

**WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES OF RESEARCH  
AND FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAMIC  
PARADIGM**

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## WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES OF RESEARCH AND FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAMIC PARADIGM\*

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### Introduction

The ontological questions that concern the theory of reality are of fundamental value in research since the answer to the question of what exists in the world generates certain philosophies that impact one's world view, subsequently delimit the focus of study only to those objects that one presumes to actually exist and resultantly form one's epistemological position. Take for example the two opposing philosophies pertaining to ontological question, namely metaphysical or religious and empiricist concept of reality whereby former presumes that the world could only be explained as a product of God's Divine Will and project, whereas the latter's philosophy is that only those things which are directly observable exist in reality. Importantly, the empiricist philosophical framework inspired the modern intellectual minds, particularly during the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment periods, which represented the conflict between Church's ontological position and those of men of science, and ultimately swayed the world of science towards the philosophy that human reason, intellect, and critical thinking were the only reliable tools to understand social and physical reality of the world. These modern western philosophies developed in a certain socio-political, cultural and civilizational environment, and were later on adopted by researchers and scientists from every cultural and civilizational background.

In this backdrop, this paper explores the question whether the ontological framework of western philosophy(ies) is comprehensive enough to be assumed natural, universal, and applicable everywhere and to account for the social complexity that the researchers witness during the course of their research. This discourse is an effort to bring into fore the fundamental issues in the Western model of theorization and their consequences. Furthermore, it also presents the fundamentals of Islamic paradigm of research as the most comprehensive model for developing sound ontological positions and epistemological practices in all the realms of knowledge.

### Paradigm Lost

Every civilization—be it Chinese, Indian, Roman, Greek or Muslim—pondered on the issues concerning life in this world and beyond, the position of man in this setting, interaction among peoples and states, and development of resources, helping in the growth of various disciplines, rules and guidance about these issues. In the context of modern philosophical framework, the contributions of Greek thought have been immense particularly in the fields of laws and administration, development of knowledge, thought patterns, and sciences. Even the modern terminologies of physics and metaphysics come from the sequence in Aristotle's book where he discusses physical and then what is beyond the physical—metaphysical. Yet, the Greek thought appears to have centered on rationality, reason, intellect and logic, lacking empiricism and

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\* This article is based on a lecture given by the author at Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad.

experimentation. For example, Aristotle argues that a heavier object falls faster than a lighter object, which seems true on the basis of logic but is actually false on the basis of experiment.

While Europe's contact with the rich traditions of knowledge and culture of the east throughout the Medieval and Middle ages influenced the intellectual minds in Europe; the real breakthrough in terms of the evolution of modern Western theorization was the proliferation of Greek thought into Europe in the backdrop of Turkish conquest of Byzantine Empire in 1453, that pushed the Greek refugees and immigrants towards Europe, who brought along the treasure of Greek knowledge with them, and spurred the three major intellectual and cultural movements—Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. Renaissance represents a paradigm shift in the Western thought from God and from the 'other world' to 'this world' and to the human. Reformation was a response of religion/Church to face this challenge by reforming within the religious realm and making it more relevant to the changing reality. Enlightenment is the real watershed that developed in concrete terms the ontological and epistemological positions in the Western paradigm of research.

Built upon these three movements, a new thrust took place where it was suggested that future progress was not possible without disposing of the religious wars, intolerance, unreality, and tendencies of ignoring the human, this world and its problems. So a break with the past and with the religion is important. The thirty years of religious wars (1618-1648) played a very significant role in strengthening this thinking in Europe. The landmark achievement of 1648 treaties, commonly known as Peace of Westphalia, and 18th and most of the 19th century thinking represent the new approach in almost all the realms of thought, where it was postulated that God, religion and Divine Guidance had either become irrelevant, or were unnecessary, as intellect, experience, observation, history etc. had rendered man with enough self-sufficiency to understand the reality and to reinvent the world. Indeed, many other developments, such as mercantile revolution, the industrial revolution, science and technologies, the imperialistic adventures, and harnessing them to the service of economy and polity, were also taking place simultaneously, affecting each other. This process of evolution led to a new model based on secular world-view.

In one sense, secularism was a great blessing because it highlighted an area that was neglected, marginalized or denigrated in the context of European religious experience. So the shift to human body, society, physical world, discovery of resources, their development and mobilization to produce wealth, power, utility, and, if fortunate enough, happiness, affluence, and prosperity was in a way essential. However, this shift did not stop at that but entailed another dimension—the denial of religion or at least making it irrelevant, meaning thereby that either there was no God, or if there was a God, he had played his role, and now everything was or would be operating on its own basis because man had become intelligent enough to find out 'the reality'. This denial of any linkage or need for the beyond is the most significant dimension that laid the basis for a reductionist paradigm and lopsided modern philosophical thought as a discipline of social sciences. The shift from discovery of the importance of the secular as well as sacred, of here and hereafter, and of the human as creation and God as Creator to self-sufficiency of the human intellect, reason and experience is a critical transition that made all the difference.

