

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



# A Qur`anic worldview and its Implication for Islamic Social Ontology

# The Concept of A Worldview

## ▶ Definition

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.

# The Main Seven Questions of a Worldview

1. *What is prime reality—the really real?*

To this we might answer: God, or the gods, or the material cosmos. Our answer here is the most fundamental. It sets the boundaries for the answers that can consistently be given to the other six questions.

*2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?* Here our answers point to whether we see the world as created or autonomous, as chaotic or orderly, as matter or spirit; or whether we emphasize our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us.

3. *What is a human being?* To this we might answer: a highly complex machine, a sleeping god, a person made in the image of God, a naked ape.

4. *What happens to a person at death?* Here we might reply: personal extinction, or transformation to a higher state, or reincarnation, or departure to a shadowy existence on “the other side.”

*5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?* Sample answers include the idea that we are made in the image of an all-knowing God, or that consciousness and rationality developed under the contingencies of survival in a long process of evolution.

*6. How do we know what is right and wrong?* Again, perhaps we are made in the image of a God whose character is good, or right and wrong are determined by human choice alone, or what feels good, or the notions simply developed under an impetus toward cultural or physical survival.



*7. What is the meaning of human history?* To this we might answer: to realize the purposes of God, or the gods, to make a paradise on earth, to prepare a people for a life in community with a loving and holy God, and so forth.

# Key Questions to be Answered by a Qur`anic Theory of Social Reality

1- How could the holy Qur`an be always relevant for human social existence in time and space when in fact it has been revealed within a particular historical social context?

2- How could it be possible that the immensely complex and rich social reality we have been observing throughout human history could have come from a single pair of male and female humans planted by Allah (SWT) on earth?

questions must be answered by a Qur`anic theory of social reality

3- What does it mean to say that the normative religion of Islam preserved in the holey Qur`an is equivalent to the 'Fitrah' (innate nature) according to which Allah (SWT) created humans?

questions must be answered by a Qur`anic theory of social reality

4- If the holey Sharei`ah governs, through its 'Ahkam', human social reality in all its diversity up to the minutest detail how could we say that the overall goal of the Shaarei`ah is just to preserve the five wholes of 'Deen', 'Nafs', 'Agl', 'Wealth', 'Children'?

# The Tale of a Male and a Female Humans

## Question

Suppose that a young woman and a young man, both of them healthy in every respect, committed such a serious crime that the king decided, as a punishment, to banish them for life to a remote but fertile island, endowed with all the natural resources needed to sustain life. Suppose also that there are no other human beings in the island, and there are no life-threatening dangers so that they can live the full time span expected for the average person during their era:

- Do you think, if some one visited their island after a thousand years, it is possible that he will find a vibrant human society?
- If your answer is no tell why, and if it is yes describe in brief the process that makes it possible for this society to 'emerge' from that first couple.

# The Master plan of Creation

- The potent Attributes of Allah (SWT) and the necessity of the unique creation of 'Man'.

## The Principle of Tawhid

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

- ▶ **Second;** 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),

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

- ▶ **Fourth**; the vicegerency of man on earth takes the form of a test for all humans as to who among them will excel in 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),

- ▶ **Fifth**; 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 generic 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 attributes, like 'iman', 'knowledge', 'mercy', 'adl', 'ihsan', 'honesty', etc., (shams, 7-10). Given 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),

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- ▶ **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, 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 (SWT) 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 physical world will remain 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**’ 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 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' 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 now 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.

