That is the *loss of Iran as a general concept*. What does it mean? Prior to the rise of colonialism, all these diverse people felt that they belong to this *imaginative constellation of Iran* and this "Iran" was not reducible to the nation-state of Iran, but it was equivalent to what Europe is today for citizens of various countries of the European continent. For instance, a Greek does consider himself as a Greek citizen, but at the same time he feels as part of a larger identity: the *European Identity*. Iran, prior to colonialism, had such a position in this part of the world but by the colonial reconfiguration of geographies *invented histories* and *novel identities* were constructed that reduced commonalities. Such identities were instead premised upon differences and divisions. The concept of Iran as a cultural continent was transfigured by statesmen during the Pahlavi Dynasty in order to fit into a novel form of political body, the *nation-state system*. In other words, many people who inhabited the cultural continent of Iran have lost their sense of belonging under the colonial administrative system and found themselves as *homeless people*. But the complexity of this form of colonial homelessness needs to be delved into although it may be apparent and

evident. Nevertheless, the obviousness of the fact needs to be demonstrated in detail. When we state that people of the Iranian continent became homeless, this does not mean that they lost their lands where they lived for generations. Although many of Caucasian people were exiled or forced to leave their lands, the majority of people nevertheless stayed where their predecessors lived and died. If this is the case, then the nature of this homelessness is not easy to capture as it is of an *imaginative nature* and that means the people of this region acquired a *homeless mind* until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. I dare to state that this mental homelessness continues to this very day in various forms and shapes in the geography that has been imagined by colonial masters of all parties concerned. This *mental homelessness* is not solely confined to the Caucasian population, but it includes the population of *Persia* who turned into the citizens of the Iranian nation state. Said differently, the resemblance of the concept of *Iran* in the phrases of *the Iranian Continent* and *the Iranian Nation-State* is only based on a *verbal commonality*, i.e. they are substantially distinct realities and it is not easy to discern the distinctions between Iran as a cultural continent and Iran as a nation state. Iran as a nation state stands against all the nascent states that were born out of colonial construction; the citizens of these nascent states of Caucasia do not see themselves as nationals of the Iranian nation state but rather subjects of Caucasia. On the other hand, many considered themselves as an inalienable part of the Iranian cultural continent.

Having examined and elaborated on these problems, we can move on to the question of *post-Turkmenchay space* and see what this concept stands for. As you may know, Turkmenchay is composed of two parts, i.e. Turkmen and Chay. The first part of the word is evident that it refers to the Oghuz who converted to Islam, while the second part is a Turkish word for *river*. Thus, the word Turkmenchay means the *river of Turkmen* and is also the name of a city nearby Mianeh in the province of East Azerbaijan in Iran where the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828 was imposed on Iran. According to this treaty, the Persian Empire ceded the sovereignty of Caucasus to Russia. This treaty, along with the Gulistan treaty in 1813, put an end to the Iranian sovereignty both in North and South Caucasia. In other words, the Turkmenchay treaty created a novel and ambivalent condition in Caucasia wherein the people were culturally Iranians (i.e. belonging to the Iranian Cultural Continent) but political subjects of the Russian Empire (in its various forms until 1991, which remains its condition even to this day). American and European scholars have not thought about this ambivalent condition of Caucasia. Instead, they focus on this region in terms of the *Russian Backyard Space* as though this region did not exist

prior to the Russian colonial administrative rule. Russian scholars, on the other hand, consider this region as their own territory where these nascent states have their own sovereignty but should define their international policies along the geopolitical requirements of Russia. In this fashion, the Russian scholars discuss this region in terms of the *Post-Soviet Space*. But this ambivalent condition of Caucasia is a cultural reality that needs to be reexamined. Of course, we cannot expect Russian or Euro-American scholars to reflect upon this *ambivalent condition of Caucasia*, which has been created in the aftermath of its cessation by the Turkmenchay treaty. Most historians have written on political and historical consequences of the Turkmenchay treaty but nobody has thought through the ambivalent condition that is related to Caucasia as part of the Iranian cultural continent, wherein Iran in this post-Turkmenchay condition has not sovereignty there but maintains a *cultural presence* that did not end by the loss of Persia's sovereignty during the Russo-Persian wars of Caucasia. By *Post-Turkmenchay Space*, we refer to this ambivalent condition wherein Iran is not politically present in Caucasia but has a deep-rooted cultural presence that endows upon her a special significance that needs to be conceptualized. In philosophy of sciences discourses, we have the concept of *undertheorization*, which refers to a concept or a theory that has been insufficiently theoretically studied or researched. Now we can use this concept in relation to the concept of *Post-Turkmenchay Space*, which is of great significance in conceiving the *ambivalent condition of Caucasia*, but due to the lack of proper conceptualization and theorization fails to demonstrate strong conceptual structures vis-à-vis the two competing intellectual frameworks: the *Eurocentric* vision of Caucasia and *Russocentric* vision of Caucasia. Of course, one should ask why we are in this state of affairs as far as Iranian scholars are concerned. Why is this position underrepresented in academic circles around the globe? In order to reply this question, we need to know the factors that have made the two competing positions overrepresented in academia? Is it solely due to the strong academic articulation of Euro-Americo-centric or Russocentric theories? The solid academic articulation is not per se the answer to this question, but we need to understand the logic of power in the realm of politics. This is to emphasize that when a power loses its prowess at the global stage, the decline of power does not stop at one realm, but it takes over all aspects of life in a *domino effect*. To put it differently, the disappearance of political sovereignty of Persia in the *Iranian Cultural Continent* opened the ways for other powerful cultures, such British Colonial Power in the south and east, as well as the Russian Colonial Power in the north and the Caspian and Black Sea respectively. By the collapse of the Soviet Union and the gradual rise

of Iran based on the philosophy of Islamic Internationalism, and later *the Shiite Crescent*, we can witness a reassertion of the Islamic Republic as one of the ardent heirs of the *Cultural Continent of Iran*. One of the consequences is the revival of and reclaiming of *Post-Turkmenchay Spaces* (Kafkazli, 2012. 21-42) as well as the reemergence of the cultural elements of Iran as a cultural continent in Caucasia.

Post-Turkmenchay Space: Political Sovereignty and Cultural Suzerainty?

The post-Turkmenchay space is riddle with *ambivalence* and *paradoxes*. It means the current states in this region are sovereign in terms of international politics and legal system, but their cultural bodies are intertwined with other cultural continents. We have two concepts in political science; one is the concept of *sovereignty* and the second is the concept of *suzerainty*. The first concept means the full right and power of a governing body over itself, without any meddling from outside sources. In philosophy of politics and law, sovereignty is a substantive concept designating absolute justifiable authority over some polity. The concept of suzerainty, on the other hand, could be described as a relationship in which one state controls the foreign policy and relations of a tributary state, while allowing the tributary state to have internal autonomy. Suzerainty is different from sovereignty in that the tributary state is in principle independent, but enjoys only partial self-rule. Although the situation has existed in the past in a number of historical empires, it is considered complex to reconcile with 20th or 21st century concepts of global legal order, in which sovereignty either exists or does not. In other words, suzerainty is a practical, *de facto* situation, rather than a legal, *de jure* one. Now that we know how these two concepts work within the frame of international legal system, we would like to deconstruct these two concepts in relation to the *post-Turkmenchay Space*. What does it mean to deconstruct sovereignty and suzerainty in terms of post-Turkmenchay space? When we talk about cultural continents it should be clear that the determining factors within these configurations are not of political/military and legal nature, but rather the relations between and within cultural continents are determined based on *cultural characteristics* and *religious indices*. You may like or dislike their effects upon national states that are working based on modern notions of *sovereignty* and *absolute dominion*, but the logic of *cultural continents* does not follow the rationality of nation-state system. This means that Iran as a *cultural continent* in vicinity to Caucasia (or even as far as the Indian subcontinent and Zanzibar in Africa) seems to demonstrate patterns that cannot be solely explained or

explained away by reference to the logic of nation-state system. In this fashion, we can deconstruct the two legal concepts of sovereignty and suzerainty in relation to the logic of cultural continents rather than the logic of nation-state systems. This is to argue that the *Post-Turkmenchay Spaces* in political terms are *sovereign states*, but in cultural and religious terms are in *suzerain conditions*, in relation to the *Cultural Continent of Iran*. This does not mean that Iran as a state controls the foreign policy and relations of the Caucasian countries, as we do not employ these concepts in terms of international modern legal system, but rather in reference to cultural realities that have survived the *modern onslaught* and functions as the Paretoian *residue*. In other words, when we argue that Caucasia is in a *suzerain condition*, that does not mean that we talk about a legal *de jure* state of affairs. Rather, this refers to a practical *de facto* situation between Iran (as a cultural continent) and sovereign states of Caucasia (or even the Central Asian States of *Post-Akhal Spaces*).

Caucasia and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Now that we have elaborated conceptual issues, it is time to move on to a new question: the intellectual possibility of reimagining Caucasia beyond the Euro-American-centric and Russo-centric perspectives. In other words, is there any possibility in the Islamic Republic of Iran to reconceptualize Caucasia in terms of the Post-Turkmenchay Space? By looking at the existing literature in Iran, we can see that dominant analyses by scholars and analysts in the field on Caucasia are either in their outlook *Russo-centric* (i.e. they view Caucasia as a post-Soviet space) or in their approach *Euro-American-centric* (i.e. they view Caucasia as a Russian Backyard space), and those who write on the significance of an Iranian approach are either sentimental or do not distinguish between political sovereignty and cultural suzerainty. To put it differently, in current literature there is no trace of a post-Turkmenchay approach, wherein Iran as a cultural continent is conceptualized and is also distinguished from Iran as a nation-state system. Additionally, one cannot find any reference to the Iranian cultural continent and Caucasia in terms of *cultural suzerainty*. This makes us reflect upon a very fundamental question: whether in the Islamic Republic of Iran it is possible to articulate Caucasia in terms of the *Post-Turkmenchay Spaces*. If the answer is negative, then what are the reasons for such a problem? How should we conceptualize this question? This problem could be addressed at two different but interrelated levels; the first level is the external geopolitical factors, and the second level is the internal configuration of political

power and the psychological contours of the formative elites in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The external factors are very important, but here we are mainly interested in the internal factors that construct the interior dimensions of political configuration since the rise of Islamism in the Iranian political landscape since 1979 and its impact on the possibility of engagement in Caucasia through the perspective of *Post-Turkmenchay Space*. In my understanding, the power configuration in Iran is based on *Candle Axis*, and by this I refer to the *Persian Concept of Sham*'. In the Persian language, the word for candle is *Sham*' and this word is an abbreviation of three words in Persian alphabets, i.e. *Sh* stands for *Sham* (in English it is equivalent to Levant, which consists of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine); *M* stands for *Misr* (in English it is equivalent to Egypt) and the last part in Persian word is the letter of عین which is demonstrated in English transliteration as a punctuation mark or apostrophe character, i.e. this mark: '. Now that we have explained this Persian expression concerning *the Candle Axis*, the question is what does it stand for? What do we mean by the *Candle Axis* in reference to the political configuration of Islamic Republic of Iran?

It means that the power elite of the Islamic Republic of Iran have invested deeply in the Arabic Islamic World rather than the world of Islam at large. But this investment needs to be understood correctly in its historical context. That means the key figures within the Islamist currents in Iran have been in various forms and ways related to the *Candle Axis*. For instance, key figures such as Ibrahim Yazdi and Mustafa Chamran spend some time in the Egyptian *military camps*, and others, such as Jalal al-Din Farsi spend a long time in the Palestinian FATAH (Palestinian National Liberation Movement) *military camps*. Others learned guerrilla tactics in Lebanon and Syria during the reign of Hafez Asad. Finally, key clerical and political elites came from Iraq, such as Ayatollah Shahrodi, Larijani Family, and many others. In other words, the Arabic Islamic World has been the theoretical and praxical *substructure* of the *Candle Axis* in Iran, and for the architects of this axis it is almost impossible to see other dimensions in the Islamicate World as a *heartland space*. This is to argue that the foreign policy of this *Candle Axis* is squarely focused upon the Arabic context of the Islamicate World. This context is constructed as its vital heartland. Seen in this sense, we can argue that Caucasia is not within its orbit of importance. As such, the architects of the Islamic Republic of Iran have a hard time reconceptualizing what we termed the *Post-Turkmenchay Space*. In order to overcome this *visual impairment*, we need to have a debate on the importance of the *Shiite Crescent* outside the borders of the Arab World, which includes various important and strategic regions such as *Post-*

Akhal and *Post-Turkmenchay Space, s* which hitherto have been deeply neglected by the architects of the *Candle Axis* in the past four decades. In addition to this problem, I think we should reflect upon another *systemic impediment* that causes dysfunctionality as far as active engagement with the post-Turkmenchay Space is concerned: what we term as the underlying factors of the *Persianate State* of Iran since the dawn of modernity during the late Qajar era in the late 19th and early 20th century, which reduced Iranhood to *Persian language* and a narrow definition of *Nationalism* based on Aryan narratives rather than civic conceptualization of nationhood. This systemic impediment is also of great significance and we shall focus on it in the next research paper.

References

- De Wall, T. "A Brief Guide to Understanding the Countries of the South Caucasus", *Carnegie Europe* February 11, 2019 Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/02/11/brief-guide-to-understanding-countries-of-south-caucasus-pub-78306>, Accessed on: October 10, 2020.
- Jaspers, K. *The European Spirit*. Translated with an Introduction by Ronald Gregor Smith. London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1948.
- Kafkazli, S. J. "Revisiting the History of Iran: Geopolitics and Geoculture," *Just Peace Diplomacy Journal* Number 6, Spring 2012: Pp 21-42.
- Kafkazli, S. J. M. M. *Reflections on Greater Iran: Issues in Geopolitics, Religion and Culture in Caucasia and Transoxania*. Published by London Academy of Iranian Studies, 2014.
- Kreiten, I. "A colonial experiment in cleansing: the Russian conquest of Western Caucasus, 1856–65", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11:2-3, 213-241, Markedanov, Sergey (2014), "A Dangerous Thaw in the Frozen conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space", *Russia Direct*, 6 August, Available at: <http://www.russiadirect.org/analysis/dangerous-thaw-frozen-conflicts-post-soviet-space>, Accessed on: October 10, 2020. 2009.
- Miri, S. J. *Current Changes in North Caucasus and its Impact on Iran's National Security*. Tehran: Published by the Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies Press, 2012.

Coronavirus and our philosophical question

Sayed Hossein Hosseini

Visiting Researcher, George Town University
Assistant professor of philosophy of religion
Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies
Tehran-Iran

Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic not only changed the human world but is also changing the world of philosophizing. In the Contemporary philosophical thought, one of the most important methodological – epistemological questions is what the relation between coronavirus and the contemporary human concept, technology, philosophy, and also humanities is.

This article discusses whether human is a creature for “the other”. (“The other” here means something other than human productions.) Then questions about how coronavirus could create another “the other” for the contemporary human. However, the contemporary human changed to the Corona era human. And because of Technology replacement with “the other”, contemporary human is also changing to “other technology”. And this process can make technology an idol for human being.

As a result, we are in an era which can cause a transition of or transformation in the Contemporary human civilization and Human himself.

Finally, there are two solutions to this global crisis: first of all, "Philosophical thought" with thinking to designing fundamental questions, and secondly, trying to establish the “new civilization”.

Keywords: Philosophy, methodology, technology, modern human, civilization, coronavirus.

Human and creature for “the other”

One of the most important questions we are confronting right now is: whether human is a creature for “the other”?

By "the other" we mean anything other than human productions and artifacts. God, nature, self and fellowman are the examples. But technology for instance is something human being himself produces.

Previously I wrote a note with the title of "the concept of social despair". It mentions 5 conceptual layers of despair from a methodological studies point of view and as a philosophical critic; individual despair, collective despair, public despair, social despair and civilizational despair. It finally asserts 3 research necessity: the importance of civilization studies, expansion of methodology topics, and scientific methodological critique of the fundamentals of contemporary humanities.

This analysis and viewpoint is today still alive and can be the introduction of our regard toward our society and the global society. (Hosseini, 2017).

Arthur Schopenhauer in "the wisdom of life" states that "One must not give vent to great jubilation or to great sorrow as the changeability of all things can transfigure those at any moment." His delighted advice afterward is that "By contrast, one must enjoy the “here and now,” possibly in a cheerful manner — this is the wisdom of life." (Schopenhauer, 1999, p. 56).

Accepting his logical introduction, maybe the more intellectual advice is that in this situations it is better to think that is closer to the wisdom of the life of life which is in accordance with his quote in rule 10 of the same book "if you want to grab everything, you should surrender to the wisdom "(Schopenhauer, 2018, p. 44).

Coronavirus and similar events caused contemporary human to ask fundamental questions.

Do humans enter an era to be called "civilization without society"? Which means a beautiful era of lonely human civilization?

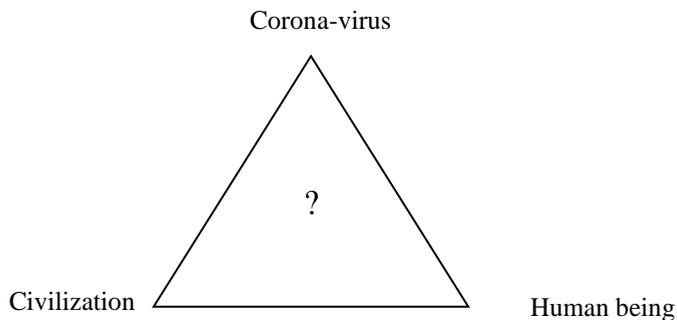
How can we assume existence and growth of a civilization without society and social structures? How can we assume a human civilization in center of which human is absolutely alone?

Ludwig Wittgenstein says: "One keeps forgetting to go right down to the foundations One doesn't put the question marks *deep* enough down" (Hacker, 1997, p: 9 and Hosseini, 2020b).

According to his quote, we should tell him that one can ask deep philosophical questions about a subject when one evaluates the ratio of that subject relationships and dealings in the interactive structure of relations and its interactions, otherwise, discussing fundamental questions is not merely the result of God-given genius.¹

Relationship of Corona with contemporary human

The explicit question is that what the relationship of Corona with contemporary human and dominant civilization is. And through which method and afterward which scientific theory this question can be analyzed and theorized?

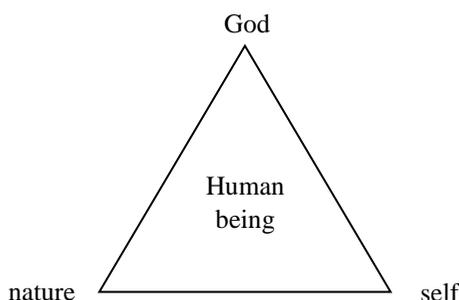


One of the interesting starting points of this essay can be a measure for Wittgenstein's discourse in 1930; since he considered the soul of his work different from and unfamiliar with the soul of contemporary progress-oriented European and American civilization (Monk, p: 110-113).

Why? It seems one of the reasons of his deep disagreement was the characteristic of the present era that is worshipping science which "Ray Monk" has also mentioned it in his book (ibid); but it is better to follow the roots of worshipping science in deeper paradoxes of contemporary western civilization; because this civilization has given contemporary human an originality which was not principally genuine; however, "human, is an originally genuine creature" (Hosseini, 2008, p: 23 & Hosseini, 2020c, p: 23).

Human in the modern view thinks that he is an independent originality but in fact he is not. The originality whose mechanism driver was belief in dominance and the possibility of absolute predominance over universe and human; over cosmic and

human being and maybe existence and non-existence and there were obviously nothing except superiority to self, dominance over nature and even ascendancy over God! But human context in essence was “a creature in relationship” and he has never been separated from his surrounding multiple relationships.



As far as “Francis Bacon” in 1620, considered the role of science in modern era as force majeure dominance and government over nature in order to oblige the nature to provide power and substantial wealth of human and to disclose its inner secrets; until 1977 when characters such as “Martin Heidegger” considered freedom in human humanity as the common point of all humanism forms and types; all and all summarized in one single principle which is “human, is the scale of everything” and the superior value belongs to him in the present modern human civilization which is dominant right now. (Naser, 2005, H, p: 12 and: Lucretius, 2015, p: 73 and: Johnson, 2010, p. 105 and: Edgar, 2008, p: 72).

The civilization which despite all of its enchantments and wonders has turned contemporary human to the strangest creature throughout historical ages, because if no string attaches you either to other humans or to God, so you are strange (Hosseini, Malek, 2020, p: 229) and also no string to attache him to his own soul!

So, can this invisible virus call contemporary human independency illusion into question and again return him to a creature for “the other”?

According to what we have obtained about the general information of this universal event so far (separated from behind the scene facts which are out of the scope of our analysis) is that this virus turned into a factor for physical and social distancing. The individuals who suffer from this disease have to be separated from family, friends, workplace and society and be isolated without any physical contact in a completely controlled environment. Human natural communications through emotional organs with other people in now disconnected and external world and

undoubtedly such disorder will lead to confusion in other human's mental and emotional relationships.

The imagination of such extensive complication in wide level of individual, family and social relationships will leads to Destruction of society.

According to some statistics until now, around 2 billion people are imprisoned in their houses, internal and external borders of so many countries closed and all regions of the world had limitations and quarantine. International crisis which entangled more than 190 countries with this crowned pandemic and according to predictions around 70% of people in the world will suffer from it. Oil price is highly fell and religious centers of the world and cultural, social, sports, political and economic activities are cancelled or delayed or as Giorgio Agamben says: "a wave of fear has paralyzed societies" and as Slavoj Zizek says: "impossible happened and the world has stopped!" (Chomsky, 2020, and: Zizek, 2020, and: Agamben, 2020).