## Crisis of Secular Paradigm:

With the development of this empiricist secular paradigm of research, the power of science was employed upon addressing and understanding the physical world, trying to discover the laws, patterns, and processes. In the light of new scientific discoveries, application of science takes the form of technology. So based on the methodologies of observation and experiment, natural science became the main concern of human effort in this period that definitely increased human power and resources, harnessing of which enabled human societies to achieve new marks. The field of science that deals with the study of humans, individuals, institutions, society and social processes, and human relationships became subservient to the methodologies of natural science because of the intellectual climate and cultural context of late 18th and 19th centuries in which they evolved in the western society. In the areas such as sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, etc., an effort was made to bring in the methodologies of natural sciences as they were assumed to be objective, superior, rational, and verifiable.

The expected consequence of applying natural science methodologies in social sciences is the undue focus on the obvious, ignoring the fact that human beings are not robots: they have been endowed with discretion and freedom to choose, meaning thereby that there can be and are multiple responses to similar stimuli. Take, for example, the case of a ball and a child: if the ball is kicked with a certain force, it will cover a certain distance and then stop when the velocity becomes zero; whereas if a child is kicked with same force, measuring the impact in terms of distance and velocity would be out-rightly inhuman. However, modern social science emphasizes more on 'what is', what human beings do, how they react. It does not go to the extent of exploring the question whether the 'human object' of research reacts with purposefulness or in the right direction. This unwarranted focus on the obvious does not motivate, inspire, and enable the researcher to discover and develop the potential that is hidden in the human beings. It is a fact that human beings have been imbued with discernment of wickedness and righteousness.' It is because of man's wicked or righteous response to stimuli that he will become what he becomes. This approach of understanding human behavior is only possible if one does not confine oneself to the methodology of empiricism or positivism. Unfortunately this reductionist approach of applying natural science methodologies in social sciences has committed a great falsification.

Another shortfall of this paradigm arises out of the fact that the generalization of laws, principles and theories in the social sciences on the basis of the principles and methodologies of natural sciences, and the whole process of research and observation are taking place in the mind of the observer, who is operating in the context of a particular culture, society, a value framework. One can be objective as far as the collection of data or fact is concerned, but once it is turned into process of systemization, the human values, cultural context, and the entire civilizational phenomena start playing their role. If the moral question is not addressed, the formation of that knowledge would definitely be different, because the same information, systematized, codified and arranged in different value frameworks is bound to be different. That is precisely the reason why a scientist with religious ontology sees the collected information as part of the Divine will, tries to explore the purpose of the creation of the object under observation, and strives to understand what could be the best use of it. With a secular approach and framework, devoid of moral and ethical context, one does not take this direction.

Another fundamental issue in the social science, in particular, is the idea of so-called value neutrality. Value neutrality is impossible: either values are known and explicit, or they are implicit, hidden, or embedded. The cloak of western social science is probably an attempt to delink social sciences from their moral and cultural roots and foundations. Although an element of value is there in natural sciences, yet the possibilities of value neutrality are relatively higher when 'the observer' and 'the observed' are two different entities. In social sciences, however, the observer and observed, being same entities, mix up, with the result that while the observer observes what is external, he also sees the external from what he is. This total delink is not possible. So, the more scientific and honest approach for a researcher would be to admit his/her value framework, instead of keeping the values embedded or hidden. Hence, to presume that a unique European experience, which has articulated and unfolded itself in the context of a certain cultural, intellectual, moral context, is natural, universal, and applicable everywhere is presumptuous and much of what the disciplines of social sciences suffer in modern research practices and life in general is because of this presumption.

The crisis of modern research in social sciences is not, therefore, about the formulation of the problem, building hypothesis thereof, measurements, techniques and processes, collection and analysis of data, inference, derivatives, generalizations, and theories etc. The real problem lies in the value framework from intellectual, moral, and cultural context of both the investigator and observer as individuals, and the entire team of scholars and investigators. Because of the alleged value neutrality, the responsibility, accountability, and usefulness that come with it is either ignored or written off.