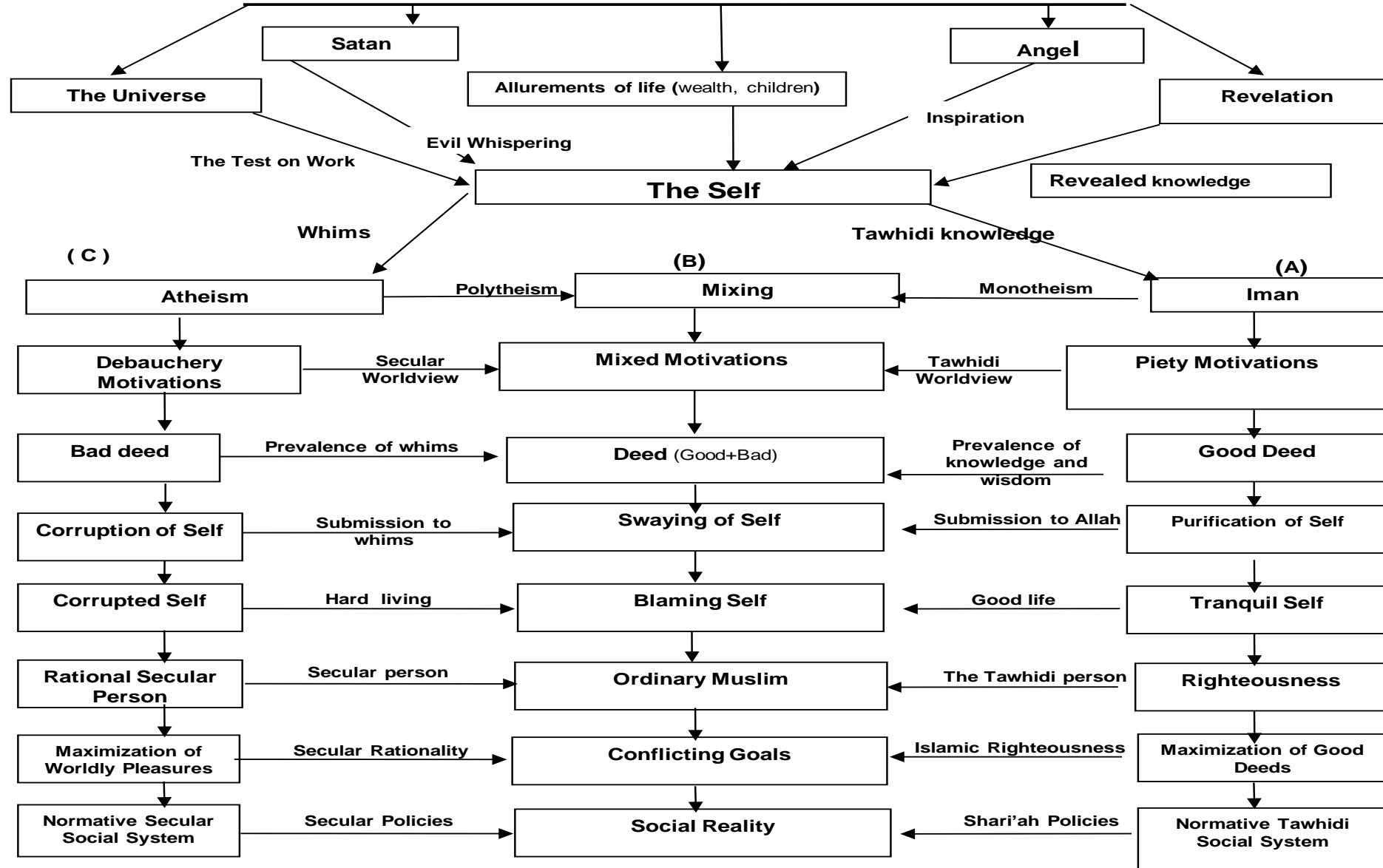
- ▶ The essence of the grand test for man on this earth by Allah (SWT) takes the form of revealed Sharie`ah injunctions based on normative 'do' and 'do not', and directly, or indirectly related to the use by man of the bounties of 'Wealth' and 'Children' as allurements of life in this world. These sacred 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.