Absolute social isolation

The human who considered himself as the absolute owner of nature, self and God, suddenly get in trouble of the technology and all communicational routes was closed to him and in a manner is creeping toward "absolute social isolation".

What is he just in touch with? Plastic cover connected to controlling devices and others also are in touch with him through this plastic intermediary, otherwise, they will be infected and will be located in unwanted borders of this quarantine.

Two hypotheses are traceable in this universal process:

The first, the worst and the most disappointing hypothesis is that in the assumption of this pandemic generality and its absolute universality (and with the imagination of few selected individuals), we are faced with people who communicate and commute with others only through complicated controlled systems and by means of advanced technologies.

The second, the most optimistic and maybe the most naïve hypothesis is that after the death of some people, the disease will be controlled and technology will achieve ways to treat and prevent this disease.

In the two hypotheses, technology is important.

Technological human

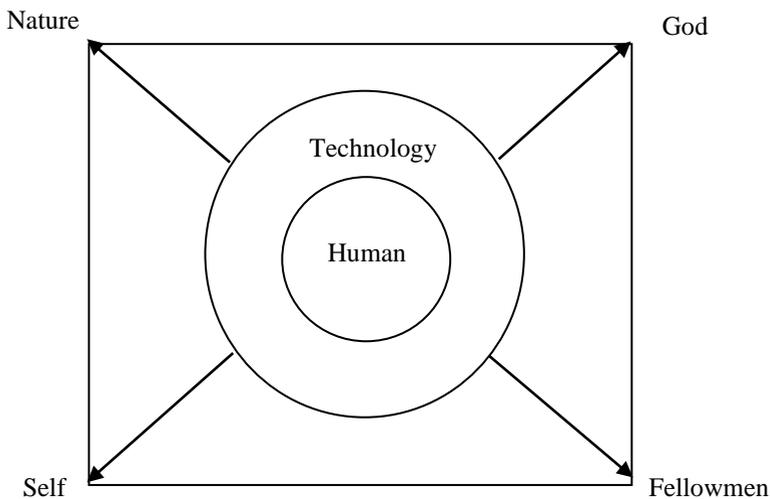
Life and death of the contemporary human depends on technology; that self-made technology which is now non-subjective.

What happened is that throughout this vast region the modern human is not single and independent in his relation with himself and others because now an “another other” is the intermediary, means and connection of him with (right now) four sides (3+1) of “the other”.

Technology is that firm cover and impenetrable envelopment which has been wrapped around other relationship areas of the contemporary human; both around association with nature mechanism (the world of external things) or fellowmen (society in the broad sense), or human himself (soul) or even God (and metaphysics).

If it was possible to separate contemporary human from present time and place or if it was supposed that technology was separated from time and place, then we would consider human relationships with “the other” convenient and free from technology, but now the perfect dominance of this plastic cover has conquered the whole individualistic, social and historical identity of human and there is no time and no place human is free from its universal effects on the earth.

Therefore, in the present era, technology plays the role of realism which does not have only a neutral position but also manipulates the message. It has dissolved contemporary human in its communicational network. In fact, this is the technology which sends “technological human” message to “the other” four sides.



Accordingly, is it possible to say that human is a creature for “the other” or is human a creature for self-made technology?

Hasn't Corona questioned “for other” and hasn't it replaced “another other” with “human other”?

Undoubtedly, these four sides of “the other” have “the other” in common that is they are truly “the others” for human, although they are not made by human; technology is not categorized in “the other” group because it is human-made; however, today modern technology is among contemporary human's artifacts that humankind himself has got involved in its unwanted requirements and instruments; and this matter may be a sign of modern technology imbalance with four sides of “the other” (Hosseini, 2013b, P:34).

But another question shows this issue a little wider and more complicated; whether contemporary humankind is in an era that all of his relations with the other is controlled by complex systems through high technologies even in pre-Corona period?! (Ignoring the number of dead and alive people in the world).

The above pre-question is that whether it is possible to find human and society or natural creature on the Earth which is not under modern technology dominance now (in post-Corona period) and also during pre-Corona period?

Human transformation

And the last question is that is Corona able to suspend this deep social belief that once “Jean-Jacques Rousseau” disclosed it: “the first human who fenced around a piece of land and this idea came to his mind to say that “this is mine” and considered people so naïve to believe his words, was the real founder of civilized society”? (Warburton, 2018, p.55).

When there is no “other”, limit and bound are meaningless.

But technology is the same as “another other” for human which will make him an artificial other; which has made anyway and has made it before again and again.

Therefore, if limit has any meaning, all delimitations are occurred by technology; but this “another other” creates: new technologic God, new nature and new self and also new and diverse fellowmen for contemporary human through its enchantment on one hand and human enchantment on other hand and its creatures enchantment on another hand; and not only suddenly makes humankind worship in

its sanctuary, but also it will make him to always worship individualistically, sonically and historically in all his moments, states and activities.

Based on this speech, “human, as a creature for the other” transforms into a servant for technology; and this is nothing except “human transformation” (regarding the difference of this view with what Heidegger mentioned in “Ge-stell” as venturesome destiny (gefahr, geschick) and maintains that technology is not a simple instrument and is not a neutral and undue instrument; Hosseini, 2013b and Heidegger, 1962).

Anyway, during these present moments and seconds it is worth for “contemporary human” returning to this fundamental question that whether human is truly and really a creature for “the other”?

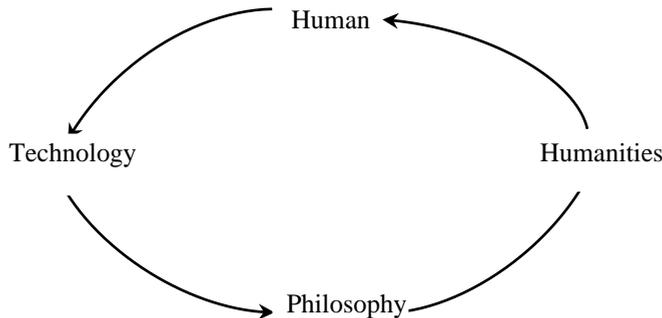
Relation of “human” concept with “technology”, “philosophy”, “humanities

And anyway, philosophers all over the world and in the realm of humanities research and domain of this question have thought about the relation of “human” concept with “technology” and “philosophy” and the nature of “humanities” to be able to theorize scientifically.

Beyond these philosophizing it has to be clear that:

It is possible to design another philosophical-technological foundations/basics compatible with nature structure and human nature mechanism (but not contemporary manufactured human) but (inevitably) considering contemporary human requirements (like “religious technology”; respecting “religious science”)?

Or do we need novel basics in the realm of humanities and social sciences structures for such system? (Hosseini, Technology Replacement with Religion; The Philosophical Gift of New Generation Human, International Conference on Contemporary Religion Philosophy, Humanities and Cultural Studies Institute).



These days, individuals like “Noam Chomsky” and “Slavoj Zizek” have spoken about active social movements and effective global solidarities to overcome Corona (Chomsky, 2020 and: Zizek, 2020); now there is no doubt that if such movements do not enjoy real social public, universal and effective features, not only they were not efficient against this crisis but also they transform into a factor to increase universal public tensions. On the other hand, undoubtedly, the contemporary world is not able to create, flourish and influence on such movements in such conditions and situations and even local or national social movements are not able to confront/deal with universal crises.

In this manner, considering another challenge may be necessary; principally regular and efficient social, public, universal movements won't be formed without common intellectual supports and supportive theoretical basics and then there is no doubt that philosophical frameworks of dominant modern civilization do not demand such serious and comprehensive mental and theoretical unity. The foundations of this cultural, political, economic and social building and construction of today's modern civilization is in terrible difference, plurality, contrast and contradiction and the formation of cognitional basics with supportive universal role cannot be expected in such condition and civilization.²

However, the approach of this essay is that; it is impossible not to consider the possibility of the occurrence of such event and not even the possibility of another civilization achievement; as it is possible to think, imagine and create novel intellectual system and also the possibility of human evolution and existence of another human.

Therefore, it is necessary to think about the creation of another civilization in the heart of this civilization and anyway it's the emergence and appearance of its philosophical fields (Hosseini, 2016, p: 12-20 and: Hosseini, 2018).

Conclusion

The conclusion of previous clauses is that Human means a creature for “the other” and “the other” is not human artifact, for example: God, nature, self and human fellowmen. Corona in this view is separated from “the other” to “the other” illusion. And the modern human (of new era) also is an independent identity human. As a result, contemporary human turns to Corona era human which means is transforming from independence illusion to “the other” illusion. And because the technology replacement with “the other”, contemporary human also is changed to

“other technology”. This issue means that the technology goes to the human deity. Finally, contemporary human is transmuted and this will end to civilization transformation. But the first solution in this article is philosophical thought with the designing fundamental questions and the second one is changing this modern civilization. Therefore, civilization and universal challenge don’t have a partial solution but the real solution is the thought of how to change contemporary civilization. But since the civilization knowledge is the basis of our new civilization, the basic solution is drawn from the relation between the concepts of human, technology, philosophy, and human sciences. This issue means we need new philosophical fundamentals for the technology which can be coordinated to the four sides: God, nature, self and human fellowmen. Maybe this can be named religious technology!

Note

1. Maybe this is the same subject which Wittgenstein has mentioned it as “Seeing Aspects” somewhere that philosophers have to look for it, because in his opinion this matter is a kind of compression; a comprehension which replaced with theory and explanation by him and he mentioned it as description “ubersicht” meaning general understanding and eyesight scope (Monk, 2018, p: 80); except that he concludes “description” and denying “theory and explanation” from the necessity of relations between a phenomenon relationships, but in another view we achieve the necessity of the role of holism and the difference of probable methods and of course the importance of scientific theorizations (Hosseini, 2013a, p: 16-24).
2. “Henry Kissinger” in his book (World Order: Contemplating Nations Features and History Current) is trying to define such philosophical basics and dominant landscape for dominance over world; but through “American New World Order (Hosseini, 2020a).

References

- Agamben, Giorgio, 2020, Corona, Fighting with an Invisible Enemy which Threats Everyone, Mehr News Agency, news code: 4883344.
- Chomsky, Noam, 2020, Corona Crisis and Big defeat of Market Rules, Mehr News Agency, news code, 4891800.
- Edgar, Andrew and others, 2008, Key Concepts in Cultural Theory, translated by Nasereddin Ali Taghavian, Tehran, Cultural and Social Studies Institute Publications.
- Hacker, Peter M. S., 1997, Wittgenstein on Human Nature, London: Phoenix Paperback.
- Hosseini, Malek, 2020, Wittgenstein and Wisdom, Tehran, Hermes Publications.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2020a, Principles and Basics of New World Order, IQNA, news code 3887381.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2020b, Wittgenstein's Approach Towards Human Entity; Critical Confrontation, professional journal of Naghdname, Humanities Texts and Books Investigation Council, Anthropology Department, no 1, Publication promise.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2020c, Question-Philosophical Criticism, Tehran, Culture Criticism Publications.
- Hosseini, 2018, Do Not Pollute Philosophy: Religious Science Possibility and Disobedience, Tali'eh News Agency, News Code 65346.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2017, A thought on the concept of social despair in civilization discussions, Anna News agency, News Code: 63770.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2016, Civilization Researches: Islamic Civilization Conceptual Studies, Tehran, Sociologists Publications.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2013a, Science Production Movement and Theorizing Academies, Tehran, Avaye Nour Publication.
- Hosseini, Seyyed Hossein, 2013b, Philosophical and Technological Basics of Environment Crisis Analysis; Necessity of Producing Religious Science, Contemporary Wisdom Research Journal, year 4, no.3.
- Hosseini, Sayyed Hossein, 2008, Love in Three Views; Love Philosophical Analysis, Tehran, Culture and Cognition Publications.
- Johnson, Patricia Altenbernd, 2010, Martin Heidegger's Path, translated by Sayyed Majid Kamali, Tehran, Mehr Newsha Publications.
- Lucretius et al., 2015, Scientific Philosophy, 1st vol., translated by Manouchehr Taslimi and others, 1st vol., Tehran, Scientific and Cultural Company Publications.
- Monk, Rey, 2018, How to Read Wittgenstein, translated by Homayoun Kakasoltani, Tehran, Ney Publications.

Naser, Seyyed Hossein, 2005, *Human and Nature; Spiritual Crisis of Renewed Human*, translated by Abdorrahim Govahi, Tehran, Islamic Culture Office Publications.

Schopenhauer, Arthur, 1999, *Die Kunst glücklich zu sein*, C.H. Beck.

Schopenhauer, Arthur, 2018, *the art of happiness*, translated by Ali Abdollahi, Tehran, Markaz publications.

Warburton, Nigel, 2018, *Philosophy: The Basics*, translated by Alireza Hassanpour, Qom, Taha Publications.

Zizek, Slavoj, 2020, *How a New World Order is Coming to Life after Corona Pandemic?* Mehr News Agency, news code: 4889509.

Heidegger, Martin, 1962, *The Question concerning technology and other essays*, translated by William Lovitt, New York: Harper & Row. (The German text appears in Martin Heidegger, *Vortage und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Gunther Neske Verlag, 1954). Pp. 13-44, and in the same publisher's "Opuscula" series under the title, *Die Technik und die Kehre* (1962), pp 5-36.)

Revisiting Muhkam and Mutashabih Ayat

Tanveer Azamat

Lecturer
Wilbur Wright College
Chicago, USA

Abstract

This paper attempts to resolve the issue of *muhkam* (clear) and *mutashabih* (ambiguous) *ayat* (verses) in Q 3: 7 by showing that the Qur'an consists of only *muhkam ayat*. It reaches this conclusion when Q 3: 7 and Q 4: 162 are read in their proper literary context and when the identity of *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* (those who are firm in knowledge) is concretely established. Following Stefan Wild, the paper argues that Q 3: 7 "tried to settle the problem of competing and sometimes conflicting authorities that included Christian and Jewish scriptures" (Wild, "The Self-Referentiality of the Qur'an," 427) when the Qur'an was being revealed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, use of Q 3: 7 to establish that the Qur'an has *mutashabih ayat* is invalid. The impetus to write this paper is pragmatic. When contemporary Muslims trained in natural and social sciences, having the mental habits of critical and systematic analysis, approach the Qur'an to live their lives under its guidance, they face the daunting task of understanding the Muslim tradition which is at times ambiguous even contradictory on this issue, as it will become clear in the paper.

Key Words: Muhkam (clear), Mutashabih (ambiguous), The Torah, 'Ulum al-Qur'an (Sciences of the Qur'an), rasikhuna fi l-'ilm (those who are firm in knowledge), Q 3: 7.

Introduction

This paper is in the series of papers that attempt to identify problems which block understanding the Qur'an by the Muslims trained in critical and systematic analysis through their exposure in natural and social sciences, and suggests solutions to directly get guidance from it.¹ The issue of *muhkam* (clear) and *mutashabih* (ambiguous) *ayat* (verses) is one such problem. The problem is particularly severing for Muslims born in the west who have a little or no exposure to “traditional Islamic education” in most cases, and who search for their Muslim identity and “authentic” Islam. The starting point of their search is the Qur'an, the foundational document of Islam. Their efforts to understand the Qur'an are blocked, among other things, by the traditional Muslim scholarship's insistence to know the Sciences of the Qur'an (*'ulum al-Qur'an*) to correctly understand the Qur'an.² Thus, they are faced with the choice to either learn the historically developed Sciences of the Qur'an instead of listening to the word of God, or they listen to the word of God with the insecurity that they must be mis-understanding the Qur'an due to their lack of knowledge of the Sciences of the Qur'an. They lose confidence that God the Almighty has the ability to directly speak with them through His revelation and impart correct understand of the Qur'an in the particularity of their situations.

According to *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* (verses) genre some *ayat* of the Qur'an are *muhkam* (clear in meaning) while others are *mutashabih* (ambiguous in meaning). Muslim tradition does not tell how to determine if: “(1) the whole Qur'an is clear (*muhkam*), (2) the whole Qur'an is ambiguous (*mutashabih*), (3) part of the Qur'an is *muhkam*, part *mutashabih*, ... [(4)] there are verses which are neither or both” (Wild, 2010. 429-30). Rather, the tradition implies one, the other, or all of the above possibilities at the same time. Each possibility has its unique speculative reason. The tradition “never adopted [and continues to do so] a decisive stand on how to distinguish between ‘clear’ and ‘ambiguous’” *ayat* (Wild, 2010. 431). The Qur'an is silent on the issue of *mutashabih ayat* except in Q 3: 7, but elsewhere it is emphatic that it is a clear book with no ambiguities.³ To understand the depth of problems posed by the tradition, let us first review it and then turn towards the Qur'an to understand its position on the issue. It may be stated at the outset that this paper is not based on ground breaking or even new research. Its approach is pragmatic: to solve a problem faced by contemporary Muslims trained in natural and social sciences who want to understand their religion through the word of God and live their lives accordingly. Therefore, the paper depends on existing exhaustive studies⁴ in general but Stefan Wild's study in particular.

The Exegetical Tradition

The discussions of *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* in the Muslim tradition are buried in the exegetical tradition, specifically in the exegesis of Q 3: 7. According to Stefan Wild, “Muslim exegesis in premodern times showed three different ways to deal with the dichotomy of clear/ambiguous [*ayat* mentioned in Q 3: 7]: legal interpretation, rhetorical interpretation, and anti-exegetical interpretations” (Wild, 2010. 430). The first group of scholars to encounter this issue were legal scholars of the late 1st and early 2nd centuries of Islam, who had to decide the legal value of a Qur’anic commandment. Based on this tradition, Wild sums up different meanings assigned to *muhkam ayat*: i) verses that deal with human behavior and hence legal matters, ii) abrogating verses (*nasikh ayat*), iii) verses that specify “the most basic religious duties of every Muslim,” iv) absolute and never changing [in meaning] verses, v) verses that “deal with details that differentiate Islam from other religions,” vi) verses “which served as basis for the religious law (*shari’a*)” etc. (Wild, 2010. 429). Contemporary Muslims wonder which meaning is correct or if all meanings are true at the same time; who and how it is to be determined which meaning applies to a particular Qur’anic *ayah* (verse)? It seems that the Muslim tradition at best left it to the individuals to decide which meaning may serve their purpose while interpreting any *ayah*. As far as modern (as opposed to Medieval) studies of this genre are concerned, they “rarely see all the implications of the terms, and do not suggest any criterion according to which the definitions may be arranged” (Kinberg, 1988. 165).⁵

The rhetorical interpreters saw ambiguous *ayat* of the Qur’an as those verses that i) used same words for different matters, ii) used “identical meanings” with different words, iii) were open to various interpretations, especially metaphorical or allegorical, and iv) could have their meanings easily distorted” (Wild, 2010. 430). The problem we face is the same: every interpreter has the option to call an *ayah* *muhkam* or *mutashabih* on his/her discretion. This then allows each sect, ideological group, or terrorist group decide an *ayah* clear that serves their purpose, and ambiguous which does not serve their purpose. Leah Kinberg provides some examples of this flawed methodology that became and continues to become subject of much abuse in interpreting the Qur’an (Kinberg, 1988. 159-60). For example, Mu’tazila believed humankind had free will while the people of Sunnah believed humankind’s fate was predestined. Both used Q 18: 29 as a proof text for their position. The Mu’tazila consider this *aya muhkam*, while the people of Sunnah consider it *mutashabih*. Q 18: 29 states: “The truth is from your Lord, so whoever

wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve ...” For Mu‘tazila this is a clear (*muhkam*) verse that does not require any interpretation. It clearly informs that the choice of belief or disbelief is a matter of choice for humankind. The people of Sunnah, on the other hand, considered it unclear (*mutashabih*) *ayah*. For them Q 76: 30 was a *muhkam* *aya*: “And you do not will except that Allah wills. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.” They then read Q 18: 29 with Q 76: 30 together and argue, since humankind cannot will except what Allah wills, it implies there is no free will in Islam. What shall Muslims believe? The decision is important as it determines how they should live their life, i.e. as free agents who take responsibility for their actions or as predestined who are subject to God’s choices. Usually, the belief in free will or predestination, like many other similar fundamental issues in the Muslim tradition, get resolved depending on the school of Islamic thought one is born in. Even more interesting is the case when same term may adopt different, rather contradictory, interpretations depending upon a person’s affiliation with one ideological group or the other. For example, Kinberg points to Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624 C.E.), an important and well-known Indian Muslim scholar, who saw Q 3: 7 “in support of his refutation of the Shi‘i views.” Shi‘i believe that their Imams are among *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm* and hence, know the meaning of *mutashabih* *ayat* along with God (Kinberg, 1988. 168). However, Sirhindi’s negation turned to affirmation during his Sufi period when he believed Sufi along with God know the meaning of *mutashabih* *ayat*.

The third group, the anti-exegetical interpreters, opposes “all (human) interpretation of the ambiguous parts of the Qur’an” and allow “human interpretation for the clear verses only.” The “matters like the day of resurrection, the conditions of hell and paradise, the eschatological appearance of the apocalyptic Dajjal, the appearance of Gog and Magog, the coming of Christ,” the verses “used by the philosophers to discuss the question of God’s attributes,” “the opening letters of some suras,” and others are examples of ambiguous *ayat* (Wild, 2010. 430). To their credit, the anti-exegetes are relatively specific about identifying ambiguous *ayat*. However, the question remains why stop at these subjects? What about the nature of *wahy* (revelation), prophethood, stories of earlier nations, scientific phenomenon in the Qur’an, etc.?

