

A Qur`anic Worldview: Its implications for Islamic social ontology

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The Abstract

The “ontological” question deals with the nature of those acting, and interacting existential causal powers, and factors that constitute, and dominate the human social space where Religion is going to be established. The author, using a theory of human social reality, which he derived from the Quran, concluded that these causal powers, and factors are: Allah (SWT); Revelation; Human Society with its material basis; Alshaytan; Angels; the universe.

The epistemological, and methodological questions deal with the time-relevant religious sciences needed to establish religion, given the social space with its interacting causal powers, and factors derived from the worldview of the Quran. The author reached the conclusion that most of the sciences needed are empirical in nature, some of them normative, others descriptive, and explanatory. We also need to develop Tawhidi sciences for the cosmos to enable the Muslim Ommah to compete with others in the human endeavor to conquer the universe.

1- The Concept of Founding Religion in the Holy Qur`an

According to the holy Qur`an, the whole universe has been created by Allah (SWT) to test people for excellence in good deeds (Hud, 7). This requires that this whole universe is rendered usable by man, and subservient to his action, and indeed this is the case as we are told by the holy Qur`an (Algathyah, 13). Within this framework it is the earth in particular that has been made as an abode for man as vicegerent of Allah (SWT), accountable to Him for his actions (Albagra, 30). This means that man must be enabled to act on earth, and that is the case as confirmed by the holy, Qur`an, (Ala`araf, 10). As vicegerent, however, man is never absolutely free to do what he wants on Allah`s bounties, nor is he totally handicapped, and helpless. He is supposed to use these bounties wisely for his own benefits, but he can do that only if he acts according to the guidance he receives from Allah (SWT), and only then will he be thankful to Him.

Man`s vicegerency on earth is a contract between Allah (SWT) and man, where man`s work is to be delivered in this world, and Allah`s compensation for it is to be delivered to man in the Day of Judgement. The bounties of Allah (SWT) on earth, represented by the two main allurements (wealth, children), are where man is to be tested for his actions, so that he is either thankful to Him for the enjoyment he derives from these bounties, or unthankful, (kahf, 46); (Alinsan, 3). Paradise is the reward for those who are thankful, and hell fire is for those who are unthankful in the Day of judgement.

Islam is the only religion accepted by Allah (SWT) from man in this world, but there is no coercion in religion, and man is free to choose whatever religion he wants, since he will be held accountable for his choices in the Day of judgement. Islam in this paper means total submission to Allah (SWT), its essence is knowledge (Ilm) based on revelation, and faith (Iman) based on that knowledge, and good deeds (Amal Salih) based on the former two- knowledge and Iman.

The religion of Islam has two necessary dimensions: The first one is the Truth revealed by Allah in the holy Qur`an; it is the normative model of religion that teaches man how to worship his Lord all the time, and in all situations, thus fulfilling his role as vicegerent on earth, till the Day of judgement. This exemplary religion is preserved in the holy Quran from any distortion, or any corruption by Allah alone, and it is mandatory that humanity should seek no guidance from any source other than the holy Qur`an.

The second dimension is that social reality which should be typically fashioned according to the normative ideal of religion as preserved in Revelation. This is the empirical version of the normative religion, where man attempts to adjust his social life according to the directives of sharie`ah. Within this framework the whole social actions and interactions of the society are intended for worshipping Allah alone. This is what is meant by the founding of Religion in the holy Qur`an, and this is what Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and his companions had founded in Madeenah, and steadfast in their commitment to it.

The normative model of Islam preserved in the holy Qur`an is built around three fundamental wholes; these are “Knowledge”, “Iman” and “Good Deed”. These three fundamental wholes are interactive as the holy Qur`an clearly shows, for there is no “Knowledge” about Allah (SWT) without Revelation, and there is no “Iman” without the “Knowledge” derived from revelation, and there is no “Good Deed” unless it is based on “Knowledge” and “Iman” as prerequisites. The “Good Deed” realized in the empirical world by the Muslim feeds back into his Knowledge and Iman, thus increasing both of them, in a spiral loop that lifts the Muslim to a higher order of moral living, and spiritual experience.