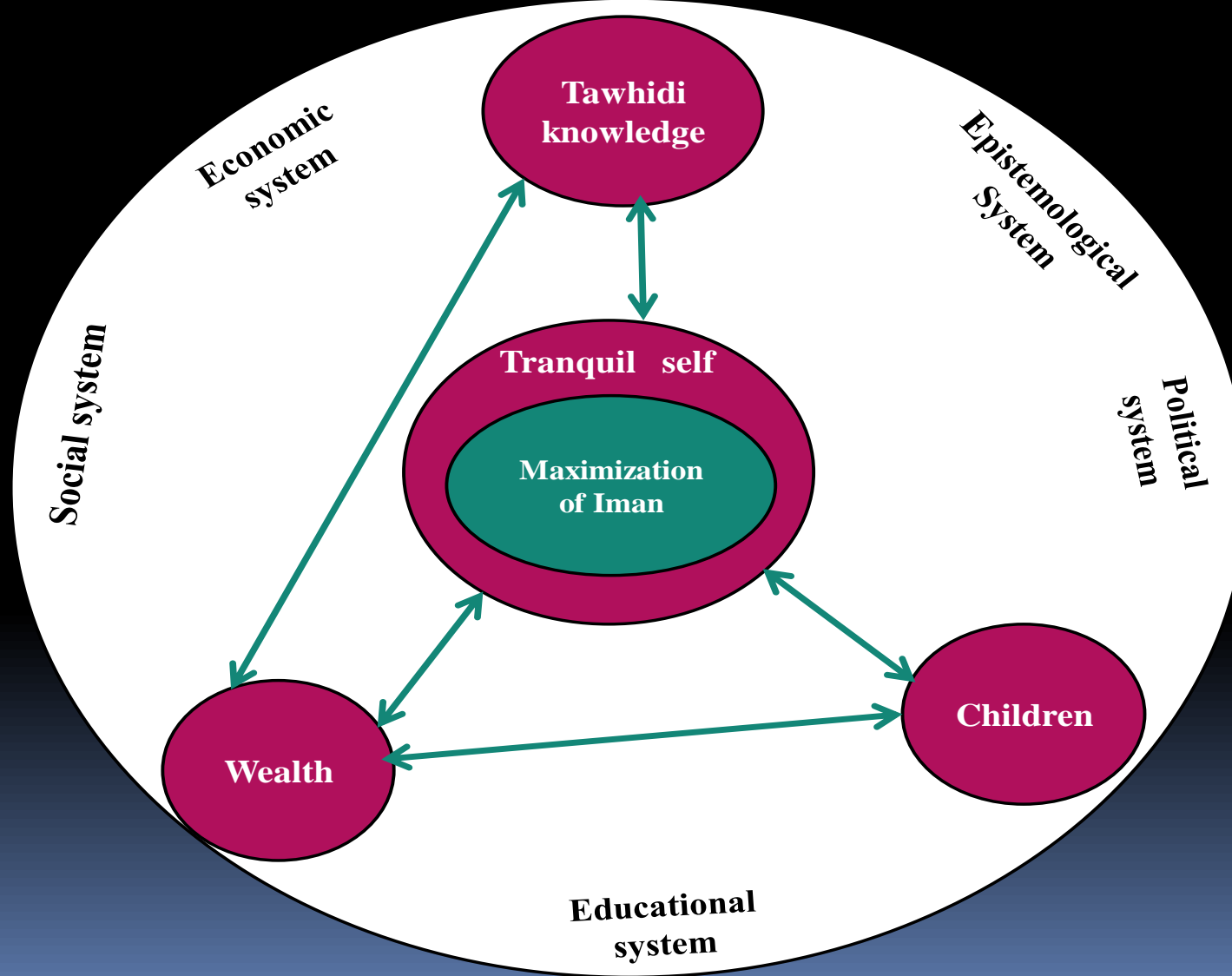
# A Qur'anic Worldview

Allah (SWT)