If one probes into the economic injustices to which the humanity is being subjected to, its root-causes can be traced back to the philosophical framework of the modern economic scholars, who look at the economy merely in terms of the law of demand and supply, self interest being the only natural motivating force, and market being the best allocator of optimal resources. The current state of global economy reveals the fact that the laws which claimed to have been natural and universal by these scholars were by far the most unnatural.

Similarly, problems in the modern practices of social science arise with the over emphasis on the quantitative: while quantitative is important and a must, all emphasis on that has led to the loss of quality. So with the result that whole thrust and development of social sciences is more in the direction of quantitative dimensions and the element of qualitative and intrinsic worth is either neglected or underdone. While quantitative techniques and use of mathematics are helpful, their excessive use in social sciences and the thinking that the real scientific realm pertains only to the quantifiable again represents a major falsification in the entire work of the social sciences, particularly in policy formulation. That is precisely the reason why it is being exceedingly realized that in quest for mathematical tools, social science tends to neglect those dimensions which should be much more important than those which can be quantifiable.

Undue isolation of different fields of social science in the name of specialization is another destructive dimension of Western paradigm. It is a fact that human beings are organic whole and knowledge is a unity. Different branches of knowledge are meant to enrich and influence one another. This is called fertilization. Instead, the modern knowledge is faced with an array of sciences, each isolates and concentrates on only one phenomenon. This approach assumes that

the entire human being can be understood in the context of one small bit. When one looks at economics, sociology, psychology, or any other field, one finds that this aspect of division of knowledge and isolation of a vast array of social sciences is regarded as part to be whole. While specialization is good, its application at the cost of deeper understanding of the human reality is counterproductive.

Applied Dimension of the Crisis: Keeping this background in mind, it would be useful to analyze 'economics' as one of the areas of social science as a test case of Western paradigm of research. Economic issues, such as what to produce and consume, how to exchange and distribute the resources, have been a part of human life since the beginning. The phenomena of self interest, profit motives, even the market are not new. What, in fact, is new in contemporary economics and the capitalistic system, which is the twin brother of contemporary economics, is the idea that self interest is the only factor which determines human choice and by everyone running after one's own interest, it would automatically lead to the fulfillment of the interest of all. And, it is only through market mechanism that a scientific and objective allocation of resources can take place. Society is reduced to economy, economy is reduced to market and the market is reduced to the game of demand and supply.

The question arises: has this philosophy of market fundamentalism been successful in fulfilling the needs of all human beings in this world? The current global economic crisis that has engulfed the entire world for the last few years has practically replied to this question in negative. To be more precise, the most careful estimates suggest that it has wiped out one third of the total wealth of humanity in just two years from 2006 to 2008. The banks are receiving bailouts in billions of dollars at a time when millions of people are suffering because of the effects of crisis in the form of unemployment and real estate crime or failure. The governments are financing banks for them to survive while about 3 million house-holders in America have been turned into homeless.

Indeed, the crises entail heavy costs, but they also bring with them an opportunity to rethink and reflect and the current crisis has precisely done that: it has urged the people in general and scholars in particular to think upon alternatives. Some of the hardcore capitalists and advocates of market fundamentalism have started saying that some corrupt and greedy people have caused this crisis along with the failure of financial system, bankers, hedge funds, and derivatives etc. For these diehard market fundamentalists, if there had been better regulations, things would not have gone so wrong.

On deeper level, however, it was realized that while both these points are correct, the crisis is more severe than meet the eyes. It is the entire economy and financial system, and its foundations, mechanism, and processes that have led to the failure. It is in this context that a large number of thinkers, scholars and analysts are now saying vocally that it is not merely failure of economy: it is the failure of the economics, the basic philosophy behind the development of this discipline and the ways through which the whole phenomenon has been looked upon. They are claiming that things can only be understood by going beyond the text books and policy manuals, and by revisiting the very fundamentals of modern economic philosophy, its principles and values are. There is a moral deficit and lack of spiritual dimension that have been totally ignored by economics and other social sciences as something irrelevant. Now its relevance is being rediscovered. The greed has led to this menace because there was no moral mechanism to check

its progress.

A very interesting study by Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, titled “Freefall: Free markets and the Sinking of the Global Economy” is very important in this context. He says that we cannot come out of this crisis merely “with a little tweaking here and there,” and some modifications; rather “...real reforms were and are needed—not just cosmetic ones.” “If the United States is going to succeed in reforming its economy, it may have to begin by reforming economics.”

“Most of us would not like to think that we conform to the view of man that underlies prevailing economic models, which is of a calculating, rational, self-serving, and self-interested individual. There is no room for human empathy, public spiritedness, or altruism.”