The three concepts of “Knowledge”, “Iman” and “Good Deed” as delineated in the holy Qur`an are generic concepts, each one of them encompasses a whole range of other related concepts nested together in complex meaningful relationships that span all the aspects of social reality in that domain.

To found the empirical version of the normative religion of Islam in the social domain these three fundamental wholes must interact as variables with the human “Self” in a process of change intended to transform a specific social reality to emulate the exemplar religious model. The “Self”, on the other hand, has three

fundamental characteristics that correspond exactly to the three fundamental wholes that encompass the exemplar model of Islam; these are the “cognitive” characteristic, the “emotive” characteristic, and the “volitional” characteristic. The main function of the cognitive characteristic is to enable the individual to develop a cognitive map of the world (worldview), where he dwells. The main function of the emotive characteristic is to enable the individual to transform his cognitive worldview into personal preferences about life, moral, aesthetic...etc. The main function of the volitional characteristic is to enable the individual to transform the manifestations of the first two characteristics into life goals, intensions, action plans...etc.

The fundamental whole of “Knowledge” interacts with the “cognitive” characteristic of the “Self” to enable the Muslim to develop a “Tawhidi” worldview based on Tawhidi knowledge. The fundamental whole of “Iman” interacts with the “emotive” characteristic of the “Self”, to enable the Muslim to transform his cognitive Tawhidi worldview into moral and aesthetic values pertaining to his Iman. The fundamental whole of “Good Deeds” interacts with the volitional characteristic of the self to enable the Muslim to transform the outcome of the first two interactions into a life-plan of goals, the appropriate intentions that will guide his actions directed towards achieving his life plan...etc. This last interaction is not complete until it manifests itself in the real world in the form of social actions, and interactions between people in a social setting that enables them to transform the two fundamental bounties of “Wealth” and “Children”, which are the natural resources with which Allah (SWT) has endowed the earth, into all sorts of utilities that satisfy human needs and desires. These two natural resources of “Wealth” and “Children” are also referred to by the holy Qur`an as the “allurements” of the life of this world, “al-hayat al-dunya”. This is where the real test by Allah (SWT) for man on this earth begins and ends. Since the fundamental whole of “Good Deeds” resolves itself in the interaction between the other two wholes i.e., “Knowledge”, and “Iman” with the “Self”, and the latter with the two bounties of “Wealth” and “Children”, then we can conclude that the establishment of the normative religion of Islam in concrete social reality, thus transforming it into a tawhidi society requires the interactions of these five wholes, i.e., “Knowledge”, “Iman”, “Self”, “Wealth” and “Children”. That is why the preservation of these five wholes is considered the primary goal of the Sharie`ah.

Although all Tawhidi religions revealed to the prophets of Allah are premised on this interaction between the five wholes, thus giving them a shared lineage, Allah(SWT) has designated for each Ummah of a prophet certain “Shir`ah”-goals- and “Minhaj”- means- designed to take consideration of the particular time

and space of the targeted social setting where that religion is going to be established. Social reality, by its very nature, is in flux, which requires that those temporal goals and means of Allah`s Sharie`ah, intended to transform a specific social reality to reflect the normative ideals of religion, should be different from those prescribed for social realities manifested themselves in distant history. This gap between the exemplary model of religion permanently preserved in the holy Qur`an, and the temporal social reality targeted for change towards that example justifies, and necessitates, after the sealing of messengers and messages from Allah, continuous “Ijtihad” by Muslim scholars to derive from Islamic sources of knowledge the time-relevant goals and means of the Sharie`ah to establish that social reality embedded in the ideals of Islam.

The following chart depicts the fundamental model of interactions between the three fundamental wholes of the normative religion of Islam preserved in the holy Qur`an and the three fundamental characteristics of the human self.