Before moving on from the discussion of how Muslim tradition dealt with the dichotomy of clear/ambiguous verses in the anti-exegetical group, we may touch upon two issues related to the exegetical tradition: first, who is “qualified to interpret the *mutashabih* and under what conditions,” and second, what do “the occasion(s) and reason(s) of revelation” say about Q 3: 7. According to Wild, Ibn

Rushd (d. 595/1198) or Averroes dealt with the first question (Wild, 2010. 430).⁶ For Ibn Rushd, *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* of Q 3: 7 are not the traditionalists but the philosophers like him. He believed the philosophers were equipped to deal with ambiguous *ayat* which according to him were metaphorical in nature, and God along with them knew their meaning. As far as masses are concerned, they should be told that such *ayat* are *mutashabih* and only God knows their meaning. Interestingly, who among the humans may or may not know the meaning of *mutashabih ayat* continues to change to this day. In recent times, Muhammad Shahrur, a contemporary Syrian Muslim scholar, in his book *al-Kitab wa-l-Qur'an* proposed that in our time *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* are “modern natural scientists, philosophers, sociologists, and anthropologists” (Wild, 2010. 432). The second aspect in the exegetical tradition related to the occasion(s) or reason(s) [*asbab al-nuzul*] of Qur'anic revelation genre,⁷ all reference of *asbab al-nuzul* to Q 3: 7 point to one conclusion: Q 3: 7 relates “to a scriptural discussion between Muslims and either Christians or Jews.”⁸ This means *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur'an are related to the discourse between Christian or Jewish scriptures and the Qur'an when they are compared. In the absence of this comparison, all *ayat* of the Qur'an are *muhkam*, as it will become abundantly clear in the following discussion.

The Qur'an

This section of the paper contends that if Q 3: 7 is understood in its proper literary context then the issue of *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur'an disappears. This implies that all Qur'anic *ayat* are *muhkam*. The approach unburdens the fourteen hundred years speculative humanly created tradition about *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur'an. The starting point of our discussion is the two generally known readings (*qira'at*) of Q 3: 7. One reading is accepted by most of Sunni scholars which Wild calls “the standard reading” with italicized relevant text in the following (Wild, 2010. 423):

It is he who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses clear that are the Essence of the Book, and others ambiguous. As for those in whose heart is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation; and none knows its interpretation, save only God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, “We believe in it; all is from our Lord”; yet none remembers, but men possessed of minds.

That is, there is a *waqf* (pause) after “*and none knows its interpretation, save only God.*”

The second reading Wild calls “the minority reading,” generally accepted by most Shi‘i scholars, as

follows (Wild, 2010. 423):

It is he who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses clear that are the Essence of the Book, and others ambiguous. As for those in whose heart is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation; and none knows its interpretation, save only God and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say, “We believe in it; all is from our Lord”; yet none remembers, but men possessed of minds.

That is, there is a *wasl* (without pause) after “*and none knows its interpretation, save only God and those firmly rooted in knowledge.*” For us it does not matter if *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm* along with God know the meaning of *mutashabih ayat*. Our concern is who are *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm* and if their identity can be determined with certainty. As it will become clear in the following that their identity holds the key to resolve the existence of *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur’an. However, before we get to their identity, we need to explore three key terms in Q 3: 7: *muhkam*, *mutashabih*, and *umm al-kitab* (“The ‘Essence of the Book’ (literally, ‘Mother of the Book’)”) to further clarify the paper’s position.

The root of *muhkam* is *hkm* that is used two hundred ten times in the Qur’an, though the “term ‘verse’ (*aya*) connected with a derivation of *hkm* IV” is mentioned only three times: Q 11: 1; 22: 52-53; and 47: 20-21 (Wild, 2010. 425). Wild confines the discussion of *muhkam* as used in the Qur’an to only these three occurrences. Q 11: 1 informs a two-step process of revelation: first its *ayat* are made *uhkimat* (“clear setting”) and second, they are made *fusṣilat* (“distinguished”). Meaning first they are “clearly composed” and then they are “expounded” (Droge, 2013. 133 n. 3&4).⁹ The next *ayat*, Q 22: 52-53, are used in the sense of “confirmation” (*ihkam*). Finally, Q 47: 20-21 are used in the sense of “a clear *sura*’ (*suratun muhkamatun*)” to “mean a clear, unambiguous, decisive passage – not necessarily a *sura*, in its later sense of a complete chapter of the qur’anic text” (Wild, 2010. 425). From this it is clear that the use of *ayat muhkamat*, based on the Qur’anic use, can safely be taken as “clear *ayat*,” having no ambiguity in understanding them. The case of *mutashabih ayat* is more complex.

The root of *mutashabih* is *shbh* that is used twelve times in the Qur'an in four derived forms: "once as the form II verb *shubbiha* (شُبِّهَ), four times as the form VI verb *tashabaha* (تَشَبَّهَ), six times as the form VI active participle *mutashabih* (مُتَشَبِّهٌ), [and] once as the form VIII active participle *mush'tabih* (مُشْتَبِّهٌ)."¹⁰ This means in all its Qur'anic use, it is used in the sense of similar and never in the sense of doubtful or ambiguous. It is a bit strange to use *mutashabih* in Q 3: 7 in the meaning of ambiguous, not clear, or doubtful? However, it is equally possible that the Qur'an uses *mutashabih* in the sense of similar at the eleven places and doubtful or ambiguous at this place only. However, the context of Q 3: 7 and the identity of *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* makes this an impossibility as we will note in the following. For now, let us consider the Qur'anic use of *shbh*.

Wild reviews *mutashabih* as used in the Qur'an at various places: i) it occurs in Q 3: 7 and Q 2: 25. In Q 2: 25 there is a comparison between the fruits of the earth and of the heaven. When the heavenly fruits are given to the believers who did good deeds on the earth, tasting them they say: "This is that wherewithal we were provided with before; that they shall be given in *perfect semblance* (*mutashabihann*);" ii) in Q 2: 70, 2: 118, 6: 99, and 13: 16, the root "*shbh* VI means nothing more than 'to resemble, to be alike';" iii) in Q 6: 141(*shbh* VIII) is used "synonymously" as in Q 6: 99, *i.e.* "to resemble, to be alike;" iv) in Q 39: 23 it is used about a *kitab*. However, in this *ayah* it is not clear, "What exactly does the *kitab* resemble? Does *kitab* *mutashbihan* mean a book containing interior similarities and repetitions or does the expression mean a *kitab* resembling something else?" (Wild, 2010. 426). For Wild *kitab* is in this *ayah* is meant to be the earlier scriptures of the Jews and Christians. v) Wild finds another shade of *mutashabih* (similar) in Q 13: 16. In this *aya*, "*mutashabih* appears as an attribute to *khalq*" (Wild, 2010. 430). The polytheists take this similarity between God and *khalq* "wrongly to assign partners to God." Wild concludes, "in this verse *mutashabih* means [a similarity] 'leading to erroneous, doubtful conclusions.'" Meaning, "those parts of the Qur'anic text that resemble pre-Islamic scriptures ... but are not identical to these early revelations. Furthermore, this lack of identity may lead the wavering believer to the conclusion that one of the scriptural versions must be wrong and that this wrong version could be the Qur'an" (Wild, 2010. 430). Based on the this, Wild concludes (Wild, 2010. 430):

mutashabih in Q 3: 7 could also refer to parts of the *kitab*. And since *kitab* in Q 3: 3 in its context [Q 3: 7] must mean the revelation revealed to the prophet Muhammad, *mutashabih* could be taken to designate those parts of the Qur'anic text that resemble pre-Islamic

scriptures and deal with the same persons or events but are not identical to these earlier revelations.

The implication of this conclusion to the rest of Q 3: 7 is clear: the addressees of Q 3: 7 whose identity we do not know yet, find *muhkam* (clear) and *mutashabih* (similarity that leads to doubt or ambiguity) *ayat* in the Qur'an when they compare them to the Torah. Among them *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* believe that both type of *ayat* are from God and they believe in them both; the non-*rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* have no problem with *muhkam ayat* of the Qur'an, but they do not seem to believe *mutashabih ayat* and keep raising questions about their interpretation when comparing them to the Torah. It is possible they may have genuine problem of understanding *mutashabih ayat* of the Qur'an in comparison to the Torah, but due to their *zaygh* (swerve) in their hearts they desire to create *fitna* (dissension) in the community and have no desire to understand *mutashabihat*. If Wild's analysis and its implication is correct, then there can be no *mutashabih* (ambiguous or doubtful) *ayat* in the Qur'an. Let us attempt to understand *umm al-kitab* in Q 3: 7 that will also lead to the same conclusion.

According to Q 3: 7, *muhkam ayat* are the *umm al-kitab*,¹⁰ "The Essence of the Book," or "The Mother of the Book." No doubt in Q 3: 7 the mention of *umm al-kitab* is meant as "clearly composed verses" of the Qur'an (*i.e.* its essence) and not in the sense of or about the heavenly *umm al-kitab*. Despite this being the case, the concept of *umm al-kitab* in the Qur'an sheds light on understanding *mutashabih ayat* issue. Based on Qur'anic discourse "*umm al-kitab* is usually taken as a reference to the heavenly original or archetype of all revelation" (Droge, 2013. 31 n. 10). Meaning, "the Qur'an like the Torah and the Gospel, is only a portion of this all encompassing 'Book'." For example, Q 13: 39 states, "Allah eliminates what He wills or confirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book." According to this principle, some elimination and confirmation of earlier books in the Qur'an should be expected. However, it should not cause any problem, as God has the source book of all revelations, *i.e.* the *umm al-kitab*. This implies each scripture revealed from the *umm al-kitab* may accommodate differences of language, culture, and space-time particularities of the recipient community, etc. As an example, Q 43: 2-4 states, "2 By the clear Book! 3 Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand. 4 And surely it is in the mother of the Book, with Us, most high indeed, wise." In the explanation of Q 43: 3 Droge writes, an Arabic Qur'an in the sense of "meaning that it is a translation into Arabic of the heavenly archetype or 'mother of the Book' (cf. Q12.2; 13.37; 16.103; 20.113; 39.28; 41.3; 42.7; 46.12). The specification 'an Arabic Qur'an' (Ar. *qur'an 'arabiyya*) may imply the

existence of ‘Qur’ans’ (as it were) in other languages, ...” (Droge, 2013. 328 n. 3). The Qur’an seems to support this perspective. For example, the Qur’an calls the Torah and the Gospel each *al-kitab* (the Book)¹¹ just as it calls the Qur’an *al-kitab* (Khan, 2013. 38). Humankind does not know anything about the *umm al-kitab* with God except what is revealed by God. For example, they do not know how or if it is in written form, the language used to write (writing requires language but language is a humankind’s construction and not a divine construct). The idea of Qur’anic use of *al-kitab* for the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur’an seem to imply each book a new version or edition of the scripture from *umm al-kitab* (Khan, 2013. 38). Since according to the Qur’an, there will be no new scripture brought down after Qur’anic revelation, the Qur’an can be considered the final edition of the *umm al-kitab* in the Arabic language. The final edition like previous editions may negate some or all the particularities of earlier editions but not the essence of the *umm al-kitab*. It is a final edition in the sense that what humankind needs to know about getting divine guidance till the Day of Judgement is present in the Qur’an, and not in the sense that whatever *umm al-kitab* with God contains is fully available in the Qur’an. Thus, all revealed books from God have *muhkam ayat* only, as long as the authenticity of the scripture remains intact, and the previous (now corrupted) and present editions of the scriptures are not compared. Wild mentions one more evidence of this argument: “Muqatil b. Sulayman (d. 150/767) taught that the verses known as the ‘Essence of the Book’ ‘were not only preserved with God ... but also in the scriptures of all peoples’” (Wild, 2010. 427). The above discussion about *umm al-kitab* also points that there are no *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur’an.

Now let us turn our attention to the key point in the *ayah*, the identity of *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm*. In the Qur’an *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm* is used twice: Q 3: 7 and Q 4: 162. Similarly, the root *rsh* occurs in the same two *ayah* only. Q 4: 162 reads, “But those firm in knowledge [*al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilmi*] among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to you, (O Muhammad), and what was revealed before you. And the establishers of prayer (especially) and the givers of zakah and the believers in Allah and the Last Day – those We will give a great reward.” The *ayah* mentions an additional word *minhum* (in them) after *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilmi* compared to Q 3: 7. Who are *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm minhum*? The literary context of Q 4: 162 establishes without any doubt that *al-rasikhuna fi l-‘ilm* are some Jews at the time of the Prophet. The whole section from Q 4: 153-161 deals with the Jews *only*. The section informs how God has been forgiving the Jews throughout their history, while they have been disobeying God. Now they are asking the Prophet to bring a finished book from the sky as his miracle. God consoles the Prophet. The

Prophet should not be surprised from this demand. They have made even greater demands from Moses before him. In this context, we can be fully sure that among the Jews (*minhum*) there is a group of Jews who are *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm*. The *ayah* Q 4: 162 makes it abundantly clear that Muslims believers cannot be *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm*. The *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* are Jews who just like Muslim believers believe in what was being sent down to the Prophet, as well as what was revealed before him. As a matter of fact, these Jewish believers rejoice over what is being revealed to the Prophet (Q 13: 36). Q 2: 78 suggests that “among them (Jews) are unlettered ones who do not know the Scripture except in wishful thinking, but they are only assuming.” Hence, both group of Jews believe in the *muhkam ayat* of the Qur’an which they find in their scripture. As far as *mutashabih ayat* of the Qur’an in reference to the Torah are concerned, *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* Jews believe that they are also from God while non-*al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* Jews do not believe in *mutashabihat*. The irony is that their belief is based on wishful thinking and not on the actual reading of the Torah but still they insist on what they know and have no intention or desire to understand how *mutashabih ayat* are also from God. If the issue of *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* is related with the intertextuality of the Qur’an and the Torah, this implies that both *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* and non-*al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* must know the *mutashabih ayat* of the Qur’an. Further, *al-rasikhuna fi l-'ilm* may or may not know the meaning of *mutashabih ayat* but in either case they accept *mutashabih ayat* are also from God. This again shows that the issue of *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* is in reference to the differences between the Torah and the Qur’an but not within the Qur’an. Wild concludes, “‘ambiguous’ in Q 3:7 meant Qur’anic revelations that resembled but were not identical with passages in Jewish and Christian scriptures. Q 3: 7 thus tried to settle the problem of competing and sometimes conflicting authorities that included Christian and Jewish scriptures” when the Qur’an was being revealed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (Wild, 2010. 427).

Implications and Conclusion

If the above arguments about *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur’an are correct, what does it imply for the current believers who read the Qur’an to get guidance from it to live accordingly? The first implication is that they do not need to master the Science of *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur’an, as *mutashabih ayat* do not exist in the Qur’an. What shall the Muslim believers do about the Muslim tradition that has long lists of what Qur’anic *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat*

may mean? Since, all these lists are speculation of one kind or another, the believers may overlook them unless they are historians involved in the historical work of reconstructing the understanding of *muhkam* and *mutashabih ayat* in the Muslim tradition. The speculations in the Muslim tradition may be very logical and convincing, the question is what the Qur'an wants to say in Q 3: 7, particularly, when it provides another *ayah* (Q 4: 162) that clearly fixes the meaning of Q 3: 7 by identifying the Jews who see *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur'an when comparing them to the Torah. For believers this insight may allow them to unshackle the chains of about 1,400 years history of *mutashabih ayat* speculative theology in the Muslim tradition when they are reading the Qur'an.

If there are no *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur'an, does it mean there will be no difficulties in understanding it? According to Irfan A. Khan (d. 2018), a significant Qur'anic scholar who has deeply reflected on issues that block Qur'anic understanding, believes that difficulties in understanding will remain. However, their nature will be different. For example, Khan points to Q 93:7 which "states that the Prophet was looking for guidance, so his Lord guided him." This means that the first condition to get guidance from the Qur'an is to be looking for guidance, i.e. to have the desire to get guidance and working to look for it. Further, Khan believes the nature of understanding the Qur'an is like a communicative act between humankind and God. According to him, "There are problems when human beings try to communicate" even among themselves. Generally, "it takes time to understand each other. And often, if there is a lack of communication, the more we try to make ourselves clear to the other, the more we confuse that person."

If Muslim scholars and '*ulema* (religious leaders) do not or cannot produce counter critique of the arguments presented in this paper, then they face a serious question: shall they continue to teach their students and masses to learn the Science of *muhkam* or *mutashabih ayat* in the Qur'an or is it time that they acknowledge to by-pass the Muslim tradition on this issue?

Note

1. Please see Tanveer Azmat, "An Introduction to the Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Dr Irfan A. Khan;" also, Tanveer Azmat, "*Asbab al-Nuzul* and Irfan A. Khan: A Critical Review;" Tanveer Azmat, "*Revisiting al-Nasikh wal-Mansukh Genre*;" and Taqi ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah, "Muqaddimah fee Usool at-Tafseer," trans. Dr. M. Abdul Haq Ansari, *An Introduction to the Principles of Tafseer* (UK, Al-Hidaayah Press: 1993).

2. Sciences of the Quran are “debates about the Quran in terms of the cause of the revelation, collection and organization of the Quran, knowledge of *makkiy* and *madaniy* verses, *nasikh wa mansukh*, *al-muhkam wa al-mutasyabih* and other similar titles,” Mohamed Akhiruddin Ibrahim, “Ulum al-Quran Course in Higher Education Institutions: A Comparative Study of Selected Public Universities in Malaysia,” available at: <http://ijasos.ocerintjournals.org>.
3. Please see Q 12: 1; 15: 1; 18: 1; 26: 2; 27: 1; 28: 2; 41: 3; 43: 2; etc.
4. For example, Stefan Wild, “Self-Referentiality,” 429; Wild refers various sources of this genre: Leah Kinberg, “Muhkammat and Mutashabihat (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis;” Michel Lagarde, “De l’ambiguite (*mutashabih*) dans le Coran;” Jane Dammen McAuliffe, “Qur’anic Hermeneutics;” al-Sututi (d. 911/1505), *al-Itqan fi ‘ulum al-Qur’an*; Helmut Gatje, *Koran und Koranexegese*; al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), *Kashaf*; Daniel Gimaret’s partial commentary of Abu ‘Ali al-Jubba’i (d. 303/915).
5. Leah Kinberg, “Muhkammat and Mutashabihat (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis;” Kinberg also provides an excellent annotated bibliography on modern interpretation of *muhkammat* and *mutashabihat* in the appendix to her article.
6. Also see: Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-maqal wa-l-taqrib ma bayna shari‘a wal-l-ḥikma mina l-ittisal* (“The Authoritative Treatise and Exposition of the Convergence between Religious Law and Philosophy”).
7. I have shown that *Asbab al-Nuzul* genre is not reliable. Its evidence in the case of *Muhkammat* and *Mutashabihat* can be taken with a pinch of salt. In the paper, it is not the primary reason to accept the paper’s position regarding clear and ambiguous verses in the Qur’an. Please see: Tanveer Azmat, “*Asbab al-Nuzul* and Irfan A. Khan: A Critical Review.”
8. For details of each *sabab*, please see Wild, “Self-Referentiality.”
9. For the idea of “*clearly composed*” A. J. Droge refers to compare the idea with Q3.7; 22.52; 47.20; “*made distinct*: or ‘expounded’ (cf. Q6.114; 154; 7.52, 145; 12.111; 41.3, 44).”
10. The Corpus Qur’an:

<http://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=%24bh> accessed Dec. 18, 2019.

11. *Umm al-kitab* (The Mother Book) is also called in the Qur'an "hidden Book" (*kitab maknun*) Q 56: 78; "guarded Tablet" (*lawh mahfuz*) Q 85: 22.
12. For example, Q 3: 78, 2: 44, 2: 53, 2: 78, etc.

References

- Ansari, M. Abdul Haq (1993). *An Introduction to the Principles of Tafseer*. Trans. Muqaddimah fee Usool at- Tafseer by Taqi ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah. UK, Al-Hidaayah Press.
- Azmat, Tanveer (2020). *Revisiting al-Nasikh wal-Mansukh Genre. Islamic Perspective* 23, 57-72.
- Azmat, Tanveer (2019). *Asbab al-Nuzul* and Irfan A. Khan: A Critical Review. *Islamic Perspective* 22, 61-82.
- Azmat, Tanveer (2017). An Introduction to the Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Dr Irfan A. Khan. *Islamic Studies* 56 (1-2), 77.
- Droge, A. J. (2013). *The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- Gatje, Helmut (1971). *Koran und Koranexegese*. Zurich: Artemis.
- Gimaret, Daniel (1994). Partial commentary of Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 303/915). Louvain: Peeters.
- Ibrahim, Mohamed Akhiruddin (2016). Ulum al-Quran Course in Higher Education Institutions: A Comparative Study of Selected Public Universities in Malaysia. *IJASOS – International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*. Available at: <http://ijasos.ocerintjournals.org>.
- Khan, Irfan A (2013). *An Exercise in Understanding the Qur'an: An outline study of the last thirty Divine Discourses (Surah 85 – Surah 114)* 2nd ed. Chicago: The Association of Qur'anic Understanding.
- Kinberg, Leah (1988). *Muḥkamāt and Mutashabihāt (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis. Arabica* 35, 143-172.
- Lagarde, Michel (1985). De l'ambiguïté (*mutashabih*) dans le Coran. *Arabi* 3, 45-62.
- Wild, Stefan (2010). The Self-Referentiality of the Qur'an: Sura 3: 7 as an Exegetical Challenge. *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Ed. Jane. D. McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Georin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Truth and Reality of WorldViews: *Methodological Considerations*

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali

Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion

Shehzadi Madiha

Department of Quran and Sunnah Studies
Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences

Abstract

This article deals with the issue of the claims of the truthfulness and reality of worldviews. It is contended here that for an authentic and truthful worldview we need to follow a systematic rational and scientific method. Just speculation cannot help us to articulate a worldview. The authentic approach to the worldview formulation must be based on knowledge - true, authentic and universal. To establish the claim the empirical, historical and rational approaches are applied. It is based on knowledge instead of speculation and conjecture.