Another very interesting study on the subject is ‘Birth of a New Economics’ by Anatole Kalatsky, who is so desperate that he even says:

“Economics today is a discipline that must either die or undergo a paradigm shift — to make itself both more broad-minded and more modest. It must broaden its horizons to recognize the insights of other social sciences...Either economics will reform itself quickly or the funeral will be for the discipline as a whole.”

Another Nobel Laureate, Robert Fogel, mentioned these issues even before the crisis in his book in 2001, ‘The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism’. His formulation of the real problem is succinct and perceptive. In his words:

“At the dawn of the new millennium, the critical issues are no longer, whether we can manage business cycles or whether the economy is likely to grow at a satisfactory rate. It is not even whether we can grow without sacrificing the egalitarian advances of the past century. Although the consolidation of past gains cannot be ignored, the future of egalitarianism in America rests on the nation’s ability to combine continued economic growth with an entirely new set of egalitarian reforms that adhere to the urgent spiritual needs of our age, secular as well as sacred. Spiritual (or immaterial) inequity is now as great a problem as material inequity, perhaps even great.”

And his final words are:

“...a world that our grandchildren will inherit will be materially richer and contain fewer environmental ills. It will be more complex and more intense than that of my generation. Ethical issues will be at the centre of intellectual life and engagement with those issues will form a large part of the fabric of daily life than is the case today. The democratization of intellectual life will broaden debate and insinuate spiritual issues more deeply into political life. Clashes between old and new religions may become more acute, but the average age of the population will rise significantly and with that ageing will come, one hopes, a maturity and intellectual vitality that will help our grandchildren find better solutions than we found.”

This crisis in a way is a reminder and the same voices calling for the rethinking of philosophies, fundamentals, and methodologies can be heard. These issues in social sciences need to be addressed earnestly with the help of a new paradigm that is broad and comprehensive and that respond to the complexities of social and physical realities of the world.

### Paradigm Needed

This is a known fact that the three milestones in the development of western thought and civilization—Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment—were impacted by Islamic thought, Islamic practice and encounter between Islam and the Western world. William Draper’s ‘History of Conflict between Science and Religion’<sup>1</sup>, mentions that the empirical method was introduced in the post-Renaissance phase by direct contribution and contact of the Muslims with the West. He also surveys the entire conflict and clash between science and religion over the ages, and asserts that there was no such conflict during the Muslim era. Another very interesting study is Robert Briffault’s ‘The Making of Humanity’<sup>2</sup> which can, no doubt, be called a history of intellectual odyssey, in which he states that the inductive method has been founded by Muslim scientists and scholars, and adopted in the West from them. George Sarton, who is a great historian of science, discusses in ‘Introduction to the History of Science’<sup>3</sup> the evolution of science in different cultures and civilizations and spells out how for four centuries, Muslims resorted to these methods and produced what technologies they invented. The recent study, ‘1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World’<sup>4</sup>, is also a very eye-opening work in this context.

While it is true that social sciences in 18th and 19th century assumed a distinct shape and matured as a discipline, as a body of systematized knowledge with principles, values, parameters, and methodologies, it is also a fact that Western paradigms remained reductionist in the sense that they brought a division between the science and divine, the secular and sacred, and physical and metaphysical; whereas the paradigm that Muslim scholars and researchers adopted during their era helped them develop sciences without creating the dilemma of choosing between science and religion. It is, therefore, important to understand the fundamentals of Islamic paradigm, its ontological and epistemological framework, and its application in research practices in the current context.

Fundamentals of Islamic Paradigm: The five verses from the first revelation, given to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), are extremely important:

“Read in the name of your Lord Who created. Created man from a clot of congealed blood. Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Taught man what he knew not.” (Al-Qur’ān: Sūrah, Al-‘Alaq, 96: (1-5).

Here, reading, reflection, communication etc. inherent in the word ‘Read’ (Iqra) in the opening verse refers to the knowledge in the dimension of physical world but with the reference to the ‘Creator’. The reference to ‘blood’ (al-alaaq) in the second verse refers to the biological realm. The

<sup>1</sup> Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*.

<sup>2</sup> Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*.

<sup>3</sup> Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Hassani, *1001 Inventions*.



third verse brings back to the concept of Centrality of God (Tawhid). ‘Pen’ in the fourth verse symbolizes the knowledge of technology and the fifth verse reiterates the centrality of God in all the realms of knowledge.

Similarly the Quran says, when Allah created human beings, “He taught Adam [the first human being] the names of all things,”<sup>5</sup> meaning the knowledge of things—concepts as well as realities with both physical and conceptual dimensions. Along with that, human beings are endowed with discretion and freedom to choose. Moreover, with the knowledge of things, and their conceptual and physical reality, the human beings are given Hidayah (Guidance).