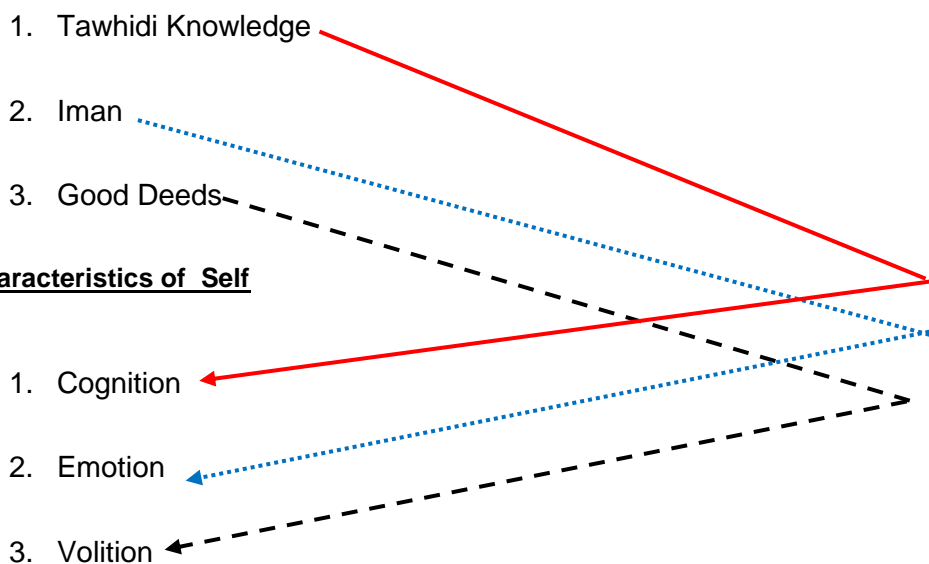
A Model of Tawhidi Civilization

Wholes of Normative Islam

- 1. Tawhidi Knowledge
- 2. Iman
- 3. Good Deeds

Characteristics of Self

- 1. Cognition
- 2. Emotion
- 3. Volition



An important implication of this model for the project of Islamizaion of Knowledge (IOK) is that since the five wholes (Knowledge, Iman, Self, Wealth,

Children) are interactive, then we need Tawhidi knowledge for all the five domains of reality. Firstly, we need knowledge about “Tawhidi Knowledge”, we also need knowledge about “Iman” which consists of knowledge about the existence of “Allah” (SWT) derived mainly from the Universe, but its philosophy must come from the holy Qur`an. It should also consist of knowledge about the “Heart” where Iman is going to dwell, and knowledge about the methods needed to inculcate that Iman in the hearts of men. It should also include knowledge about how Iman branches into more than seventy branches as the Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) states. It should also include knowledge about how the believer could preserve and continuously increase his ‘iman’ against all the odds and challenges of modern life.

Knowledge about the human “Self” in all its three characteristics is necessary since the “Self” is the melting pot of all the interactions of the various wholes that bring social reality into existence. So too, is knowledge about the empirical world as regarding “Wealth” and “Children”, not only for the purpose of satisfying human needs, but more importantly as the main allurements where Allah’s decisive test for humanity takes place, and where the cardinal concepts of “Shukr” and “Kufi” manifest themselves in concrete human action, and interaction, and where the social “Sunan” of Allah are brought into effect.

2- A Qur`anic Worldview: The Master Plan of creation

The general principle grounding the worldview about social reality derived from the holy Qur`an is that Allah (SWT) created man solely to worship Him (zaryat, 56). This worship means that man has to know Allah (SWT), then to start discharging His commands on His earth, thus fulfilling his role as vicegerent.

This general principle can be developed into a social worldview in the following steps:

Firstly; earth is the main geographical place where this worship of Allah (SWT) has to take place, (bagara, 36), (a`araf, 25),

Secondly; this worship of Allah (SWT) takes place in the context of man as an honored being given the responsibility of vicegerency on earth, (isra, 70), (bagara, 30),

Thirdly; the contract of vicegerency consists mainly of man settling the earth, and using its resources for his own benefits, (hud, 61),

Fourthly; the vicegerency of man on earth takes the form of a test for all humans as to who among them will excel in good work. For work to be good it must

satisfy two conditions: it must be done to please Allah (SWT) alone, and it must be done according to Sharie`ah prescriptions, (almulk, 2), (hud, 7),

Fifthly; the main domain where this test for man takes place on earth is what the holy Qur`an calls the “allurements” of the earth, (kahf, 7),

Sixth; the allurements on earth are the two inclusive wholes of “Wealth” and “Children”. As a generic concept “Wealth” in the Qur`an includes the natural agricultural, animal, and mineral resources, and the value added by man that transforms these resources into beneficial goods and services. The concept of “Children” in the Qur`an includes the sexual relationship between man and woman, the off-springs resulting from such a relationship, and the grand-children expected to follow later in life, (kahf, 46),