Keywords: Worldview, Modernity, Modern Educational System, Ethical Search, Modern Metaphysics.

Introduction

For any seeker of the truth, a glance over any aspect of the universe such as vegetation on the earth is sufficient to understand and differentiate between the true worldview and the false. The modern dominant view of life, society and the world expounded by modern philosophers does not accept the view of creation and thus denies its spirituality. Although, we see a great deal of empirical evidence that confirms the hand of the Creator in the creation of this world. The abundance of vegetation on the earth is supported by various constituent elements and factors for their growth and the laws of nature under which all this happens. Additionally, one can see perfect harmony everywhere in the universe and the countless needs and demands of all creatures are met. In spite of all this, it seems that only heedless people can say that this universe is a self-created phenomenon. It does not reflect the spirituality, knowledge, wisdom, power and design of an All-Wise, All-Knowing, All-Mighty, All-Powerful Creator.

There exists in the universe the perfect harmony between the earth and the heavens, between the sun and the moon, air and water. We also observe that the vegetation fulfil the needs of the innumerable forms of living beings. Having seen all this, does it stand to reason that this integrated system of the universe, with its laws, harmony and interconnections between its different parts and forces, is possible without the All-Wise and All-Powerful Creator? A truthful and realistic mind which has no preconceived bias is bound to give witness that there is an abundance of signs in the universe which indicate that there exists an All-Powerful Creator – the Only Creator – the Lord of the lords (Mawdudi, 2001, 55)¹.

The people of the modern world have accepted the view of human maturity and autonomy based on which they claim they could know everything about this world. Their determination has kept them engaged in a continuous assessment and examination of everything related to life, society and the world. It was/is argued that everything is open to further query and testing. Everything is subject to rational scrutiny and observational examination. The truth and reality about things may be refuted or accepted by new arguments. Critical thinking, hence, became an important tool for a clear and objective understanding of everything. The main goal was/is to achieve quality in life by knowing its truth and reality. Everyone wants to raise the quality of life. In simple words, people and their governments aspire for development of culture and civilisation. It is argued that everyone should enjoy the fruits of justice, prosperity, equal opportunities, human rights and good governance. This cognitive transformation included, “the growth of scientific consciousness, the

development of a secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, the primacy of instrumental rationality, the fact-value split, individualistic understanding of the self, contractualist understanding of society, and so on” (Gaonkar, 2001, 1-2).²

Governments and state agencies are focussing on political stability, economic growth, and scientific advancement and technological development for the well being of people. For this purpose, they argue that we need to plan to develop dynamic rational and empirically oriented personalities fully skilled and genuinely equipped with technology and a dynamic educational system. They see the educational system as a means to transform individuals into ethical beings capable of understanding. Reason became, for them, as the instrument of knowledge and arbiter of truth. It is asserted that it is science, not religion, which gives us the truth about nature. The pursuit of happiness in life has become as the final goal. An assumption that reason can and should be used to increase human well-being through economic and technological progress constituted an integral part of modernity. According to modernity, “the individual person is an end in himself with the capacity to direct his own life, not a slave or a child to be ruled by others; that individuals have equal rights to freedom of thought, speech, and action; that religious beliefs should be a private affair, tolerance a social virtue, and church and state kept separate; and that we should replace command economies with markets, warfare with trade, and rule by king or commissar with democracy”(Kelly, 2016, 1).³

The modern educational systems were developed based on this spirit. It is generally argued that a literate society is better than an illiterate one. Hence, people are asked to become more and more educated. To this end, a number of branches of knowledge and disciplines have been developed. All these branches of knowledge deal with aspects of the physical or metaphysical dimensions of life, society and the world. They all, it is believed, are engaged seriously in studying different aspects to give us knowledge about life, society and the world, and provide information and train our young ones in skills and techniques. In our contemporary societies, there is a lot of emphasis on the application of skills, techniques and technology.

Need for Change of Mode of Thinking and Analysis

Despite of our determination for a continuous assessment and examination and re-examination the reality is that the modern ways of thinking, understanding and analysis and the frameworks of rationality, empiricism, positivism etc. remain stagnant and beyond further assessment. These dominant modes of thinking,

understanding and analysis have been taken as granted. Some support the advocacy of the need of some improvement and addition of some new ways into the corpus of abovementioned theories. In spite of this the reality is that nobody is thinking outside the existing and dominant paradigms. Nobody is inclined to go beyond rational and empirical methods and raise the need to re-examine the philosophical foundation of modernity. Modernity and the dominant modes of thinking and understanding have been taken as final destinies. There does not seem to be a serious effort to re-examine the foundational ideas related to modernity and the ways of thinking, understanding and analysis. There is no discussion for change in existing modes of thinking based on a fresh view of ethical exercise.

Even ethics has been taken traditionally. There is no new meaning of ethics. There is no challenging voice. But a close examination of the happenings around the world reveals the fact that there is an urgent need of a radical change in our mode of thinking, understanding and analysis. I suggest that any kind of new inquiry, if we realise its necessity and urgency, has to be based on new foundational principles of thinking and understanding that must be beneficial for humanity.

Through a close examination of all existing ideas and concepts related to epistemology and methodology, especially in the presence of emerging problems of global warming, unprecedented range of natural calamities, growing number of biomedical problems we realise that the dominance of modernity and modern Western worldview seem to be detrimental for the safety and security of humanity. The reasons are not far away. However, if some people think differently, they are unable to turn the course of history. Does it mean that whatever is going on regarding thinking, understanding, analysis, knowledge, information, technology, skills, techniques, planning and production is not right? No. This is not something which requires fresh thinking. We need to think afresh about our view of life, society and the world. We should question whether things are going in line with the truth and reality of life, society and the world. Are our ways of thinking, understanding and analysis are authentic, truthful and realistic? We need to think these issues afresh because we had claimed that through scientific knowledge and rational understanding alone we would be able to understand the accurate description of truth and reality of life, society and the world (Bodenhorn, 2002, 4).⁴ We, therefore, made claims that we are autonomous and able to solve any of life's challenges using the power of reasoning, sense perception, observation and experiment.

But due to the emergent problems of life, we are forced to think afresh regarding our fundamental claims, especially our view of life, society and the world. Equally important is to rethink our views of thinking, understanding and analysis. We not only need to rethink but we need to think differently, correctly, rightfully, authentically. Can we survive any more without being critical and ethical? Are our present conditions of life satisfactory? Does not our commitment to critical thinking, empirical approach and rational understanding demand that we must think everything afresh?

Our existing views about the truth, reality and universality of life, society and the world are no exception. We, at the very outset, are bound to rethink about the truthfulness of our ideas about life, society and the world to make sure that we are marching on the basis of solid foundation and ethics so that we can continue our claim that we can have the knowledge of truth and reality of life, society and the world. Consequently, we are also bound to rethink our views of thinking, understanding and analysis so that we can achieve our noble goals in life, society and the world regarding civilisational development.

A Fundamental Question

Before proceeding further, we must ask a fundamental question: Are we sure our processes of thinking, understanding, observing and analysis are sound and authentic? Are they based on knowledge? In my view, the current and dominant process of thinking, understanding, observation, experiment, deduction, induction and analysis are not based on true, authentic and universal knowledge. We depend on human faculties to understand the truth and reality of life, society and the world which produce speculation and conjecture so far as the metaphysical truth and reality are concerned. The truth and reality of the existing phenomena are that we are in the process of creating knowledge using our faculties of reasoning and sense perception instead of applying knowledge. Our theories of rationalism, empiricism, relativism, pragmatism, positivism are obvious examples of our thinking process. We are doing our best to survive by our faculties. If this is true, then we ask ourselves: Do we understand what do we mean by human faculties, and are we ethical and authentic when we depend on our faculties?

We also claim that our knowledge and information are the result of our faculties. Our sciences – natural, applied, social or religious – are the manifestation of our reflection and observation, experience and measurement based on our faculties. Our reasoning and observation are the manifestations of our complete autonomy.

Therefore, for a long time, we did not question our understanding of thinking and analysis and the position of our faculties. We had long and exhaustive debates about epistemology and methodology, physics and metaphysics, philosophy and ethics. We are comfortable with our epistemological and methodological positions.

I contend that as a prerequisite to our fresh thinking and understanding, we first need to think and understand about the truth and reality of our faculties and also life, society and the world. In my view, the questions of the right way of thinking, understanding, mode of analysis and the truth and reality of human faculties, life, society and the world should have become the burning and important questions of our time. In modern world, we have contested that the most authentic way to live a meaningful and quality life is to guarantee a reasonable basis to life on the basis of ethical exercise. For this, we know, we depend on rational and empirical faculties. But the question here is: Can we afford to follow superstitions, assumptions, myths, dogmas and blind faiths? Can we depend on metaphysical speculation and philosophical conjecture instead of true, authentic and universal knowledge? Can we afford to erect the building of culture and civilisation on a foundation of life, society and the world which itself is based on speculation and conjecture? Can our dependence mere on faculties guarantee authenticity, truthfulness and reality?

Once again, I contend here that our search to get the answers to the questions of the truth and reality of human faculties, life, society, the world and the true and authentic ways of thinking, understanding and analysis must be sound and authentic. It needs to be based on true, authentic and universal knowledge about metaphysical dimension because there is no reason to ignore it and depend on speculation and conjecture. It is evident that our faculties do not work independently reasonably and satisfactorily so far as metaphysical domain is concerned.

Despite the full use of faculties, we are unable to solve the emerging problems. Hence, it seems to me that the faculty of reason and sense perception themselves are in need of true, authentic and universal knowledge. On the basis of historical and empirical evidence, we need to understand that our faculties in the domain of the metaphysical world demand genuinely the sound foundation of knowledge; not merely knowledge but true, authentic and universal knowledge. They cannot yield true, authentic, and realistic results. It seems to me that the historical and empirical record of the modern world which is full of crisis and chaos suggests that our quest for truth and reality of life on the basis of our faculties has resulted in uncertainty and scepticism. For our better survival along with our faculties, we need to be

supported by true, authentic and universal knowledge. The autonomy of our faculties has caused all the problems of modern life.

The Need for Ethical Search

I agree in principle with our basic claim that we want to live with the truth and reality of life, society and the world, and need to be rational and empirical. Our ethical foundation must be sound. However, the wish to be rational and empirical as well as truthful and realistic must be the result of a genuine ethical search, supported by empirical and historical evidence. However, due to our dependence on speculation and conjecture we cannot claim that our autonomy is genuine, our place is authentic, our understanding is truthful and realistic. My fundamental argument is that in our search to make us rational and empirical and to know the truth and reality of life, society and the world, we must be based ethically on knowledge.

To make our search ethical, we need true, authentic and universal knowledge. Our dependence on speculation and conjecture cannot be considered authentic and logical as our search is based on human faculties instead of true, authentic and universal knowledge. In my opinion, the negligence of knowledge was caused due to the lack of a proper ethical search and appropriate inquiry. This also happened due to certain historical conditions at the beginning of the dawn of the modern age in which most of the philosophers and thinkers, despite their sincerity and commitment to rational search and empirical understanding, became reactionaries, especially against religion due to its excesses. They did not make efforts to collect sufficient data due to their hastiness. They became prejudiced and biased about certain things.

Most of the philosophers, thinkers and scientists of the modern period did not realise that human faculties are not independent of other factors. They work within the framework of social and moral laws. For example, they failed to understand that moral laws or immoral traits influence human faculties. If people neglect moral laws and go along with immoral traits, they would fail to see the truth and reality of life, society and the world. There are many immoral activities that affect the process of thinking negatively. (The Qur'an, 2: 78).⁵

Under the influence of immoral traits, most of the philosophers speculated about the truth and reality of life, society and the world. They applied their arbitrary methods of thinking, understanding, and analysis. Subsequently, they developed a number of metaphysical, epistemological and methodological theories contrary to

rational, historical, empirical and ethical standards. Their arbitrary methods full of ethical, historical, empirical and rational flaws cultivated metaphysical ignorance, epistemological assumptions, reaction, and prejudice, and pride, hastiness along with scientific myths, metaphysical dogmas and blind faith. These characteristics are evident in modern philosophy of life.

Most of the philosophers, thinkers and even scientists of the modern period who advocate historical, scientific and rational approaches did so based on human faculties. Any rational research needs to be based on the sound foundation of true, authentic and universal knowledge. Doubt, scepticism, uncertainty, assumptions, and guesswork cannot be considered as sound foundations since the conclusions they produce are uncertain.

From a metaphysical point of view, philosophers in the modern age failed to understand the truthful and realistic position of human faculties. From a pure metaphysical perspective, the failure of philosophers, thinkers and scientists to properly understand the position of faculties of a human being caused a major erroneous philosophical blunder which resulted in making false claims of rationalism, scientism, positivism and empiricism. They did not realise that their views contradict one another as most of them accepted either rationalism or empiricism.

This characteristic of modern metaphysics is manifested in their epistemologies and methodologies. Finally, their dependence on human faculties resulted in the development of extreme ideologies and unrealistic isms which emphasise one aspect of something as important at the expense of the other. They did not apply for the study of life, society and the world a holistic and comprehensive knowledge-based approach. This can be seen in the development of the theories of individualism, materialism and pragmatism among others.

The Problem of Method

Although philosophers of science claim that they spend all their energies studying phenomena based on a scientific method, still one can see there are problems with their method and conclusions. For example, according to them, all things outside observation cannot be validated as true. “They arbitrarily rejected as false whatever they failed to comprehend and whose final sequel was not apparent to them” (The Qur’an, 10: 39).⁶

There can only be two justifications for rejection. Either they should have the knowledge of the metaphysics that they can say it is not real or they should authentically be able to demonstrate the grounds as being false. But as things stand, neither of these two reasons is available. No one can contend without knowledge that unobservable things are unreal. Nor has anyone been able to penetrate the realms of the supra-sensory world and claim, on that basis, that they know for certain that things out of reach are not real. Nor has anyone returned to life after having suffered death to contend that there are no metaphysical realities.

Those who continue to deny the truthfulness of the idea of the existence of the metaphysical realities are doing so on grounds of conjecture and speculation, even though they do this with an air of confidence which at times creates the impression that statements about the falsity of the metaphysical reality are scientific facts. There are many signs in the heavens and the earth which people pass by without giving any heed. They point to the reality of the metaphysical world. The true observation, therefore, is not the observation of the surface; rather it must go beyond the surface and see the reality of the metaphysical existence (The Qur'an, 12: 105).⁷

A comprehensive and holistic observation which goes beyond the surface will help us see beyond the superficial mechanisms of things to grasp their broader reality. Everything in the heavens and the earth has a physical existence and unobservable metaphysical reality. Hence, people who observe things as objects of purely physical existence fail to observe them in totality. Theirs is a physical observation that fails to capture their complete reality. Man has been endowed with senses and a rational mind to reflect the greater significance of something based on his observation. He is expected to go beyond physical observation and use his rational faculty on a quest for the unseen reality. In his quest, the natural phenomena serve as signs of that reality!(Mawdudi, 2001, 212)⁸

If people do not show curiosity for the unseen reality, it is incomplete observation. Due to this incomplete observation, people suffer from a state of apathy which leads them to erroneous ideas and doctrines. Such people virtually shut their power of observation and minds to the truth. Had they not done so, it would not have been difficult for them to appreciate the unobservable truth and reality. They would benefit from that truth and reality instead of denying their existence (Mawdudi, 2001, 212).⁹ That is the natural consequence of the apathy and heedlessness.

The same applies to rationality or the rational method. The philosophical inquiry which aims at discovering the truth and reality of life, society and the world based on the rational faculty ignores the importance of the existence of true, authentic and universal knowledge. In this method of inquiry, most things are assumed. For example, it is assumed that through philosophical/rational reflection, the underlying reality of the physical phenomena of the universe is ascertained. The truth and reality of everything are also determined by resorting to the philosophical/rational inquiry. The conclusion at which philosophers arrive does not depend on rational methods alone; rather it ends with assumption, speculation and conjecture. In this way, the rational method does not demonstrate its soundness.

It is generally argued that the method that is adopted by philosophers in their inquiry is rational. But the truth and reality are that it is a combination of both the speculation and reason. Let us examine this claim a little more. When philosophers claim that they are applying their rational faculty, it does not simply mean that they depend on reason which, in truth, is nothing less than conjecture and speculation so far as the issues of the metaphysical world are concerned. Without solving the metaphysical issues at the very beginning authentically and truthfully, we cannot proceed further. Rationality demands that we must resolve the metaphysical issues from the outset. Despite this, we still depend in our rational method on reason alone. Hence, we need to understand that conjecture and speculation have no sound grounding upon which one can stand rationally. But still, we call them logical reasoning and phoney rationalism and give them the imposing title of philosophical inquiry.

A deeper analysis of this argument, however, reveals that this kind of intellectual quest is essentially fallacious. Philosophers fail to realise that the real cause of the fallacious aspect of their inquiry is their negligence of the need for true, authentic and universal knowledge of the metaphysical world. Mere dependence on guesswork and conjecture based on assumptions in the pursuit of the truth and reality of life and the world is not sufficient. We perceive half reality but not the whole. For complete perception and cognition along with reason, we need true, authentic and universal knowledge of the metaphysical world.

The result is that philosophers are incapable of independently grasping total reality. They end up with incomplete cognition of reality. Their prejudice renders them incapable of arriving at any sound judgement regarding the truth and reality of life, society and the world.

To overcome these problems, we need to identify the fundamental causes of our failures. We do not have the consciousness that we are under the influence of metaphysical ignorance, epistemological arrogance and methodological assumptions due to which we do not bother to find the true, authentic and universal means which can guide us in our quest to truth, certainty and authenticity.

The Need for Scientific Rational Method

Philosophers have claimed in the sociology of knowledge that human beings opened their eyes in total darkness and went through primitive stages of life to mature and develop their faculties. Here, one needs to ask: are we left without knowledge and guidance? Do we have evidence for that? Don't we need to systematise all that through which we can come to know in such a manner that our reflections help us to testify to the reality underlying the phenomena. If we find sufficient grounds to affirm the truths propounded by our ethical search, we must accept our conclusions. Depending on speculation will not fulfil the criteria of rationality. To be sound in our ethical search, it must be based on relevant data. If data is relevant and its analysis is appropriate then we would be in a position wherein we can say something with certainty and authenticity.

In my view, the philosophers and thinkers failed to collect relevant. Based on incomplete data they made conclusions. Consequently, they could not draw truthful conclusions in line with the truth and reality of life, society and the world. For drawing truthful conclusions, they need to look for more relevant data. Are we sure that they had collected all the necessary data? Are we sure that we did not have any better source of data than the existing sources of rationality and sense perception as considered by philosophers? Do we have evidence that other than reason and sense perception there is no other authentic source, or this is the only assumption? We need to develop a better method of understanding that fulfils the criteria of rationality and scientific thinking and liberates our faculties from the clutches of assumptions, speculation and conjecture. It seems to me that our philosophers, thinkers and scientists did not utilise all the possible/available data when reaching their conclusions. Hence, they overlooked the need for knowledge and depended solely on speculation and conjecture.

The First Principles of The Foundation of Life and Society

Ethical Approach to Life

My fundamental contention is that the ethical search is the first principle for the foundation of life and society. Without ethics [rational exercise], we are unable to lay down a sound foundation of life, society and the world. Assumptions, speculation and conjecture are not helpful in this regard.

My view of ethics and ethical search is slightly different from the general view. I take ethics as a rational search and extend its scope to all the aspects of life, society and the world, physical and metaphysical. So, for me, an ethical inquiry is that which investigates the physical and metaphysical worlds and determine their truthfulness.

To begin with, I argue that our life is, no doubt, material in the sense that we have a material body which is surrounded by the physical world, but a reasonable ethical inquiry into the origin and development of life, society and the world suggests something else.

I contest that life is deeply rooted within the framework of ethics. Before we start to understand anything of this world, we need to understand the truth and reality of ethical search. It is an ethical search that helps us to understand the truth and reality of life, society and the world. In the modern world, philosophers and ideologues did talk about the truth and reality of life and the world. But it appears to me that they failed to understand the real meaning of truth and reality due to their misconceptions of ethics. Hence, they interpreted the 'truth' and 'reality' of material existence in terms of its mechanism. They could go beyond the mechanism and see the creator of that mechanism.

To elaborate, I will raise a few ethical questions: Is it true that life is only materialistic? Is the materialistic view of life based on true, authentic and universal knowledge? Can this materialistic view of life and the world be proved ethically sound supported by empirical and historical evidence? Do not this materialistic view of life and the world practically deny the need for ethical search as such? When we see a sound system and an organic mechanism in our body and nature, how can one explain this mechanism without its creator? Does it not mean that the ethical search so far conducted has its flaws?

The true nature of life, society and the world demonstrate its spiritual dimension. There is no disputing that we need to lay down a foundation of life based on truth and reality. When I consider ethics as a rational search, I also consider it as the first principle of cognition. Here I do not confine ethics to morality alone or to the study of the basis of morality as understood by the majority of people. I use ethics here as a rational inquiry into the origin and development of

life and society without confining it to the inquiry of the basis of morals alone. I, therefore, contest that the confinement of ethics to morals or the basis of morals is unethical. Hence, I conclude that to understand the truth and reality of life, society and the world, we need to lay down the foundation of inquiry based on a sound rational basis.

This ethical search cannot be conducted in the darkness of speculation and conjecture. It must be based on knowledge which alone can render us with truth and reality. To understand the truth and reality of life, society and the world we need both ethics and knowledge.