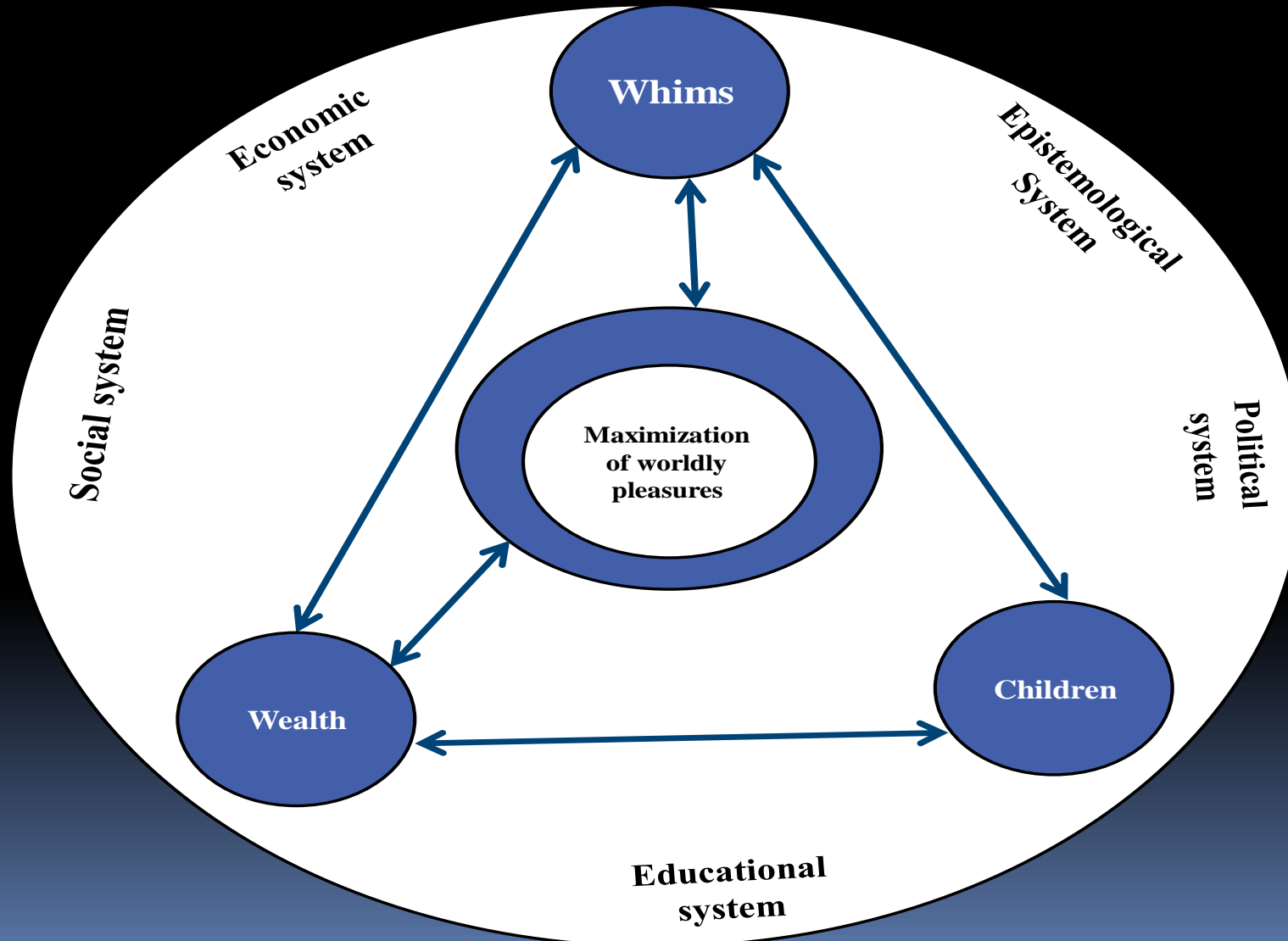




# Tawhidi Social System



# Secular Social System



# Foundations of The goals of Sharei`ah and The Wholes of social reality

- ▶ The Tawhidi social reality is the result of the interaction between 'Self', 'Wealth', 'children', 'knowledge' and 'Iman'.
- ▶ Sharei`ah goal is to preserve the five wholes of 'Self', 'Wealth', 'children', 'Knowledge' and 'Iman'.
- ▶ Result: The Sharei`ah goal is to preserve the foundations of the tawhidi society.

# Islamic social ontology

- ▶ The meaning and importance of social ontology:
  - The term ontology refers to the *study* or *theory* of being, not to being itself. To have an ontology is to have a *theory* of what exists.
- ▶ all theoretical positions are dependent upon particular assumptions about ontology (theory of being: what is the world made of? What objects do we study?), epistemology (theory of knowledge: how do we come to have knowledge of the world?), and methodology (theory of methods: what methods do we use to unearth data and evidence?). (Kurki and Wight 2006: 14)

- ▶ “it is impossible to engage in any sort of ordered thinking about the socio-economic world without making a commitment (if only implicitly) to some social ontology, because any attempt to conceptualize socio-economic phenomena of interest inevitably involves the adoption (if only implicitly) of some picture of the nature of social being” (Lewis 2005: 291).

## Islamic social ontology

- ▶ “every theoretical view of society and, for that matter, of any concrete object, has two components: an ontological and a methodological. The former concerns *the nature of society*, the latter the way to study it.”
- ▶ More concretely, investigators of social ontology may attempt to clarify these questions:
  - (1) Are there social entities or social kinds? If so, what are they composed of? Do they exist *sui generis*, that is, in their own right? (And what does this mean?) On what basis and to what extent can they be identified, investigated and compared?
  - (2) What are the differences between natural and social kinds.
  - (3) Does “society” stand high above the individuals that comprise it? Are there “laws” of society other than the laws regarding individual behavior?