Seventh; the grand test for man in “Wealth” and “Children” is made possible because Allah (SWT) imbued them with lust for an enamored human self, (al Imran, 14),

Eighth; the result of testing the human self in the gloss of this world (Wealth, Children) is either thankfulness ‘Shukr’, or ingratitude ‘Kufr’ to Allah`s bounties. Only ‘Shukr’ is accepted by Allah (SWAT) from man, and it is the essence of worship of Allah by man, and the ultimate fruit of good deeds, (alinsan, 3), (zumar, 7),

Ninth; man has become capable of choosing between gratitude, and ingratitude to Allah (SWT) because of the nature of his creation, where the ‘Self’ is imbued with certain characteristics that motivate it to transgress, and disobey its Lord, mainly ‘greed’, ‘niggardliness’, ‘weakness’, ‘hastiness’, ‘envy’, etc. The ‘Self’ also has the potential ability to be pious by endeavoring to acquire those godly characteristics, like ‘iman’, ‘knowledge’, ‘mercy’, ‘adl’, ‘ihsan’, ‘honesty’, etc., (shams, 7-10). With this nature of the ‘Self’ man has been created with the free will to choose his course of action, and bear responsibility for it, (kahf, 29),

Tenth; thankfulness to Allah (SWT) for his bounties requires three conditions: ‘knowledge’, ‘iman’, ‘good deed’. The knowledge component consists of three kinds of knowledge; knowledge about the benefactor (Allah), and His attributes that make him a giver. The second type of knowledge is that about the beneficiary (man) from these bounties, and his characteristics that make him benefit from Allah`s bounties such that they are indeed bounties in his regard, and his attributes

that make him capable of delivering thankful deeds. Then, there is knowledge about the bounties themselves (wealth, children), and in what respect are they bounties for man, and in what way should they be used such that the wisdom behind their creation is fulfilled. As for the condition of ‘iman’ it requires, on the basis of knowledge acquired in condition one, a firm belief in the mercy of Allah (SWT) that brings tranquility to the heart of the believer, and peace of mind as regards the security of his lot. The condition of ‘good deed’ is such that the beneficiary uses the bounties of the Benefactor for what He wants them to be used for, and in accordance with the lawful methods He ordained.

The three fundamental Qur`anic concepts of ‘Self’, ‘Wealth’, and ‘Children’ are generic concepts as I mentioned earlier, and their real counterparts in the empirical world are responsible, through their interaction, for the generation of social reality. The three real elements of ‘Self’, ‘Wealth’ and ‘Children’, through their interaction, are the necessary condition for the existence of human society as we will demonstrate below.

A question of importance here is the following: what guarantees, in this grand test of Allah for man, that every human being will go through this test? The guarantor lies in the dual nature of the ‘Self’, firstly; the duality between the biological body and psychological self, and secondly; the duality of the psychological self as between the motivators of its transgression (fujoor), and the motivators of its piety (tagwa). The first duality led to a corresponding duality in the innate motives needed to sustain the human being; some of which needed to sustain the body; they are the biological motives, and some are needed to sustain the psychological self; these are the psychological/social motives.

The biological motives needed to sustain the human body consist of ‘hunger’ resulting from the lack of eating food, ‘thirst’ resulting from the lack of drinking water, ‘nudity’ resulting from lack of wearing clothes, ‘exposition to sun’ due to lack of shelter, and ‘lust’ resulting from the lack of sexual intercourse. These biological motives, the satisfaction of which is related to the two wholes of ‘Wealth’ and ‘children’, are necessary motives and must be satisfied in order to preserve the human species and sustain their lives on earth. These are the motives that guarantee that all human beings, anywhere, and any time, will enter into the test involved in the allurements of ‘dunya’, namely ‘Wealth’ and ‘children’.

The main innate psychological motives mentioned in the holy Qur`an are ‘niggardliness’, ‘miserliness’, ‘envy’, ‘greed’, ‘hastiness’, weakness’. These are the necessary motives that guarantee that the ‘grand test’ will take place for every human being, anywhere, and in all times. They are the mechanisms that trigger the competitive race among humans to secure the maximum they can get from the allurements of ‘dunya’.