The term ethics is used interchangeably with morality. It is considered a rational inquiry into the study of the basis of morality. This understanding in my view is limited and destroys the true meaning of ethics. If ethics investigates the rightness and wrongness of morals, then this ethical search cannot be confined to morals alone. If it confines its scope, then it demonstrates certain flaws. Why is an ethical search confined to the study of morals alone? Why do ethics refer to the study on the basis of moral actions alone? If ethics is a rational search, then why is this rational search not extended to the study of other dimensions of life and the world? Why is its scope not open to include the inquiry into the study of the truth and reality of life, society and the world?

To be in line with the spirit of ethics and rationality, we need to include it in everything, especially to know the truth and reality of life, society and the world. Now, it is clear that the ethical search cannot be ignored so far as the knowledge of truth and reality is concerned. We, therefore, cannot depend for cognition of truth and reality on myths, dogmas, speculation, conjecture, assumptions, superstitions or guesswork. It does not seem to be reasonable to think that man is left in total darkness of metaphysical truth whereas we see all the necessary things, which are needed for the survival of man, have already been made available in this world. How, then, can we maintain that the issue of truth and reality of life is left at the mercy of speculation and conjecture?

There have always existed two approaches for understanding throughout history. One is adopted by philosophers, thinkers, scientists and scholars who depended for the answer to the question of truth and reality on their faculties of reason and sense perception. Since, the question of truth and reality of life belong to the metaphysical domain, the use of human faculties alone can only produce conclusions based on speculation and conjecture. Hence, the total dependence on reason and sense perception seems to be unethical.

The second approach is that which is adopted by a chain of messengers who confirm each other for being truthful regarding the knowledge of the metaphysical world. They say Allah SWT claims that He is the Creator of life and the world. Hence, He possesses the true, authentic and universal knowledge of life and the world which He granted to them through the process of revelation. He also claims that He possesses unlimited knowledge, unlimited wisdom and unlimited power over everything. Throughout history, Allah SWT claims He sent books containing true, authentic and universal knowledge to guide mankind. The Qur'an is such a book.

Allah SWT instructs people through the Qur'an that those who doubt Him or His claims can apply their faculties to testify to the truth of His claims. The study of the Qur'an, therefore, becomes an ethical necessity for true, authentic and universal knowledge [TAUK]. Once one refers to the Qur'an for this purpose, he finds that Allah SWT presented a very powerful ethical discourse full of rational arguments, historical and empirical evidence in favour of the existence of TAUK.

All the claims made by Allah SWT in the Qur'an for the existence of TAUK are open to examination and analysis. If he/she finds that the claims of Allah SWT are true, authentic and truthful, then he/she is bound ethically to accept them. Once we study this body of knowledge – TAUK - free from subjectivity, prejudice, pride and arrogance, we come to know the truth and reality of life and the world which is ethical, spiritual, moral, legal and consequential.

It is forcefully asserted in the Qur'an that life has an ethical basis. To establish the truthfulness and reality of this claim, it provides rational arguments and gets the support of empirical and historical evidence. Allah SWT followed in the Qur'an the most suitable method for explaining the truth and reality of life and the world. In this method, there is no room for blind faith, dogmas, myths, doctrines, superstitions, desires, fancies, imaginations, assumptions, distortions, presuppositions, biases, prejudices, reactions, hasty decisions, speculation, conjecture, illusions, enmity, hate, etc. This method has several important features which constitute the 'scientific' nature of the discourse of the Qur'an. According to which, without the state of knowledge as the basis, there is no possibility of true cognition and comprehensive observation of the state of reality. I call it the Scientific Rational Method.

First, it presents a very powerful ethical discourse to argue and prove the claims of the Qur'an. It is contended in that discourse that without the foundation of knowledge, no true cognition, observation or experience of the state of reality is

possible. According to this, Allah SWT, the Creator is the Creator of the entire universe (The Qur'an, 22: 3).¹⁰

Second, in this discourse, a critical evaluation of history and the views of philosophers, arrogant leaders and the founders of religions are made. Without reference to history, there is little possibility of true and comprehensive cognition of life and the world (The Qur'an, 2: 11).¹¹

Third, it presents a comparative analysis and examples of religions, people and rulers, especially of the past. This is required as a witness of history and fundamental facts of life to show that those who did not accept Allah SWT ultimately lost everything. [Allah has revealed the best teachings, a self-consistent Book which repeats its contents in manifold forms (The Qur'an, 39: 23)].¹²

Fourth, the discourse of the Qur'an is the result of the knowledge of Allah SWT which is His quality which implies that whatever is claimed in the Qur'an is based on His knowledge for which He does not depend on anyone else. Hence, whatever is contained in the Qur'an is nothing except knowledge – true, authentic and universal. Allah SWT like other thinkers and philosophers is not in the process of understanding the things and creating knowledge. He possesses knowledge of each and everything of the entire universe (The Qur'an, 7:52; 4: 166; 2: 145).

Fifth, it presents TAUK as the only source which is available for man for understanding the truth and reality of the metaphysical world. Man has no other source other than TAUK. His faculties do not help him to create true, authentic and universal knowledge. Human faculties are deemed to be tools of knowledge while the TAUK is the active source of truth and reality. It further claims that the knowledge of the truth and reality of life, society and the world is beyond the jurisdiction of human faculties. Whether man realises this or not, or likes it or not, he is bound to depend on TAUK which is presented by the Creator of man in the Qur'an (The Qur'an, 2: 2; 26: 192).¹³

Sixth, due to the emphasis on knowledge, Allah SWT rejects speculation, conjecture, imagination or guesswork. It forcefully, argues that every starting step of cognition, observation or experiment must be based on TAUK. There is no place for doubt, imagination or assumption in the process of cognition (The Qur'an, 11: 18-31).¹⁴

Seventh, it is also supported by a number of parables and examples. "We have indeed propounded for mankind all kinds of parables in this Qur'an that they may take heed."(The Qur'an, 12: 111)¹⁵

Eighth, it is followed by historical and empirical evidence. “We have explained things to people in myriad ways”(The Qur’an, 30: 58)¹⁶ and invited people to observe them(The Qur’an, 2: 164).¹⁷

Ninth, a few important themes have been repeatedly discussed. “Allah has revealed the best teachings, a self-consistent Book which repeats its contents in manifold forms”(The Qur’an, 39: 23).¹⁸

Tenth, every subject is presented in a simple way so that everyone can benefit from it. It is said in the Qur’an, “In the Qur’an We have explained things to people in myriad ways”(The Qur’an, 30: 58).¹⁹

Eleventh, it asks people to use the faculty of sense perception, followed by reason and expects thinking critically, reflecting analytically and finally understand deeply (The Qur’an, 10: 24).²⁰

Twelfth, thinking and reflection are not used at the very outset. They come after going through the process of ethical discourse, critical evaluation, presentation of historical events, comparative illustrations, and empirical evidence, use of parables, examples, repeated themes and simple statements (The Qur’an, 30: 23-26).²¹

This systematic arrangement is adopted to facilitate people’s ethical search and reflective understanding. I contend that from an ethical point of view, we need to depend on the second approach to know the truth and reality of life and the world instead of the first approach. The first approach which applies human faculties depends on conjecture and speculation. Hence, it does not fulfil the criteria of rationality nor the scientific method. Philosophers never realised the truth and reality of human faculties.

The second approach depends on the application of TAUQ as a result of which the truth and reality of life, society and the world become known to us. Allah SWT through TAUQ informs us that life and the world are not solely material as they have been misunderstood by the modern philosophers. They have been created by the Creator Allah SWT. Hence, life and the world have a spiritual existence along with material. The truth and reality of the existence of Allah SWT as the Creator of the universe and also the existence of TAUQ is established based on ethical discourse along with historical and empirical evidences. They are neither the result of human speculation nor superstitions and dogmas. Look at some of the ethical arguments of the Qur’an from Chapter 57 namely *Al-Hadid*.

All that is in the heavens and the earth extols the glory of Allah [57: 1].

Everything extols the glory of Allah SWT because:

He [Allah] is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise. His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death, and He has power over everything. He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of everything. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then established Himself on the Throne. He knows all that enters the earth and all that come forth from it, and all that comes down from the heaven and all that goes up to it. He is with you wherever you are. Allah sees all that you do (The Qur'an, 57: 1-4).

Allah SWT reminded us:

His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and to Him are all matters referred for judgement. He causes the night to pass into the day, and causes the day to pass into the night, and He fully knows all that is hidden in the breasts of people (The Qur'an, 57: 5-6).

After presenting these reasons and making everything clear, Allah SWT expects one should accept Him as his Lord, Master and must surrender to Him.

Believe in Allah and in His Messenger and expend of what He has entrusted to you. A great reward awaits those of you who believe and spend their wealth. How is it that you do not believe in Allah when the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord...(The Qur'an, 57: 7-8).

In continuation of the rational discourse it is said in Surah Al-Hadid:

He it is Who sends down Clear Signs to His servant so as to bring you out from darkness into light. Surely Allah is Most Kind and Most Compassionate to you. How is it that you do not expend in the Way of Allah when to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth (The Qur'an, 57: 9-10).

Who is it that will give Allah a beautiful loan? A loan that Allah will repay after increasing it many times and grant him a generous reward (The Qur'an, 57: 11).

He further reminds us:

Know well that Allah revives the earth after it becomes lifeless. We have clearly shown Our signs to you, perchance you will use your reason (The Qur'an, 57: 17).

Verily those who give alms – be they men or women, - and give Allah a beautiful loan shall be repaid after increasing it many times; and theirs shall be a generous reward (The Qur'an, 57: 18).

Additional arguments provided by Allah SWT for our reflection and understanding include:

Know well that the life of this world is merely sport and diversion and adornment and an object of your boasting with one another, and a rivalry in the multiplication of riches and children. Its likeness is that of rain: when it produces vegetation it delights the tillers. But then it withers and you see it turn yellow, and then it crumbles away. In the Hereafter there is either grievous chastisement or forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure. (The Qur'an, 57: 20).

The life of this world is nothing but delusion. So vie with one another in seeking to attain your Lord's forgiveness and a Garden whose width is as the width of the heaven and the earth, one which has been prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. That is Allah's bounty which He bestows upon those whom He pleases. Allah is the Lord of abounding bounty (The Qur'an, 57: 20-21).

Again, the power of Allah SWT is presented as an argument:

No misfortune ever befalls on earth, nor on yourselves but We have inscribed it in the Book before We make it manifest. Surely that is easy for Allah. We do so that you may not grieve over the loss you suffer, nor exult over what He gave you. Allah does not love the vainglorious, the boastful, those are niggardly and bid others to be niggardly. And he who turns away, should know that, Allah is Self-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy (The Qur'an, 57: 22-24).

And We sent down iron, wherein there is awesome power and many benefits for people, so that Allah may know who, without even having seen Him, helps Him and His Messengers. Surely Allah is Most Strong, Most Mighty (The Qur'an, 57: 25).

The abovementioned discourse in *Al-Hadid* shows that life is ethical, spiritual, moral, legal and consequential, the denial of which equals to the denial of truth and reality. The Qur'an is full of this kind of ethical discourse. The main goal of the revelation of the Qur'an, with an ethical discourse, is to raise consciousness of the

need of an ethical approach to life. Myths, superstitions, dogmas, guess works cannot show us the truth and reality of life and the world.

They do not realise that in truth they are only deceiving themselves (The Qur'an, 2: 9); Whenever they are told: 'Do not spread mischief on earth', they say: 'Why! We indeed are the ones who set things right'. They are the mischief makers, but they do not realise it. (The Qur'an, 2: 12- 13); Whenever they are told: 'Believe (understand) as other believe (understand)', they answer: 'Shall we believe as the fools have believed'? Indeed it is they who are the fools, but they are not aware of it (The Qur'an, 2: 14); They are like him who kindled a fire, and when it lit up all around him, Allah took away the light (of their perception) and left them in utter darkness where they can see nothing (The Qur'an, 2: 18); Just think (The Qur'an, 2: 30); Have you no sense? [2: 43]; Thus does Allah bring the dead to life and thus does He show His signs that you might understand [2: 73]; Are they unaware that Allah knows all that they hide and all that they disclose? [2: 77]; Are you not aware that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belong to Allah, and that none besides Allah is your protector or helper? [2: 107]; those who use their reason (to this truth) there are many signs in the creation of the heavens and the earth [2: 164]; Truly in that is a sign for you, if indeed you are men of understanding –faith [2: 248]; Thus does Allah make His teachings clear to you that you may reflect [2: 266]; Yet none except men of understanding take heed [2: 269]; No one derives true admonition from anything except the men of understanding [3: 7]; In this there is surely a lesson for all who have eyes to see [3: 13]; Do they not reflect on themselves? [30: 8]; Have they not travelled through the earth that they may observe what was the end of their predecessors who were far mightier and tilled the land and built upon it more than these have ever built? [30: 9]; Surely there are signs in this for those who reflect [30: 21]; Indeed there are signs in this for the wise [30: 22]; Indeed there are signs in this for those who hearken [30: 23]; Indeed there are signs in this for those who use their reason [30: 24]; Thus do We make plain the signs for those who use reason. But the wrong-doers follow their desires without any knowledge 30: 28-29]; Do they not see that Allah enlarges and straitens the sustenance of those whom He pleases? There are signs in this for those who

understand – believe [30: 37]; This is the Blessed Book that We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), that people with understanding may reflect over its contents and those with understanding derive a lesson [38: 29]; There are signs for people who use reason [45: 5] Verily there are signs in this for those who reflect [45: 12]; Will you not take heed? [45: 23]; Tell them, (O Prophet): “Did you consider (what would be your end) if this Qur’an were indeed from Allah and yet you rejected it? [46: 9]; Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alteration of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding [3: 190]

Spiritual Approach to Life

Here I am not taking spirituality in a religious sense concerned with religion or religious matters, inner sensitivity or attachment to religious values and so-called spiritual development. Spirituality in one sense refers to an ultimate or immaterial reality; an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of their being; or the ‘deepest values and meanings by which people live. There has always been a universal quest to find answers to questions such as what is the meaning of life? What is its beginning and end? Does existence have a purpose? How should we answer these questions? Spirituality is related to all these questions. Hence, it is defined as a search for understanding answers to ultimate questions about existence, life and its purpose, afterlife and the relationship to other creatures. In short, spirituality refers to the creation and its purpose by a powerful Creator.

We did not create in sport the heavens and the earth and all that lies between the two (The Qur’an, 21: 16)

Existence is created with a plan and purpose. It is unrealistic and untrue to understand that man and other creatures have been created without purpose and left free to live and do as people like, and that none will be called to account. The spiritual truth is that there is another life after this worldly life wherein the rule of law will be executed. In the next Life, we are accountable for our present life. We will be rewarded or punished according to our performance in this world. All this amounts to saying that the universe has been created with purpose. It is not a game, sport or play. We all have to return to our Creator. This world is indeed a serious place wherein evil and falsehood have their values. If anyone considers this world merely as an arena for sport and entertainment, or as a platform for working out whatever one likes or develops arguments for false premises, one will end up

destroying one's self. One should remember that the study of human history is extremely instructive. "All those nations which considered this world to be nothing more than amusing theatre, or an opportunity for self-indulgence, or who embraced other false doctrines in place of the truth expounded by the Prophets [pbwt], have again and again been led to their doom. How unwise it is, then, for people to deride those who tender sincere advice, and then when they come face to face with Allah's scourge, they cry: 'Woe to us: surely we were wrong-doers'"(Mawdudi, 1995, 258).²²

And it is He Who has endowed you with life and it is He Who causes you to die, and it is He Who will then resurrect you. Man is indeed extremely prone to denying the truth (The Qur'an, 22: 66).

However, in modern times, it is claimed that the success of science has undermined any source other than science which can answer the questions of metaphysical truth. The claim to the success of science is subject to question. It is reasonable to assess the rationality of the claim of science. In my opinion, this claim of science has failed to provide authentic, truthful and realistic answers as all the claims of science are not capable to genuine scrutiny based on rational standards and arguments with the support of historical and empirical evidence. Evidence has not confirmed the claim of science that the world is entirely physical and material. What is confirmed by science is that this universe follows a well-designed system. Despite this, science insists that there exist no metaphysical reality. It also claims we do not need any other source of knowledge except science. In this way, we deny not only the truth of the metaphysical world but also the need for universal values and norms. Rather, we claim it is we who can develop our values, norms and morals. We made everything relative and simply assume if anything is important in life, it is social agreements and cultural conditioning, as existence has no ultimate meaning or value.

In contrast, we find strong evidence that there exists a reality and truth. There is meaning in life which requires values and morals. The Qur'an establishes that Allah SWT is the Creator of the universe: "O mankind, serve your Lord Who has created you as well as those before you; do so that you are saved" (The Qur'an, 2: 21).²³ The reasons for accepting Allah SWT as the Lord of the universe are: "It is He Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky a canopy, and sent down water from above with which He brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Do not, then, set up rivals to Allah when you know – the truth"(The Qur'an, 2: 22).²⁴

This spiritual dimension of life and the world is explained repeatedly in the Qur'an: "How can you be ungrateful to Allah Who bestowed life upon you when you were lifeless, will later cause you to die and will again bring you back to life so that you will be returned to Him" (The Qur'an, 2: 28). We are asked to look at this proclamation of the Qur'an: "He is Allah: there is no god but He; the Knower of the unseen and the manifest, He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. He is Allah: there is no god but He: the King, the Holy, the All-Peace, the Giver of security, the Overseer, the Most Mighty, the Overpowering, the All-Great. Exalted is He from whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Planner, Executor and Fashioner of creation. His are the names most beautiful. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth extols His Glory. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise" (The Qur'an, 59: 22-24). Allah SWT made it clear to us that it is He who established us in the earth and arranged for our livelihood according to our needs, but we hardly recognise it and give thanks to Him (The Qur'an, 7: 10). He said: "For He it is Who appointed you vicegerent over the earth, and has exalted some of you over others in rank that He may try you in what He has bestowed upon you. Indeed your Lord is swift in retribution, and He is certainly All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate" (The Qur'an, 6: 165). "We assuredly established you in the earth and arranged for your livelihood in it. Little do you give thanks" (The Qur'an, 7: 10).

All things necessary for the existence and survival of man had already been created before the creation of man. Can we deny this fact of our existence? Hence, Allah SWT says He has the right to call people for account: "So We shall call to account those to whom Messengers were sent, and We shall to account the Messengers (to see how dutifully they conveyed the Message, and how people responded to it). Then We shall narrate to them with knowledge the whole account. For surely We were not away from them. The weighing on that Day will be the true weighing: those whose scales are heavy will prosper, and those whose scales are light will be the losers, for they are the ones who have been unjust to Our signs" (The Qur'an, 7: 6-9).

All this shows, beyond doubt, that on the Day of Judgement no consideration will be given weight other than acceptance of truth. Acceptance or rejection of truth will be the sole criteria of judgement. A life of falsehood, however long it lasted, and however full of worldly achievements, will carry no weight on the Day of Judgement. This fact has been expatiated upon in the Qur'an: "Shall We tell you of those who are greatest losers in respect of their deeds? It is those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they believed that they were acquiring good by their

deeds. They are those who deny the signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter). So their works are in vain and were shall attach no weight to them on the Day of Judgement” (The Qur’an, 18: 103-105). We find in the Qur’an some more statements that possess the same message. Their study helps to understand the truth and reality of this world and also the next.

The Achievements of Past Nations

Allah SWT, who is All-Knowledgeable, All-Wise and All-Powerful, out of His mercy and blessings and kindness, cautions us about the consequences of the rejection of truth; rejection of the true purpose of life and true, authentic and universal knowledge, and the universal morals approved by Him. At one place in the Qur’an Allah SWT admonished mankind. He said:

Did they not journey in the land that they may behold the end of those who had gone before them? They were more numerous and greater in strength and left behind more splendid traces in the land. Yet their attainments did not avail them. When their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they arrogantly exulted in whatever knowledge they had (The Qur’an, 40: 82-83).

The abovementioned quote from the Qur’an expounds that those who denied the truth and TAUK and depended on their arbitrary knowledge, lost everything. They were the great losers. They went against the true purpose of life and did evil on earth. All that which they earned was of no benefit to them. Whatever knowledge they had, they considered was more than enough for them. They were satisfied with their so-called empirically, speculative or inherited knowledge. Due to their arrogance, they considered man as ‘self-sufficient’ and, therefore, denied the need for guidance by the Sustainer. They rejected whatever ethical and spiritual truths were offered to them by the Prophets [pbut]. Allah SWT again reminds and asks people:

Do they not see how many a civilisations or people We have destroyed before their time whom We had given a [bountiful] place on earth, the like of which We never gave unto you [O Prophet Muhammad], and upon whom We showered heavenly blessings abundant, and at whose feet We made running waters flow? And yet We destroyed them for their sins, and gave rise to other people in their stead. (The Qur’an, 6: 6).

The rejection of spiritual truths inevitably springs back on the life of rejectionists. Such an attitude not only has a disastrous effect on their lives after death, it also destroys the moral basis of their society and their earthly happiness. All the archaeological remains and historical records of the ancient nations genuinely give evidence to how they met their disastrous ends through turning away from truth and honesty and persistently persisting in their devotion to falsehood. In addition, they took their philosophy and their science, their law, mythology and theology invented by philosophers and religious leaders as the real knowledge, and regarded the knowledge brought by the Prophets [pbut] as worthless and therefore paid no heed to it. Allah SWT said in the Qur'an:

How many a nation did We destroy before them that were stronger in prowess [competent] than these. They searched about the lands of the world. But could they find a refuge? Verily there is a lesson in this for everyone who has a [sound] heart and who listens with an attentive mind (The Qur'an, 50: 36-37).