## Islamic social ontology

- ▶ What are the entities identified by the Qur`anic worldview as defining the social space and through the interaction of their causal powers they create social reality, thus determining the nature of Islamic social ontology? We can identify the following:
  - ▶ Allah (SWT),
  - ▶ Revelation,
  - ▶ Self, Wealth, Children. Note the following:
    - The importance of the 'Heart' in its Qur`anic meaning,

- The 'Self' with its qur`anic characteristics of 'Fujoor' and 'Tagwa',
- 'Wealth' and 'Children' as the main domain where religion will be founded'
- Human actions and interactions,
- Human goals,
- Necessary characteristics of human beings (freedom, knowledge acquisition,



## Islamic social ontology

- Change and development, and their implication for 'tagdid' in the form and content of religion through 'Ijtihad',
  - Two social systems, 'Tawhidi' and 'Dunyawi', in constant conflict,
  - 'Satan' and his enduring enmity for man'
  - 'Angels' as supporters of Muslims,

- ▶ Allah`s **social** 'Sunan' governing human social reality,
- ▶ The '**universe**' made amenable to man`s Adventures.

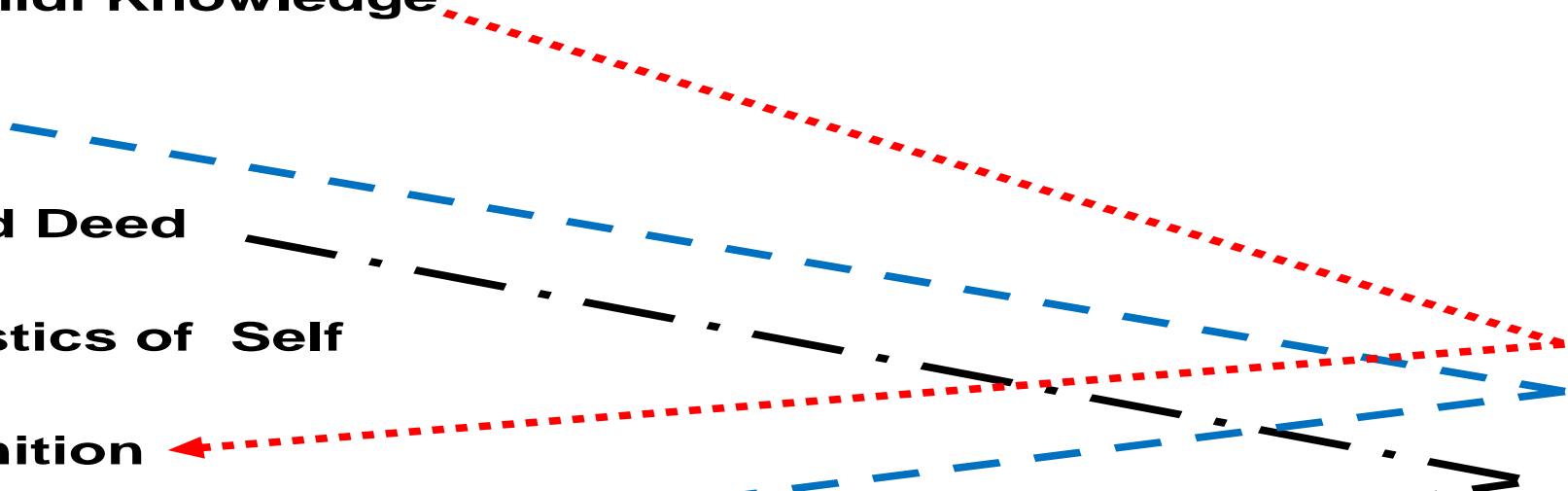
# Tawhidi Civilization

## Wholes of Normative Islam

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

## Characteristics of Self

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



- ▶ Kinds of knowledge we need:
  - 1- Knowledge about 'Knowledge';
  - 2- knowledge about 'Iman';
  - 3- knowledge about human 'Self';
  - 4- knowledge about 'Wealth';
  - 5- Knowledge about 'Children';
  - 6- Knowledge about 'Satan';
  - 7- Knowledge about their interactions;
  - 8- knowledge about the 'universe'