Once the necessary interaction between the three elements of ‘self’, ‘wealth’ and ‘children’ is triggered by the necessary biological mechanisms, another two elements necessary for this interaction come into play, namely ‘empirical knowledge’ which is latent in the form of the human abilities to know and the laws of nature made liable by Allah (SWT) to be known by man. The other element is ‘whim’ dormant in the human self and is activated by the taste of pleasure that the self experiences once it interacts with the allurements of this world, ‘wealth’ and ‘children’. By ‘whim’ we mean: the some total of human cravings, biological and psychological, that lead man to indulge into worldly pleasures.

The empirical knowledge derived solely by human sensory encounter with the empirical world remains purely functional in terms of enabling man to find his way to make the best use of the resources available to him on earth until ‘revealed knowledge’ comes from Allah (SWT) explaining the ultimate existential truth about man and the world. The two types of knowledge then merge to make what we call the ‘Tawhidi knowledge’ that fulfils two integrated functions: ‘faith’ (iman) in Allah (SWT), and human actions in the world according to that faith.

The ‘Self’ either it interacts with ‘Wealth’ and ‘Children’ via ‘Tawhidi knowledge’ and piety ‘tagwa’ motivators thus fulfilling the purposes of the Creator and achieving thankfulness for the bounties of Allah (SWT), or it interacts with them via ‘whims’ and the motivators of transgression ‘fujoor’ thus bringing mischief and corruption to the earth. This grand interaction is at the core of social reality, and responsible for all types of observable social phenomena throughout human history. This is of course as far as external causes are concerned, but within the framework of Islamic causal explanation and social ontology there are more powerful hidden causal powers, ‘Satan’ is one of them, but above all Allah (SWT), the cause of all causes.

According to the holy Qur`an human history on earth started by a single pair of a male and female descended to it by the order of Allah (SWT) to fulfill the grand design intended for humanity by Him. The innate sexual urges of the two resulted in copulation, and the resulting offsprings led to the formation of a family, and the biological needs for food, water, clothes, and shelter forced the members of the family to work and produce. The gradual increase in the number of the family members resulted into more needs requiring more resources and more work, leading ultimately to division of labor, and the formation of the extended family. We can follow this reasoning to its logical and factual conclusions where a tribe gradually comes into existence, where feuds between the members of the tribe require the appointment of chiefs and development of rules to bring order and harmony to the social life of the tribe. Ultimately when the number of the

members of the tribe becomes too large for the available resources to meet their need and greed, they disperse through migration to distant lands hoping for a better and more abundant opportunities. Thus, gradually nations come into being forming new cultures, and new international relations between people who once sprang from a single pair of male and female humans.

The essence of the grand test for man on this earth by Allah (SWT) takes the form of revealed Sharie`ah injunctions based on normative ‘do’ and ‘do not’, and directly, or indirectly related to the use by man of the bounties of ‘Wealth’ and ‘Children’ as allurements of life in this world. These sacred injunctions are designed to bring felicity to man, both in this world and in the hereafter, if he adhered to them strictly, but because they run counter to man`s whims regarding the use and abuse of the allurements of life in this world, the human self finds it hard to obey them, and rebels against them, thus preferring disobedience over obedience of Allah (SWT).

The holy Qur`an uses the two concepts of ‘al-hayat al-dunya’ and ‘al-akhirah’ to summarize the pathways of humanity to the test awaiting them all in the domain of the allurements of this world, ‘wealth’ and ‘children’. Those who prefer the life of this world, and want all their lot here and now, have chosen to devote their lives to one goal; ‘maximization of the pleasures of this world’. On the other hand, those who prefer the life of ‘al-akhirah’ have chosen to devote their lives to one goal: maximization of ‘good deeds’ in this world in order to ‘maximize the pleasures of the hereafter’.

These two fundamental choices of humanity represent two different worldviews with respect to the way human beings conduct the affairs of this world, the dominant among them throughout human history has been the secular (dunya) worldview.

We end this section by summarizing the above Qur`anic worldview in a comprehensive charts that capture the full implications of it for studying social systems from an Islamic perspective.

A Quran`ic Worldview