Here Allah SWT gives the example of previous nations who were not only powerful and strong in their land but had also made incursions into other lands and brought under their sway far off lands. But the question is, could their power and might save them when the time appointed by Allah SWT came for their seizure? They had rejected the truth and committed evils. When Allah SWT decided to punish them, they could not find any shelter and refuge. Now, on what trust do we hope that we will get refuge when we have rebelled against Allah? He said in the Qur'an:

[O Prophet], how many are the cities that had greater power than your city that drove you out? We destroyed them and there was none to protect them. Then, can he, who is on a Clear Guidance from His Lord, by like him whose evil deeds have been embellished to him, and who pursued their lusts? (The Qur'an, 47: 13-14).

Allah SWT gives the example of another nation who dwelled "in mountains and exult in that" (The Qur'an, 26: 149) but due to its denial of truth and spirituality could not survive. Commenting on their contribution, a commentator writes: Just as the *Ad* were famous for their high, collonaded buildings, the *Thamud* were renowned for carving beautiful buildings out of the hills. Citing several nations as example, Allah SWT asked people of the world in the past and even asks today to reflect upon their fate.

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with Ad of Iram, known for their lofty columns, the like of whom no nation was ever created in

the lands of the world? And how did He deal with Thamud who hewed out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the tent pegs who transgressed in the countries of the world, spreading in them much corruption? Then their Lord unloosed upon them the lash of chastisement. Truly your Lord is ever watchful (The Qur'an, 89: 6-14).

There was always a fallacious argument that people and nations are more powerful and prosperous than those who do not follow the path of truth. Even today, it is asked as to who enjoys higher standards of living. The answer is provided in the Qur'an:

How numerous are the peoples We destroyed before them – those that were more resourceful and grander in outward appearance! (19: 74).

Whatever was done by people regarding development was all for the sake of show. They wanted to demonstrate their wealth, skills and power while the buildings were devoid of spirituality. This was typical of a decadent society. Our present societies are no more different from past societies every nation is planning to be either the major power or supper power. The Covid-19 has demonstrated that material and technological advancement in our time fail to protect us from recurring natural calamities and diseases. Today, the poor cannot find the bare minimum of shelter, while the rich and affluent erect stately palaces. What a development for which we all aspire!

We are making the world attractive and indulge in it whole-heartedly. We are tempted so much that we forget everything other than worldly enjoyment and achievement. We do not have any concern with the truth. We are satisfied with our lifestyles. We deceptively see ephemeral benefits and advantages of worldly life so attractive that, on one side we compete with one another in this race and, on the other, we forget about our real position as *abd* and vicegerent of Allah SWT and accountability to Him in the Hereafter.

No doubt we are responsible for our erroneous deeds. We consider the worldly life overly attractive. No doubt philosophers, thinkers and scientists point out false doctrines in opposition to the truth and invite us to falsehood instead of truth and good. No one has the power to compel us to live a certain way. We have the option to choose and will certainly be held responsible for our actions (The Qur'an, 15: 3).

Throughout history, people are rebuked for constructing grand buildings. The buildings, the so-called symbol of development in our times, fulfil no genuine need. They are designed only to make spectacular display of affluence and grandeur of a

few people whereas there are hundreds of slum areas in which millions of people live. There is a need for useful buildings; however, people devote their immense wealth, skill and effort in making them grandiose, attractive and durable as though they are going to live in this world forever, and as though the only purpose of their life is to live luxuriantly with no concern for accountability, sense of punishment or reward. The discussion about the next world, accountability, punishment and reward is not realistic and scientific. It is relevant only in religious discourse.

A deeper look into this kind of mentality illustrates the most conspicuous manifestations of degeneration. Alas to our intellectual decadence that we take them as the symbol of civilisational development.²⁵

Concluding Remarks

In the Qur'an, the causes that lead us to the truth or falsehood are made understandable. The choice to choose the right or wrong path lies with us. No external factors are responsible. The proper use of natural endowments, the power of discernment and decision, volition and choice are all our responsibility. No one can hold external factors responsible. Our rise or fall rests with us. If we can examine ourselves critically, we would be able to appreciate the factors which would guide us on the road to destruction and ultimately lead to our undoing. The destruction of a nation is not caused by outside factors (The Qur'an, 17: 13).

This is the Law of Nature devised by Allah SWT. Such is human psychology that when a man thinks that the results of the struggle in this life are limited to this world, when he is not convinced that there is another Court of Law in which the whole of his life will be judged and a final verdict passed on his performance, when he is not sure that there will be another life following the present one – a life wherein he will receive the true measure of reward and punishment in consideration of his thought and actions – he is bound to develop a materialistic worldview. All discussion concerning the conflict between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, and between morality and immorality appear to him as meaningless. Whatever can bring him pleasure, enjoyment, material betterment and luxuriant living, and whatever can endow him with power and authority will seem good to him, regardless of all moral and philosophical considerations. He will be scarcely concerned with truth and reality. His only goal will be the pursuit of worldly advantage, and this will make him wander in every direction. Whatever he does to achieve this seems to him worthwhile, and he will think that those who do not similarly pursue the good of this world are nothing but fools. Such a person is

willing to do anything conducive to that end with impunity and is likely to be impervious to all moral considerations.

Seized with this mode of thinking and behaviour, a man's false ideas and evil deeds become attractive and charming. Making evil deeds attractive is sometimes attributed to Allah SWT and sometimes to Satan. When it is attributed to Satan, it means that Satan presents those people who subscribe to a materialistic worldview with an imaginary picture of seductive heaven and continually prods him, saying: "Go ahead, you are doing well"(Mawdudi, 2001, 137).²⁶ During the modern period, man in the name of liberty and freedom became a slave to many things such as scientific dogmas, his desires and whims and wishes.

Whatever is mentioned in the Qur'an is not fiction. They are not mere figments of the human imagination. Rather, such things were revealed by Allah SWT – All-Wise and All-Knowledgeable whose knowledge encompasses everything (Mawdudi, 2001, 138).²⁷

Note

1. Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, Towards Understanding the Qur'an, English Version of Tafhīm al- Qur'an, translated and edited by Zafar Ishaque Ansari, Vol. 7, Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, note 5, p 55
2. Gaonkar, Dilip P. "On Alternative Modernities" in Alternative Modernities, edited by Gaonkar, Dilip P, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001, 1-2].
3. David Kelley, Modernist Culture, and the Islamic Threat, <http://www.liberalinstitute.com/KelleyModernity 1.html>. (accessed 3 January, 2016).

4. Terry Bodenorn, *Defining Modernity*, U of M Centre for Chinese Studies: 839 Greene Street Ann Arbor, MI 48104-3209, 2002, 4.
5. Among the immoral traits, one can include wrong-doings; aggression; committing things wickedly; spreading mischief on earth; knowingly distorting the truth; cherishing baseless wishes and merely following conjecture [2: 78]; following vain desires; attributing to the truth something about which they have no knowledge [2: 80]; shedding the blood of one another; turning out one another from their homelands; killing one another; committing sins and enmity; acting always arrogantly; downgrading others; calling others liars; denying persistently the truth; refusing to accept the truth after knowing it; consoling themselves with evils and wrong-doings; denying the guidance and knowledge and following merely desires and conjecture; not showing any evidence in favour of claims to the truth; speaking merely conjecture without realising it; speaking without knowledge; giving importance without consciousness to desires instead of knowledge; not taking any evidence seriously; insisting to follow vain desires; following desires and showing disregard to the knowledge; concealing knowingly the truth; doubting everything; buying error in exchange for true guidance [2: 175]; taking the signs of the truth in jest and ignoring it; bringing people out of light into all kinds of darkness [2: 257]; arriving at conclusions arbitrarily...[3:7]; sticking to crookedness; looking for worldly enjoyments; neglecting the knowledge of truth and committing excesses against one another [3: 19]; confounding the truth with falsehood; concealing the truth knowingly [3: 71]; falsely fixing a lie against the truth, and doing this wittingly; following baseless superstitions; helping one another in sin and transgression; taking the words of truth out of their proper context and distorting their meaning; going behind falsehood and committing unlawful things; going beyond at the cost of the truth; following error and causing others to go astray, and straying people far away from the right path [5: 77].
6. The Qur'an, 10: 39.
7. The Qur'an, 12: 105.
8. Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, English Version of Tafhim al-Qur'an, translated and edited by Zafar Ishaque Ansari, Vol. 7, Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, p 212.
9. Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, Vol 7, p 212.
10. The Qur'an, 22: 3; 23: 12-27; 25: 4-19.
11. The Qur'an, 2: 11.
12. The Qur'an, 39: 23.
13. See, The Qur'an, 2: 2; 26: 192; 27: 6; 32: 2; 40: 1-2; 25: 1.
14. The Qur'an, 11: 18-31.
15. The Qur'an, 12: 111; 13: 2-13; 39: 27.
16. The Qur'an, 30: 58.

17. The Qur'an, 2: 164.
18. The Qur'an, 39: 23; 10:24; 29:19-20; 30:21-22; 45:12-13.
19. The Qur'an, 30: 58.
20. The Qur'an, 10: 24; 29: 19-20;30: 7-9; 30 :20-22; 45: 12: 13.
21. The Qur'an, 30: 23-26; The Qur'an, 11: 18-31.
22. The Qur'an, 12: 111; 13: 2-13; 39: 27.
23. The Qur'an, 30: 58.
24. The Qur'an, 2: 164.
25. The Qur'an, 39: 23; 10:24; 29:19-20; 30:21-22; 45:12-13.
26. Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, Towards Understanding the Qur'an, Vol. 5, 1995, p. 258.
27. The Qur'an, 2: 21.

References

- Ali, Abdullah Yousuf, The Holy Qur'an, English translation of the meaning and Commentary, King Fahad Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, Al-Madinah Al-Munnawarah [N.D]
- Asad, Mohd, The Message of the Qur'an, The Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2013
- Hussain, Mohd Yusuf, Towards Developing an Integrated Research method in Human Sciences, I IUM PRESS, Kuala Lumpur, 2009.
- Iqbal, Muzaffar [General Editor], Center For Islamic Sciences, Canada, 2013
- Khan, Irfan Ahmad, An Experience in Understanding the Qur'an, Association for Qur'anic Understanding, Kazi Publication, Chicago, 2010
- Khan, Irfan Ahmad, Reflections on the Qur'an, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, 2005
- Rahman, Fazlur, Major themes of the Qur'an, Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 1999

Hilary Kornblith's Stance on Conceptual Analysis and its significance for Islamic philosophy

Houman Afrah'siabi

PhD Researcher

Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies

Tehran-Iran

Abstract

Kornblith, as an epistemological naturalist, opts for a reliability account of knowledge. He verbalizes his debt to two figures in epistemology: Alvin Goldman and Willard Van Orman Quine. Goldman's impact on Kornblith's epistemology was inspiring him with his reliabilism. Quine, on the other hand, provided the grounds for naturalizing epistemology, raiding conceptual analysis and subsuming epistemology under psychology as a scientific discipline. By integrating epistemology into psychology, Quine provided an archetype and acted as an advance guard for a new approach to epistemology. Kornblith has received inspiration from these, but has not restricted himself to Goldman's version of reliability, nor has he adopted Quine's vague normativity. He has attempted to manipulate practical psychology to forge grounds for his naturalistic epistemology. However, he has failed to advance a successful alternative stance intended to resolve the problems of traditional epistemology. His achievement, though, is revealing some flaws of traditional epistemology and conceptual analysis. On the other hand, Islamic philosophy does use conceptual analysis when it deals with definition. All in all, Kornblith's position against conceptual analysis does not undermine Islamic philosophers' justification for their use of conceptual analysis.

Key Words: Conceptual Analysis, Traditional Epistemology, Reliabilism, Naturalistic Epistemology, Cognitive Ethology, Islamic Philosophy.

Introduction

This essay examines and refutes Hilary Kornblith's perspective on conceptual analysis. It aims to explain that conceptual analysis is similar to what Islamic philosophers use in their discussion of definition, and refuting Kornblith's stance on conceptual analysis lends support to the subject of definition in Islamic philosophy's logic. First, the essay compares Kornblith's characterization of a layman's and a scientist's concepts. Then, it presents Kornblith's justification for categorizing knowledge as a natural kind. The development of knowledge in animals based on the concept of responsible behavior is explained in the next section. In the following part Kornblith's grounds for rejecting introspection as a mental phenomenon which can rectify errors are enumerated. Reliabilism and its role in epistemology comes next. The essay also explains why Kornblith believes animals have a more cognitive sophistication than is normally thought. In the final section, the essay argues its criticism of Kornblith's stance lends support to Islamic philosophy's use of conceptual analysis in logic.

Rejection of Descartes' internalism and undermining intuition

Kornblith believes Rodrick Chisholm, though an internalist in justification, has allowed us to better appreciate how much could be achieved within the Cartesian framework (Kornblith¹,2003:601). He does not restrict himself to Chisholm's clarifications on Descartes' justification. He sets out to repudiate the Cartesian internalist stance with his rejection of the efficiency ascribed to reflection as a source of justification.

Having rejected Cartesian view of knowledge and internalism, Kornblith makes two moves. His first move is making a linguistic assumption which undermines the epistemological status of concepts in traditional epistemology obtained from the layman's intuition and philosophers' conceptual analysis. He rejects conceptual analysis as a pivotal method used in traditional epistemology. He grants knowledge the status of a natural kind which should be studied scientifically. Thus, he tries to eliminate conceptual analysis as a generally used method in traditional epistemology. He appoints science as the sole legitimate agent which can study knowledge. He subsumes epistemology under experimental science, namely ethology, as the discipline which is to study knowledge. In his second move,

Kornblith sets evolution the task of providing the theoretical basis for his epistemology.

A layman's concepts vs. a scientist's concepts

In Kornblith's view, different degrees of accuracy are observable in the semantic metamorphosis of a term in its journey from the stage where it is in common use, to that of a term where it has taken on its semantic content based on a long period of modifications. These happen due to innumerable scientific observations and experimentation. Initially, a given individual might have erroneous beliefs about an object based on intuition. Step by step, however, the experimental nature of the decrees obtained from observation and tests elevates the scientific accuracy of the concept. Accordingly, a gradual approximation and a process of steady rectifications broadens the scientist's knowledge.

Kornblith compares a scientist's behavior to that of a collector. He picks and chooses the best samples. Intuition contributes to the act of choosing representative samples in the early steps of learning about things. At the outset, a scientist might have a rough idea of what the object under observation is. Their idea might as well be erroneous in some aspects. Yet, this does not get in the way of the process of formation of the intended knowledge. For instance, our image of a mineral develops as we work our way up to perfection. As the scientist carries out more observations and experiments, their image of it becomes progressively more precise.

Based on this understanding, Kornblith argues that the non-specialist intuitional concept in a layman's mind cannot serve as the basis for our knowledge of nature due to its inaccurate nature. In the same vein, he rejects analysis of concepts as the single main pathway towards our knowledge of the world.

He argues: "Language use is not essential to knowledge", (Kornblith, 2002: 102). This decree is the claim presented as his grounds for marginalization of conceptual analysis. As a naturalist, in practice, he chooses experimental philosophy as the discipline which dictates the new methods and determines our orientation in epistemology. He resorts to ethology and evolution in his description of the knowledge and explanation of its formation. Thus, the overall nature of epistemology undergoes a colossal transmutation from an analytic discipline to an experimental one.

Knowledge and belief as natural kinds

Kornblith claims that: “current evidence supports the view that we are innately disposed to form conceptual theories which presuppose a certain substantive claim about the world, namely, that there are natural kinds which are what they are in virtue of unobservable features of the kind” (Kornblith², 1993, 81). He maintains that knowledge too is a natural kind which should be studied by psychology as a branch of science, the rightful means of gaining knowledge. He argues that the view claiming that knowledge and belief cannot be natural kinds relies on the claim that there are two strata of knowledge and belief: first-order beliefs and second-order beliefs. He does not believe human knowledge is a two-tier entity. He believes in universal animal knowledge which is the fruit of evolution throughout history. The major argument that he puts forward against the notion of two order beliefs is that the second-order beliefs are merely another group of beliefs. They just unnecessarily add to the number of hypotheses that are conjured up to explain knowledge.

In “The Metaphysical Status of Knowledge” (Kornblith, 2007:162), he surveys various depictions of the stance that claim belief and knowledge cannot be natural kinds: that belief and sensitivity to reason require second order mental states, that the propositional attitudes are inherently social, that propositional attitudes are inherently normative, and that belief and knowledge are not proper objects of theory. He claims that none of these stances opposes the view that belief and knowledge are natural kinds.

Undermining the weight of the concept of knowledge

Kornblith maintains that we cannot learn anything substantial by examining the concept of knowledge (Kornblith, 2011, 38). Analyzing concepts based on our intuitions is the target of his major criticism.

Conventionally, most epistemologists contend that it is impracticable to have knowledge without having the concept of knowledge. They suspect that examining our concept of knowledge is instrumental in understanding it. Additionally, there are thinkers who highlight the social aspect of knowledge. Kornblith considers the

concept of knowledge as not highly significant in epistemology, and judges the aforementioned stances erroneous or inaccurate.

Surprisingly enough, he concedes that it constitutes a weighty fact that there is a concept of knowledge (Kornblith,2011:38). There is vagueness in this double stance. On the one hand, he rejects the concept of knowledge as a determinant factor in shaping our position in epistemology, but on the other, he refrains from clearly stating that it is unimportant. Arguably, this vagueness runs through all his epistemology.

Three semantic status of a lexeme

For us to conceptualize his perspective on the workings of concepts, Kornblith compares the concepts of water, transistor, and knowledge. He describes the distinctive behaviors that these three concepts show in our overall knowledge.

Kornblith views concepts as mental representatives (Kornblith,2011: 39). He believes that these concepts rest in the minds of individuals.

According to Kornblith, most people have similar concepts of water in their mental make-up. When there is a slight difference between the concepts in the minds, talk of water can ease up the interpretation of speech. When there are large differences between the concepts of X, any talk of X could be absolutely misleading. In such cases he claims it is pivotal to determine whose concept we are talking about. "Thus, when it matters, I will make it explicit just whose concept it is that I am talking about" (Kornblith, 2011: 39). He admits that there is a serious debate going on about what kind of mental representation a concept is.

Kornblith reminds us that water is all around us, and that it is unsurprising that there is a word for it in our language. Water carries a lot of weight for us in our lives, and the fact that there is a specific lexeme for water enables us to do a great many things in our daily lives. Having a single word for it, enables us to converse economically. The possession of this concept enables us to think about it in the usual sense of the word. Having a concept of water constitute a prerequisite for having a word for it (Kornblith,2011:40). Kornblith's linguistics is so basic and undeveloped.

Kornblith here turns our attention to the concept of a different object, i.e. a transistor. He explains: "I have a concept of transistors, but I'm quite sure that I could not distinguish a transistor from many other electronic components, or, for that matter, from many colored pieces of plastic attached to a wire" (Kornblith,2011:40). Based on his explanation, although he has a picture of

transistors in the mind, he holds a large number of erroneous beliefs concerning these electronic devices.

He agrees with Putnam where he says even expert or specialist knowledge contains a great many errors regarding transistors, but they enable us to refer to these pieces of electronic equipment (Kornblith, 2011:40, Putnam, 1975). This does not mean that these people need not have any special relationship to the things we are referring to and talking about. They are in a better epistemic relationship than the rest of us. They have some genuine expertise (Kornblith, 2011: 40). The experts should have (fallible) recognition capacities for gaining more information concerning transistors. These capacities may at times lead to erroneous beliefs but are reliably connected to the object studied (ibid).

Having the word water enables the society to talk about water and tap from the information that the community has provided, be it folk wisdom, or scientific information. Water is ubiquitous, for it is easy for people to recognize it everywhere. By contrast, transistors might not have this quality, although at expert level possession of expert knowledge is required to relate to the expert community, and benefit from the information provided by the scientific circles.

Health, by contrast, is ubiquitous, but its nature like that of a transistor is not at all obvious. There are countless conceptualizations of health. Our understanding of health has altered dramatically over years in the folk and expert mind. Kornblith claims that "unlike water and transistors the concept of health has a normative dimension" (Kornblith, 2011: 41). We should be in a certain desirable state to be healthy. Parallely, having a word for health is a conduit to tap from the pool of information available in the society from lay individuals and experts. "In order to relate to the community to tap from their information, we have to have the concept of health" (Kornblith, 2011:41). Kornblith claims what is true of proper functioning for organs is also true of the very nature of health. Accordingly, he binds the function of our knowledge of health as a natural kind to a blind evolutionary competitive selection.

He depicts a minimal picture of concepts. He claims that "if somebody deems concepts as mental theory-like representations, then the content of the theory need not be robust at all" (Kornblith, 2011:41). Concept possession does not guarantee any knowledge at all.

He concedes that the possession of the concept of water endows us with some abilities, although this concept might not guarantee scientifically approved. He draws our attention to Edward Craig's distinctive stand in "Knowledge and the State of Nature", rejecting Kornblith's minimalist view (Kornblith 2012: 46, Craig, 1990). Craig's concept of knowledge is robust and fat, which puts it vis-à-vis that of Kornblith. To Craig, concepts are created by us in answer to certain needs. By contrast, Kornblith is not at all sure that concepts are entities that we create. Concepts are created in us by certain cognitive processes (Kornblith, 2011: 46).

By projecting a flexible minimal delineation of concepts, Kornblith reduces the status of concepts to a negligible linguistic spec in the universe of his epistemology. He believes that, given the contributions of ethology and practical psychology to epistemology, having a concept is arguably not as important as it is made out to be. He advances this picture by falling back on the belief that our knowledge is the by-product of evolution as are our kidneys, hearts and lungs (Kornblith, 2011: 48).

Knowledge as a natural kind

Kornblith claims: "knowledge is as much a natural kind as water. The category of knowledge plays a crucial explanatory role in scientific organization. Moreover, just as with the case of water, this system of classification is not merely one that serves human needs. It is, instead, a feature of the world that any adequate scientific theory would need to account for whatever the needs of the creatures who developed the theory. If one failed to recognize that non-human creatures have knowledge, one would thereby fail to understand something important about the cognitive lives of these creatures" (ibid).

This stands in contrast to Craig's view that the concept of knowledge is invented to address a human need. "As Craig would have it, the concept of knowledge is invented, as it were, in order to address this human need. What I have been suggesting, however, is that there is a category of knowledge – a natural kind – that exists quite apart from any human needs or interests. If we wish to explain the cognitive lives of non-human animals, and human beings, of course, as well, we will need to advert to talk of knowledge. And once we understand what knowledge is, namely, reliably produced true belief, we can see why human beings who possess knowledge are well suited to play a certain social role. Those who know things are useful sources of information, and labeling them as such allows that information to be passed along in ways that answer to human concerns. The social role that knowledge plays is not what makes it the kind of thing it is" (ibid).

The main argument that Kornblith invariably puts forward for his rejection of traditional epistemology and its perspective relying on conceptual analysis is his conceptualization of reason as a factor that does not compare to the role of evolutionary process of belief formation (Kornblith, 2015: 225-226). Accordingly, he believes belief is a by-product of an evolutionary process.

He clearly states: "I can only conclude that for those who wish to understand the nature of knowledge, there may be no reason at all to care about our concept of knowledge" (Kornblith, 2011: 50). In other words, he does not believe in a type of epistemology as the by-product of conceptual analysis.

Given the circumstances, having said all that, concepts do not play the major role that traditionalists assign to them. Thus, reason loses its high status in a radical naturalistic approach to epistemology. At the end of the day, with the status of concepts and reason having been undermined, what is normally called armchair philosophy wears off to a minimum in a Kornblithian perspective to epistemology.

Having adopted an experimental approach to philosophy while downgrading epistemology to a chapter of psychology, the resultant epistemology reserves almost no room for concepts or conceptual analysis. As a result, epistemology would turn into an outright experimental sub-discipline that views knowledge as a natural kind which should exclusively be scrutinized through the methods of practical psychology.

Responsible behavior and the demand from environment

Given Kornblith's stand on conceptual analysis, one expects him to present an alternative epistemology. Logically, one would expect him to provide a clear, complete, plausible explanation of how this alternative knowledge is created and in what way it is studied.

He turns our attention to a particular concept in cognitive ethology, i.e. responsible behavior. Based on cognitive ethology, there is a pressure exerted on animals from their environment. Nature makes constant information demands on animals, forcing them to react to environmental conditions.

As a proponent of evolutionary epistemology, Kornblith relies on the process of formation of knowledge as result of these demands on animals. Accordingly, responsible behavior is the kind of behavior which necessitates the truth of the animal's knowledge. This constitutes a necessary quality of the behavior in question to guarantee the survival of the animal as a result of appropriate reaction to stimuli

in hazardous situations. He infers the truth of the aforementioned knowledge from the successful outcome, i.e. the survival of the animal in question. Here, he departs substantially and meaningfully from the traditional stands which define truth based on distinctive perspectives for example correspondence to reality.

Needless to say, if the invaluable element of truth is to be obtained from correspondence with reality, it is mandatory for the epistemologist to delineate how one would reach from experiment to information bearing statements. This is where conceptual analysis comes into play, a hitherto impossible mission which has been challenging epistemologists since the introduction of the concepts of truth and knowledge.

Having obtained the truth from a process which is totally detached from Carnapean induction, or Popperian deduction, or any other method of inference, the formidable problem of interpretation of experiment and deriving factual propositions from observations is out of the game. This seems to be an invaluable achievement for Kornblith, since he manages to rid himself and epistemology from one of the problems vexing some traditionalists. Still, the abominable epistemologist's demon does not leave Kornblith alone. In fact, he looms up on his way where he should explain away the problems of evolutionary cognitive ethology while attributing the lowest level of knowledge to the most intelligent non-human species among animals on the one hand, and establishing that the knowledge studied by ethologists is the same type intended by epistemologists.

Monolithic animal knowledge and rejection of a semantic approach

To Kornblith, knowledge does not divide into animal and human knowledge. He does not trust the ameliorative function of reflection and the superiority of it over first-order knowledge. In his view, reflection and first-order knowledge stand on a par. He seriously rejects what other philosophers consider as the capabilities of introspection. He overtly and emphatically rejects the merits that philosopher ascribe to introspection. He mentions weaknesses that introspection manifests in its verdicts. He does not believe that the knowledge that is present to the mind has any advantages over our perception of the outside world. On the contrary, he considers introspection and intuition as fallible and an animal's perception of the outside world as a corrective factor which might help a species survive in hazardous environment.

Alvin Goldman disagrees with Kornblith where Kornblith rejects the need for the use and interpretation of speech (Goldman⁴, 2005:409). Understandably, Kornblith does not approve of Alvin Goldman's semantic approach to epistemic normativity. Goldman deals with normativity as if normativity is a semantic issue. Goldman's stance leads to a perspective which rates normativity as a value. It deals with normativity in the status of a meaning. A norm is to do with a good meaning of it. On the other hand, he does not believe that knowledge is a natural kind. Nor does he consider normativity as a hypothetical imperative as Kornblith does.

Unsurprisingly, Kornblith, rejects a semantic view and adopts a stance based on the dictates of the natural environment. To him, normativity is a factor which turns into a descriptive quality, an unpopular stand which is intended to resolve at least one of naturalism's well known problems. Kornblith avoid naturalism's problems by Quinian adjustments. He makes modifications in other parts of the fabric of knowledge instead of encountering the problem head-on.

Thus, epistemic normativity in Kornblith view is not rejected as expected from a naturalist, rather, it is retained by claiming that it has a descriptive nature. He claims that Quine's stance on normativity is ambiguous, and that he has rectified this constituent in naturalistic epistemology. Normativity in Kornblith's perspective, in the status of hypothetical imperatives, is measured by conduciveness to truth.

The relationship between the world and Knowledge

By rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction and reductionism, Quine left his grave impression on Kornblith. Parallely, Kornblith as a follower of Quine rejects armchair philosophy and claims that experimental philosophy should replace it. With this step, he adopts an alternative strategy to tackle the task of explication of the relationship between the real world and knowledge.

Truth plays an important role in Kornblith's epistemology. In his view, however, the truth is not obtained from observational statements based on experience; rather, he explains how experience leads to reliable beliefs in an evolutionary process.

Given his disbelief in introspection, he goes into a detailed explanation of how true beliefs are developed as a result of evolutionary survival of the fittest. Accordingly, true knowledge which fits in with the environment survives and false beliefs are

eliminated. This helps the given species to cope with the informational demands imposed by the environment on the animal.

Thus, truth plays a major role in naturalistic epistemology in Kornblith's view. Truth does not originate in analysis, rather, it survives in the pool of beliefs in a blind process of selection of the fittest. In fact, animals' knowledge based on the demands that the environment imposes on them naturally leads to truth. It is the appropriateness of an animal's choice that makes its knowledge fit in the environment. This appropriateness of the choice is what Kornblith ascribes as truth. Kornblith delineates responsible action which is comprised of true knowledge.

Brushing aside introspection

Kornblith mentions that introspection, which is relied upon by internalists, is not capable of performing the functions which are assigned to it by traditional epistemologists. Introspection cannot rectify errors in our internal bits of information. He states: "...introspection should not play a large role in the project of self-improvement, and that in many cases it will worsen an agent's epistemic situation" (Kornblith⁵, 2006: 411). He does not approve of reflection or self-introspection, because they are prone to error and instead of rectification and enhancement of knowledge they can lead to self-approval and entrenchment of false beliefs.

In the proposed view although human beings are different from other animals, and their ability to reflect on their mental states is one of these differences, this dissimilarity should not be overestimated (Kornblith⁶, 2014: 163).

Although the mind has direct access to internal bits of information, sometimes the verdicts of introspection turn out to be wide off the mark. Kornblith entrenches his stance on this matter by providing imaginary examples. In order to do so, we are asked to think of two imaginary people: Jack and Jill. Jack is characterized as an insecure individual with a shaky self-confidence. Jack's assessment of what others picture of his character in their mind includes erroneous pessimistic judgmental misconceptions. Unlike Jack's assessments, Jill's understanding of her social surroundings is based on a sound realistic picture. Having contrasted the two

processes responsible for these two interpretations of the social environment, Kornblith intends to explain how introspection is capable of making serious mistakes (in the case of Jack) and how a reliable process can provide true knowledge (in the case of Jill).

I believe this method of treatment of reliability is what Kornblith himself criticizes in traditional epistemology. It is an evident instance of conceptual analysis and a deviation from Kornblith's ideal experimental psychology. Here, he does not study real characters, rather, he presents imaginary characters in imaginary situations. This method of philosophy has already been rejected by Kornblith in the opening chapter of *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature* (Kornblith, 2002). Thus, he himself practices the kind of philosophy that he has already rejected in traditional epistemology.

In "Testimony, Memory and the Limits of the A Priori", he argues: "It has long been pointed out that our cognitive faculties are shaped by experiences from the moment we are born, and the deliverances of experience, past and present" (Kornblith, 1995:19). This philosophical view, in turn, deals with the problem of characterizing the formation of knowledge as the result of the formation of belief.

Based on an internalist's position, reflection on the inferential workings of memory, and on its role in justification, seem to provide an interesting new way of appreciating an old insight which rates first person point of view as an advantageous point of view for the knower. Kornblith believes that "perception has a justificatory role alongside its casual role in the production of testimonial beliefs. Thus, to attempt to extend the scope of a priori justification to cover testimonial beliefs does not succeed" (ibid, 2).

In response to internalists who rate first person perspective as an advantageous point of view for the person who has knowledge, Kornblith suggests that it is having "a reliable perspective" which gives the knower a metal edge not the first-person point of view (Kornblith,2012:55)⁷. Thus, he rejects the internalist position on introspection.

Kornblith's alternative approach

It is perhaps an implausible stance to approve of the justificatory role of perception and reject conceptual analysis' method, but refuse or fail to fulfil one's responsibility to provide an alternative tenable position. This seems to be the case with Kornblith's naturalism.

In practice, Kornblith does not provide a convincing alternative to traditional epistemology. He claims that science should study knowledge and introduces cognitive ethology as the discipline responsible for studying knowledge as a natural kind. Having presented this position, one expects him to provide an alternative epistemology which studies knowledge scientifically. One expects him to present alternative answers to epistemological questions. Once we study Kornblith's works we do not receive what we expect, and in practice he evades answering our questions and passes the bucket to evolution. He evades his responsibility to provide the much needed alternative explanation and simply resorts to a Quinian adjustments. Having rejected conceptual analysis as the main method used in traditional epistemology, one expects Kornblith to earnestly engage with presenting his picture of knowledge obtained from cognitive ethology. After all, based on his own words the answer to our questions should be sought in science. Contrary to our expectations, his treatment of experimental philosophy turns out to be unconvincing.

Adopting externalism

Kornblith rejects internalism and argues in favor of externalism (Kornblith⁸, 2006:342). However, he notes that internalism remains attractive even to those who reject the Cartesian premise (Kornblith⁹, 2001:123). He maintains that knowledge does not require internalist justifications where justified belief is seen as a necessary condition for knowledge (Kornblith, 2006: 342).

In "How Internal Can You Get" he repudiates internalism (Kornblith,2001,111-125). To him, internalism comprises of two major components. First, justification: if a belief is to be knowledge, it requires something to justify it (be it a reason(s), or perception). Second, for a fact to justify a belief, one should have personal

epistemic access to the fact, which is sometimes a priori. Internalism, as a theory of justification, which necessitates the believer's access to good reasons which justify their knowledge, is in agreement with self-assessment of knowledge which admittedly goes hand in hand with introspection. He argues:

“Justification is [...] a matter external to agents. The realization that there may be a gap between what an agent is justified in believing and what she is justified in believing that she is justified in believing may cause us to distance the concept of justification from that of blame. Alternatively, it may force us to recognize that we legitimately may be blamed for things for which, by our lights, we should not be blamed. My own solution to this problem is to opt for the latter alternative. This does not leave much room for an internalist account, but this I believe, is as internal as we can get.” (Kornblith, 2001: 123).

Kornblith's externalism is in agreement with his efforts to eliminate self-assessment of perception from the depiction of episteme. Based on externalism it is possible for a belief to be justified, and some factors may have made it justified, but the believer does not have a priori access to those factors.

Kornblith is a reliabilist externalist who contends that the justificatory factors should be reliable. He falls back on reliabilism to resolve the philosophical problems that are not resolvable through cognitive ethology. I believe, although he may not admit it, this is where, wittingly or unwittingly, he is forced to resort to traditional practice of epistemology, i.e. analyzing the concept of reliabilism.

True, this adopting of reliabilism renders Kornblith's epistemology inconsistent. First, Kornblith starts off by rejecting conceptual analysis as the main method used in the study of knowledge in order to get rid of justification; however, he himself practices conceptual analysis by adopting reliabilism and analyzing its concept. His act of explaining reliabilism is where he himself practices conceptual analysis. Arguably, reliabilism cannot be resorted to by an animal in response to environmental situations in the way truth can. The truth of a certain piece of a certain animal's knowledge can be deduced from the resultant survival of the animal in nature. However, the role of the concept of reliability in Kornblith's epistemology makes it inconsistent.

One should take heed of the fact that Kornblith's account of reliabilism is not a marginal element beside others. Rather, reliabilism is a pivotal determinant factor in Kornblith's epistemology. Remember Kornblith's stance concerning armchair philosophy. This move goes against naturalized epistemology. Based on an evolutionary stance the formation of knowledge is a mechanical deterministic

dictate of a material world which leads to extinction of the unfit and the survival of the fittest. As such, reliabilism as a concept whose recognition involves conceptual analysis cannot be resorted to as a major element in our epistemology. Reliabilism contains an analytic element to it. If Kornblith's stance on naturalized epistemology are right, all he should present is scientific psychology and nothing else except evidence against conceptual analysis. Going into long detail regarding reliabilism would be self-contradiction.

Reliability of the process of belief formation

Kornblith says the standard view in epistemology is that knowledge is justified, i.e. true belief plus something else. He claims that knowledge needs no justification. In his view, the nature of knowledge and the nature of justification can be better understood if we stop viewing justification as one of the necessary conditions for knowledge (Kornblith, 2008: 1). He argues that, based on some internalists' views, the idea of justification must be merely tied to the presence of reasons, meaning that an agent who is justified is in possession of an argument(s) in favor of the belief in question. He calls this conception of justification having ideas on paper (ibid: 5).

Surprisingly enough, he considers the dialectical conception of justification as important, both in its personal (Descartes' view) and also in its communal form (Hegel's perspective). Nevertheless, he characterizes justification as an unnecessary condition on knowledge. He argues that the dialectal accounts of justification do not give us a necessary condition on knowledge. Moreover, he expresses his distrust of reflection which under some circumstances may even lower the reliability of our processes of belief acquisition, demanding meeting more objective standards for conceptions of justification. He overtly argues that knowledge needs no justification and that we understand the nature of knowledge and justification if we stop viewing justification as one of the necessary conditions on knowledge. (Kornblith, 2008:2). Ironically, he claims that he does not brush aside justification, for it is an important epistemic category that we should not simply do without (Kornblith, 2008: 3).

He claims that he does not reject reflection. However, in his eye when it entrenches one's beliefs, it works as a monkey wrench which only provides support for our beliefs (Kornblith, 2002: 13-14). This means that it does not necessarily do service.

Kornblith says: "When we provide a subjective requirement on justification, [...] we make it implausible that justification so understood is a necessary condition on knowledge. But, the more objective we make our requirement for justification,

thereby making room for a real connection with knowledge, the more implausible it is that the actual phenomenon of justification is captured by it. Knowledge requires that some sort of objective standard be met; justification requires the meeting of some more subjective standard; but knowledge does not require justification.” (Kornblith, 2008: 17).

In “Knowledge needs no Justification”, where he claims he has proved that knowledge does not entail justification, Kornblith presents third person cases to elaborate this. He explains that when a person fails to be justified in his beliefs, his belief is rejected as knowledge. He believes that if a person has a belief that is the product of wishful thinking or something similar, it is not approved of as knowledge. On the other hand, he maintains that this does not have to do with justification. Rather, the reason is that objective conditions on knowledge are not met. These conditions are not conditions on justification. He goes on to claim that in cases where a believer meets all the objective conditions required for knowledge but does not meet the subjective requirements on justification, and they do not meet the standards of their community, this may lead to their giving up of the belief and as a result losing the belief they do not know.

Turning his attention to private reflections, he explains when a person does not meet their own [personal] standards, they drop their belief and consequently they do not have knowledge. He suspects when this person keeps their belief although it does not meet their standards, it is clear that they do not know because of this while their belief meets the objective requirements on knowledge. In his view: “Failure to meet the standards for justification deprives one of knowledge even if justification is not a necessary condition for knowledge.” (Kornblith, 2008: 19).

On the grounds why justification is not necessary for knowledge, he states: “Dialectical accounts of justification fail to provide us with a necessary condition on knowledge, because they fail to be sufficiently objective” (Kornblith, 2008: 15). He believes that justification is not necessary because its dialectical accounts fail to be sufficiently objective. Now that we have heard this from him, we expect him to present his own accounts within the framework of experimental philosophy. Arguably, these have to be sufficiently objective.

Logical constraints, standards of logical probabilistic consistency and reliability of processes of belief formation, etc. are some objective considerations regarding our conceptions of justification in Kornblith's eye. He argues that having abandoned Descartes' rationalist optimism about the fit between justification and knowledge, justification will not be required for knowledge. He enumerates probability

calculus, de facto reliability, and logical constraints on inference as other sources which may provide us with the required objective standards. However, he explains that in practice logical constraints on inference, standards of probabilistic consistency, or de facto reliability, etc. are not all equally practical to achieve his goal.

He claims that among these items reliability is different from the others, because it is obtainable and that others are not feasible. Reliability is different, because it is not unreasonable to think that we have beliefs that are formed by reliable processes. He believes that our checking of the reliability is part of our justificational practice, but this is not related to reliability accounts of justifications, rather it is the reliability of the belief acquisition that determines if a belief is justified.

Knowledge as a natural Phenomenon

To present a replacement picture, Kornblith, as a naturalist, turns to experimental philosophy. He claims that: "Epistemology is fully naturalized when it regards knowledge as a natural phenomenon, an object of study with a substantial degree of theoretical unity to it.", (Kornblith, 2002: 27). He believes that knowledge is not heterogeneous. Epistemology is of one monolithic nature. Therefore, whatever we learn from Kornblithian epistemology, we shouldn't think of it as originating from diverse, genetically heterogeneous sources.

If the species who have true knowledge survive, and the proof of truth is in survival then why do we need the reliability account of knowledge which is true belief obtained from a reliable process? After all, knowledge is developed in the natural process of evolution. For all Kornblith's explanation, a question remains unanswered: what is the *raison d'être* of reliability account of knowledge? If Philosophy should be experimental, conceptual analysis is misguided, and truth is determined by way of survival of the fittest, then Okam's razor should be applied here to eliminate reliability. Provided that we approve of Kornblith's reasons in favor of naturalism, all the explanation regarding the importance of justification and reliability seem redundant.

Equating man's knowledge with animal knowledge

Kornblith claims animals have knowledge. More importantly, he subsumes man's knowledge under animal knowledge in an evolutionary context, rating human knowledge as a kind of animal knowledge. He explains that animal knowledge has

developed in an evolutionary process. Unlike Brandon and Davidson who consider animals and children as language-less creatures, Kornblith does not believe that animals need to have social linguistic interaction to have beliefs and ascribes beliefs to both animals and children (Kornblith, 2002: 83-95).

In "Knowledge in Humans and Other Animals" (1999) Kornblith repudiates analysis of concepts as a method for epistemology. He suggests that the proper subject of epistemology is knowledge itself. Knowledge should be looked at as a natural phenomenon and that we should view it as a natural kind. He reminds us that there is a large body of literature treating knowledge as a natural kind. Additionally, he relies on cognitive ethologists view of knowledge in support of knowledge as a natural kind (Kornblith, 1999: 328).

I admit that it is natural for a philosopher to look for extant evidence in favor of his theory. However, Kornblith's reliance on Carolyn Ristau's use of the word "know" in her description of animal behavior (Kornblith, 2002, Ristau, 1991) is a bit too extreme. He refers to Carolyn Ristau's use of the word know in her description of a pipping bird's behavior in reaction to a predator approaching its nest, trying to protect its baby.

Arguably, one might reasonably doubt if the use of the word "know" in this context necessarily refers to an epistemologically intended meaning of knowledge. Even given the fact that Kornblith sees man as a species developed by evolution and claims that knowledge is a by-product of the same process from lower level species, one cannot necessarily equate the term know in cognitive ethology with that used in epistemology. Kornblith has to provide his grounds for such synonymy. He refers to Carolyn Ristau's work attributing belief to animals (Kornblith, 2002; 83, Ristau, 91:94, 105, 123, 96, 94). An important criticism which is relevant here is a linguistic one. Kornblith practically equates a plover's knowing of something in the environment with knowledge in different types amongst human beings.

Kornblith's view of an animal's cognition is based on two claims. First, an animal's cognitive capacities are seen as a product of natural selection. Based on his words, the best explanation of the animal's cognitive capacities is that they were selected for. Second, the behavior which contributes to a species' fitness makes certain information demands on the animal, and the animal's cognitive capacities were selected for their ability to play this role (Kornblith, 1999: 331).

Cognitive equipment as an informational processing system

To Kornblith, man's cognitive equipment is a product of natural selection. Survival of the fittest animal happens blindly and mechanically. In his view, animal cognitive traits are the result of natural selection, and natural selection prefers desirable practical problem-solving functions. As a result, some animal traits survive in the competition between the extant naturally developed characteristics. According to Kornblith, cognitive ethologists explain the presence of the human cognitive equipment as an information processing system.

He suggests that non-naturalists or traditionalists seek a different type of knowledge. He argues that this project leads to a radical skepticism. He explains that this is the grounds why he has opted for a different kind of knowledge and that is the one defined by cognitive ethologists, a type of knowledge called animal knowledge (Kornblith, 1999: 335).

He admits that human beings have self-reflection which is unavailable to animals. Moreover, he believes that the knowledge sought for in cognitive ethology, true knowledge, is the product of a reliable process. In his view, some human beliefs stem from self-reflection. However, true knowledge does not require self-reflection. In fact, the majority of human beliefs are formed unreflectively (ibid). He reminds us that reliably produced true knowledge is also applicable to human beings.

Exclusion of reflection as a target of study in epistemology undeniably deprives the resultant picture from an important component of knowledge. In traditional epistemology, this component marks the major difference between man and other living creatures. He claims that the reliably produced true knowledge in animals is the knowledge that epistemologists should study.

Kornblith admits that there is a category of knowledge namely reflective knowledge which is thought to be only available to human beings. However, he claims that it is the responsibility of those epistemologists who focus on this type of knowledge to delineate the differences between the two types of knowledge and not anybody else's. He argues that the kind of knowledge that cognitive ethologists talk about are one and the same thing that epistemologists study (Kornblith, 1999: 338).

Kornblith's reliabilism and its flaws

Kornblith admits that cognitive ethologist's use of the word knowledge is something similar to what we mean when we say that the sensor on an electric door knows when to close the door. Ironically, he also admits that knowledge is not just

true belief and attributing intentional states to an animal does not equal having knowledge. Once we study Kornblith's position we notice that he defines reliabilism, but unfortunately, he does not define reliability as a pivotal component of reliabilism. If he has not defined reliability, he has not defined knowledge either.

In "Does Reliabilism Make Knowledge Merely Conditional?", Kornblith defines reliabilism as the view that knowledge is reliably true belief. It is a form of externalism. He adds: "According to the reliabilist, it is the fact that a true belief is reliably produced which makes it a case of knowledge; this fact does not need to be known, or believed, or epistemologically accessible to the knower." (Kornblith, 2004: 185). The fact which makes a person's belief a case of knowledge may be external to their epistemic perspective.

Thus, he is an externalist and claims that internalism leads to skepticism (Kornblith, 2004: 186). He provides his conceptualization of reliabilism by introducing the epistemic states of two imaginary characters, Jack and Mary. Thus, he provides an imaginary example in which two characters' state of knowledge portrays what reliabilism means.

Oddly enough, he uses value-tied adjectives to depict these two individuals' characters in order to clarify his intended meaning. Jack is characterized as a Know-it-all, over-confident individual who makes many false and even absurd claims. Conversely, Mary is described as intellectually-tempered, bright, reasonably knowledgeable, circumspect, and humble (Kornblith, 2004: 188). This is in fact ascribing reliability or unreliability to two imaginary characters prior to a study of a real person's cognitive characteristics.

He goes on to explain that based on reliabilism, Jack knows a good number of things he believes he knows. However, there are beliefs that are produced in totally unreliable ways and he does not know them. He argues that the mental mechanism that is responsible for producing a large number of Jack's beliefs is unreliable (*ibid*). On the other hand, in standard perceptual circumstances, some mechanisms responsible for some of Jack's beliefs are reliable. In such cases Jack is entitled to be said to have knowledge (Kornblith, 2004: 188). In spite of this, according to Kornblith, Jack does not have second-order knowledge because the one mechanism by which Jack's beliefs about what he knows are formed is unreliable.

In Mary's case, however, Kornblith maintains that she has a good deal of first-order knowledge in that a sizeable number of her beliefs are produced reliably. Mary has a great deal of second-order knowledge too, because of the extant reliable

mechanisms responsible for producing beliefs she knows that they are reliable (Kornblith, 2004: 188).

What can be seen from Kornblith's explanation is that we do not receive an explicit description of experimental way of accessing reliability. He merely provides some adjectives which simply describe Jack and Mary's character. Character description adjectives are replete with values which are not experimentally spelled out. Therefore, in the case of Kornblith's explanation of reliabilism regarding Jack and Mary's knowledge, we do not receive anything experimental to replace conceptual analysis. He explains that, based on reliabilism, Mary knows that p if and only if her belief that p is both true and reliably produced; Mary knows that she knows that p if and only if her belief that she knows that p is both true and reliably produced and first-hand perspective is unessential to knowledge." (Kornblith, 2004: 190). Most importantly, he adds that externalists attribute knowledge in a variety of situations where internalist conditions (justified true belief obtained from first-hand accessibility) are not met.

There are four problems here which our engagement with the argument between the externalist and the internalist might throw our minds off from. One problem is that Kornblith himself makes a conceptual analysis while defining reliabilism. What he presents as reliabilism is arguably a rough form of conceptual analysis. However, he gives us imaginary situations and talks about imaginary characters to define or to present reliabilism. Secondly, he talks about reliabilism which admittedly is based on the concept of reliability, but he does not say what reliability is. Thirdly, what he presents as evidence from animal behavior is neither sufficient nor experimental psychology. The fourth problem is a linguistic one. Perhaps in order to be fair on Kornblith, one might as well investigate further and help him with his epistemology by resorting to his position regarding cognitive ethology and see if cognitive ethology saves his project from failure. From a linguistic point of view, it is not possible to talk about his epistemology or understand it, because he rejects conceptual analysis. In order to comply with Kornblith's position on traditional philosophy, we should expect him to experimentally provide scientific support for his cognitive ethology. However, we face a handful of examples of observations of animal behavior which do not seem to be sufficient to reach his important conclusions in epistemology. This is not what we expect from a proponent of experimental philosophy. What he presents as observations from animal world does not provide us with conclusive scientific basis for his position.

Attributing greater cognitive sophistication to animals

Once one finds out that Kornblith's reliability account is nothing but a form of conceptual analysis, having his positions in mind, it becomes necessary to check up if the epistemology that he presents is obtained from cognitive ethology. In order to do so one might as well look at his works. Based on his own stance, one would naturally expect to find practical cognitive ethologists' scientific study of knowledge. Contrary to our expectations we do not face cognitive ethology's results. Rather, what we face is scanty pieces of quotes from few such sources which do not provide particular detail. What we face is merely a few unconvincing quotations which contain dubious remarks about animal knowledge.

More importantly, it seems that what he presents as knowledge is not what cognitive ethologists have in mind. Rather, it is he himself that is trying to pass his much needed interpretation of results off as scientific results to replace conceptual analysis' stance on knowledge, claiming that animals have knowledge and this knowledge is the same knowledge that we find in human beings. He claims that animal knowledge is the same knowledge that epistemologists are trying to study and get to know.

Obviously, he has to provide solid grounds for equating animal's knowledge with that of man. It goes without saying that from a traditionalist's perspective when we think of propositional knowledge, we find it hard to equate a chimpanzee's so-called knowledge concerning an ethologist's intentions about feeding it with human propositional knowledge.

Kornblith himself informs us that what we find in cognitive ethologists reports is attributing intentional states to animals and not knowledge. What he needs to present in order to convince epistemologists of his naturalist position is conclusive evidence and experimental results which clearly support his claims. Therefore, he moves from an ethologist's attribution of intentional states to animals to attribution of knowledge to them (Kornblith, 2002; 52-61). He reports that: "What one sees in animal behavior literature, and with a great deal of frequency, is talk of animal knowledge." (Kornblith, 2002:53). Undeniably, what ethologists refer to as animal knowledge is remotely dissimilar with what we know as human knowledge. It goes without saying that the complexity, depth, type, quality, and diversity of human knowledge could not be found in animals.

A study of Kornblith's attempt to introduce a new approach to epistemology shows that what he presents is untenable and inconsistent. He does not succeed in carrying

out his project. His reliabilism is not the stand to be adopted by an experimental philosopher, for reliabilism entails conceptual analysis.

Studying Knowledge itself, not the concept of it

Kornblith says: "Philosophy was widely understood to consist in an investigation of our concepts.", and that: "It is, I believe, deeply mistaken." He adds: "the subject matter of epistemology is knowledge itself, not our concept of knowledge." He further emphasizes: "My insistence that epistemology should not concern itself with our concept of knowledge requires that I depart, in important ways, from some common practices. I will not, for the most part, be comparing my account of knowledge with my intuitions about various imaginary cases." (Kornblith, 2002: 1-2). He rejects the ritual of mentioning a few examples and imaginary cases, and use intuition to philosophize on them (ibid: 4).

He describes his favorable method of studying knowledge as one in which; "a good deal of the work involved in defining the subject matter under investigation is actually done by the world itself rather than the investigator." (Kornblith, 2002: 11).

When and where we expect him to present a scientific study of knowledge, what we face is not knowledge but intentional states in animals and the presence of the word "know" in few cognitive ethologists' works which seem to be simply a lexical choice ungrounded in what epistemologists find attractive or meaningful. The ethologists' usage of the word know does not seem to be because of identity of the reference with "know" in a human sense. The use of the word "know" in ethology works seem to be simply a choice which is made to lexicalize a special animal state. The ethologist does not intend to refer to knowledge in a human sense.

Kornblith does his best to bridge the gap between intentional states in animals and knowledge in human beings, but his explanation is unconvincing and his experimental evidence undeniably deficient.

Surprisingly enough, in Kornblith's works we face examples, imaginary situations and an overdose of intuition use which he himself repudiated earlier in his total bashing of conceptual analysis. Despite his fundamental anti-analytic position, he himself analyses the concept of reliabilism and uses imaginary situations.

Instead of robust experimental evidence coming from cognitive ethology, what we read in his works is for example unconvincing descriptions of a plover's behavior in reaction to a predator approaching its nest and or two chimpanzees' behavior in an attempt to study their reaction to a man trying to feed them (Kornblith, 2002).

Arguably, this is not at all what could be called full-fledged experimental psychology.

His quote from Bern Heinrich in which we find a raven, a hawk and or an osprey's distracting behavior (Kornblith, 2002: 33; from Heinrich, 1999) is described by his own work as not common bodily motion, which is what we need to start off the task of practicing cognitive ethology with a physical or experimental orientation. Even based on his own words, they could not be described in non-intentional terms and as homogeneous behavior to qualify as evidential basis of scientific practice or experimentally based explanation. Consequently, he is entangled with reasons, intentions, and the like, a far cry from what he needs to back up his epistemology experimentally. He himself admits that sheer physical description of behavior without reference to the reason of behavior fails to capture commonality between instances and therefore falls short of our expectation of a convincing explanation (ibid).

Quite unexpectedly, having failed to take the first step successfully, Kornblith hastens to attribute belief to animals even if he qualifies his statements. He resorts to environment's effect on biologically given needs and resorts to evolution to lend theoretical support to his explanation. According to him, the environment places informational demands on an animal who has to recognize the features of its environment. Unsurprisingly for him, the process of evolution gradually develops the cognition required to deal with the given situations. He claims this requires the ability to represent information (Kornblith, 2002, 37).

He explains: "No doubt, beliefs are entirely physically composed;" and "we need to advert to some common property of the various individuals that abstract from the details of the physical level of description." (Kornblith, 2004: 40-41). Mental representations in his view are a particular sort of higher-level property. They are states whose interactions with one another need to be explained in informational terms. Thus, to predict human behavior we need belief and desire.

He refers to experiments by Povinelli and Eddy to claim that chimpanzees attribute intentional states to each other (Kornblith, 2002: 48-52, Povinelli, et al, 2000). He goes further and claims that the experiment shows that the chimps have some sort of knowledge. He even maintains this stand in spite of the fact that investigators clearly express doubts about the validity of the theory on the grounds that they say this results from a fear of anthropomorphism. Kornblith argues: "Explaining their behavior, while it does not require the attribution of a theory of mind, does require the attribution of beliefs." (Kornblith, 2002: 52).

It seems that what he presents as firsthand experience, providing us with evidence that animals have beliefs, does not provide him with experimental grounds required to fulfil the intended task. He quotes investigators reports containing the word “belief” or “know” in a non-technical sense, presenting them as evidence that animals have belief or knowledge. The problem here is that he does not use the word belief in the sense that the investigators do. This is simply an instance of a common term applied to refer to two distinctive referents with different intended meanings. Povinelli et. al use these words hesitantly to refer to a remotely likely state of mind in chimps, while Kornblith rushes to grab the expression from Povinelli's mouth and interpret it the way he needs so desperately.

On the balance, what Kornblith presents as cognitive psychology to replace traditional epistemology is not what could qualify as experimental philosophy. Contrary to his values, in another part of his argument where he introduces Jack and Jill, he presents imaginary examples and uses intuition. He does not succeed in avoiding analysis or intuition, things that he criticized armchair philosophy. True, he presents his anti-analytic epistemology in the linguistic context of analytic philosophy without noticing or admitting it. This means that he too, conceptually analyses knowledge.

Is reliability a defined concept or a clearly explained process in Kornblith's stance?

What we face in “Does Reliability Make Knowledge Merely Conditional?” is an imaginary example about two people, Jack and Jill, in which Jack is depicted as unreliable and Jill as an individual who forms ideas reliably. Kornblith merely mentions that Jack's knowledge is unreliable and Jill's is reliable. Reliability itself is not defined as a quality for a “process”. Neither does he provide an explanation of how an experiment can qualify knowledge or the process of gaining it as reliable.

Perhaps, given the fact that he has picked up the concept of reliability from Goldman, he has Goldman's reliability in his mind. Non the less, this possibility quickly loses its force when we remember that Goldman openly states that epistemology starts off with conceptual analysis at first but adopts a different strategy somewhere along the line. After all, Kornblith supports an outright experimental philosophy studying knowledge scientifically.

Thus, he cannot rely on any Goldman's reliability when he has already rejected Goldman's hybrid approach to epistemology. It is an explanatory responsibility for

him to clearly explicate what makes a process reliable and also crash the linguistic barrier between the world of science and the realm of epistemology and open a new avenue via experiment, experience, and observation.

What we gather from Kornblith's epistemology is, given his presentation of the position which approves of reliability and his failing to provide an experimental exposition of this jargon, he himself fails to carry out the dictates of his naturalistic epistemology.

Conceptual analysis in Islamic philosophy

In Islamic Philosophy the subject of conceptual analysis as a method of philosophizing has not been raised or investigated independently under a distinctive title. However, it is the type of philosophy commonly practiced. Although conceptual analysis has not been referred to as a single research subject, Islamic philosophers have frequently used a method which is more or less similar but not identical to it. That method is definition. Definition is an important element in Islamic philosophy which is resorted to as a means towards Islamic philosophy's objectives. Almost all or most Islamic philosophers hold the opinion that definition is possible. More importantly, they maintain that definition is epistemologically fruitful.

Accordingly, in Islamic tradition, conceptual analysis manifests itself in logic. Islamic philosophers analyze concepts in their meticulous treatment of logic. They have discussed definition and suggested classifications. These philosophers have mentioned conditions on each classification (see for example, Ibn Sina, 1393, Mozaffar Logic, 1384, Sohrvardi, 1373).

We face different types of definition. Defining by providing examples, by providing the opposite, by describing the essence of the referent, by comparison and mentioning similarity, etc. are some methods used in defining terms in Islamic philosophy. All this are instances where the method and the orientation are very similar to those applied by conceptual analysts for example breaking down concepts to their constituent elements.

Unsurprisingly, the rejection of conceptual analysis by naturalized epistemology which rejects armchair philosophy cannot be approved of by Islamic philosophers. It is incompatible with the overall approach adopted by figures such as Ibn Sina or Sohrvardi. However, Kornblith's defeat in presenting a defensible position means that his arguments do not harm Islamic philosophers' use of conceptual analysis.

Conclusion

Upon a study of Kornblith's works, we notice that our rightful demands from him to delineate a tenable alternative epistemology is not satisfied. As a matter of fact, he merely postpones taking stance on indispensable issues, and finally shrugs off his responsibility, shifting it to evolution and ethology. In actual fact, he passes the bucket to evolution to explain the biological process of development of cognition, although he presents some evidence from cognitive ethology. What one infers from his observations is that knowledge is a natural kind which is generated in an evolutionary process. One would expect him to provide a plausible description of the development of knowledge in human beings, something which extends all the way back in the evolutionary process. Delegating this task to evolution is not philosophically or scientifically convincing. After all, he himself claims that philosophy should be considered a scientific discipline and he is expected to practice what he preaches.

He fails to provide grounds for his claim that cognitive ethology can replace traditional epistemology. Having heard his criticism of knowledge obtained from traditional epistemology, a full-fledged depiction of knowledge provided by cognitive ethology is reasonably expected from him. However, what we receive from him is not persuasive. Neither his examples nor his explanations provide us with a tenable knowledge of reliability.

Non the less, to be fair, Kornblith succeeds in identifying some flaws in traditional epistemology and conceptual analysis. In spite of this, he fails to provide a successful alternative to traditional philosophy. He redefines traditional epistemology's intuition and uses it to his advantage.

It seems that Kornblith's epistemology is not truly different from traditional epistemology. True, he is linguistically mistaken in his stance on conceptual analysis. The best evidence in favor of this claim is that he himself fails to observe his own naturalistic principles. He makes conceptual analysis where he defines reliabilism. He does not carry out his project of integrating epistemology into science.

In Islamic philosophy, on the other hand, conceptual analysis manifests itself in the subject of definitions. What Islamic philosophers do while discussing definition involves some form of conceptual analysis. Islamic philosophy is not compatible with naturalistic orientations, at least in the way they exert their influence in Kornblith's perspective, and Kornblith's position on conceptual analysis cannot refute that of Islamic philosophers.

References

- Boyd, Richard, 1979, "Metaphor and Theory Change, what is Metaphor a Metaphor for?" In *Metaphor and Thought*, 356-408. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Craig, Edward, 1990, "Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis", Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Daniel Povinelli and Timothy Eddy, 'What Young Chimpanzees Know about Seeing', *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 61(1996), 41.
- Goldman, Alvin, 2005, "Kornblith's Naturalistic Epistemology", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LXXI, No. 2.
- Heinrich, Bernd, 1999, "Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf birds", (Harper Collins, 1999).
- Kornblith, H, 2012, "Why Should We Care about the Concept of Knowledge?", in *Episteme*, Vol. 8, Issue 01, 2011, pp 38-52.
- Kornblith, H, 2004, "Does Reliabilism Make Knowledge Merely Conditional?", *Philosophical Issues*, 14, Epistemology, 2004, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2001, "Epistemology", Blackwell Publishers.
- Kornblith, 2014, "On Reflection", Oxford University Press.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2012, "What Is It Like to Be Me?", *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, Fourdham University, Routledge.
- Kornblith, 2003, "Rodrick Chisholm and the Shaping of American Epistemology", Blackwell Publishing, *Meta-philosophy*. Vol. 34, No. 5, October, 2003.
- Kornblith, Hilary ,2006, "Reply to Bermudez and Bonjour", In *Philosophical Studies*, 2006, 337-349.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2012, "On Reflection", *Oxford Scholarship Online*, 1-43.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2009, "Timothy Williamson's The Philosophy of Philosophy", 109-116.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2014, "Introspection and Misdirection", University of Vermont, published online: 02 June 2006.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2014, "Introspection and Misdirection", University of Vermont, published online: 02 June 2006.
- Kornblith, 2001, "Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism", The Blackwell Publishers.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 1993, *Inductive Inference and Its Natural Ground*, MIT Press, A Bradford Book.
- Kornblith, H, 1999, "Knowledge in Humans and Other Animals", *Philosophical Perspectives*, 13, Epistemology, 1999.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 2008, "Knowledge needs no justification", *Oxford Scholarship Online*, *Epistemology: New Essays*, Print ISBN-13: 9780199264933.
- Kornblith, Hilary, 1993, "Inductive Inference and Its Natural Ground", The MIT Press.

- Korblith, 2003, "Rodrick Chisholm and the Shaping of American Epistemology", Blackwell Publishing, *Metaphilosophy*. Vol. 34, No. 5, October, 2003.
- Korblith, Hilary, 2012, "What Is It Like to Be Me?", *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, Fourdham University, Routledge.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1975, "The Meaning of Meaning.", in *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2, 215-71, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Quine, Wilhelm V., 1951, "The Philosophical Review", Vol. 69(1951).
- Ristau, Carolyn (ed). *Cognitive Ethology: The Minds of Other Animals: Essays in Honor of Donald R. Griffin* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991).
- Shettleworth, Sara, 1998, "Cognition, Evolution and Behavior, (Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Williamson, Timothy, 2007, "The Philosophy of Philosophy", Oxford, Blackwell.
- Ibn Sina, 1393, "Alesharat va Altanbihat, Containing Elaborations by Khajeh Nasire Dineh Tousi and Ghotbe Dineh Razi", Vol. 1, Qum, Albalaghe Publications.
- Sohrvardi, Shahabe Dineh, 1373, *Collection of Works (Hekmat Al' Eshragh)*, Vol. 2, Edited by Henry Corbin, Tehran, The Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.
- Mozaffar, Mohammadreza, 1384, "Mantegh Mozaffar", Translated by Ali Shirvani,