This gives us a paradigm in which first information is centrality of God. Everything else emanates from that. The central issue is: how the Creator and the creation are to be related. In this relationship, first dimension is recognizing the Creator, meaning man is not alone and man, humanity, world, and universe can only be understood in relation to the Creator. The realms of knowledge pertaining to the physical, biological and technological world, and the areas of activity would originate from that. But they are not to be seen as compartments: they are to be integrated. And the integrating principle is Hidayah as it is mentioned in the Holy Quran, “...Henceforth there shall come to you ‘guidance’ from Me now and again: whoever will follow it shall have neither fear nor sorrow.”<sup>6</sup> So the career of man on the earth does not begin in ignorance or darkness.

To integrate and understand the realms of knowledge, human beings have been endowed with three things: 1) intellect, power of reasoning, capacity to think, to examine, to opt, to pursue etc.; 2) knowledge of the physical realm, the capacity to knowledge and information, and 3) a higher form of knowledge, that is Hidayah, which, in the current ontological terms, would mean the concept of reality. The perception of reality and Hidayah would integrate all of this. It is a holistic, integrated, God-centered, Hidayah-centered paradigm that Quran presents.

After bestowing these faculties upon man, Allah invites him to explore the physical, biological and technological world. The following verses of the Quran are important in this context:

“Do (these unbelievers) not observe the camels: how they were created? And the sky: how it was raised high? And the mountains: how they were fixed? ‘Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made? And at the Sky, how it is raised high? And at the Mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it was spread out?’<sup>7</sup>

The entire focus of these verses has been: look at the animals, the mountains, the earth and all around. The Quran invites the man again and again to reflect upon the setting in which he abodes, to relate himself to the world around him, to visit the landscape of the world, to see how nations and civilizations have prospered and declined, and to respond. In the current epistemological terms, the Quran proposes to employ empirical methodologies to understand the realities of the world created by the Almighty God. With Quranic injunction that “...Wherever you are, turn your

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<sup>5</sup> Al-Quran, 02:31.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Quran, 02:38.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Quran, 88:17-20.

faces in the direction of Masjid Al-Haram,"<sup>8</sup> geography becomes an indispensable instrument to find out that direction. That is how developing realms of knowledge in the Muslim era were natural demands of living in the real world. An empirical methodology, observation, experiment, verification, confirmation on the basis of results, became integral part of Muslim methodology and it is an established fact that Muslim thinkers, scholars, researchers and technologists, who enriched culture and history, resort to these three dimensions: Divine guidance, human intellect, and the empirical method.

Keeping this background in mind, it would be useful to mark the four distinct paradigms of knowledge in human history. The first paradigm is the knowledge based on Divine Guidance, a higher source—the source which created this universe, sharing that part of knowledge with the humans that the Creator considered useful and essential for man's role on the earth. All religions and to be more specific, the Islamic paradigm starts with it. The second paradigm, known as mystic knowledge, is based on intuition. Third paradigm is based on reason and intellect, with the assumption that there is a reality and that reality can be perceived by intellect. Intellect operates through five senses; intuition operates beyond that. Intellect is a capacity, a faculty that has been a source of experience, information, and knowledge. The entire development of mathematics and geometry is on the assumption that this is something that has existed but only through intellect we will be able to capture it. The fourth paradigm is the empirical dimension, where information, facts, and knowledge are discovered through the process of observation and experiment, where verification of the hypothesis is possible through the empirical vouchsafe, and where prediction is possible because of this process.

It is, indeed, a tragedy that these four major paradigms are looked in isolation, assuming each to be self-sufficient. Islam's contribution in this realm is that it recognizes these four paths to knowledge, integrates them to one, and devises an overarching arrangement, in which Divine Guidance is placed at the highest, and intuition, intellect, reason and experiment play their role under its umbrella, each complementing and supporting the other, and making Islamic paradigm holistic.

Applying this all-inclusive paradigm in their research practices, the Muslims developed natural and social sciences in all realms within the first century of Islamic era. Indeed, they started with the Quranic sciences where grammar, language, Tafseer, Hadith, history, Ilm ar-Rijal, the whole process of deriving law from Usool-al-Fiqh (fundamentals of the Islamic law) and a number of sciences were developed. Later, Intellectual challenges started coming from the Greek and the rich intellectual movements of Mu'tazilah and Ash'ariyyah responded to those challenges, enriching philosophy as a result. In the fulfillment of the Divine Guidance and popular demands, like the requirement of writing and propagation of the Qur'anic text and Prophetic Traditions, the Muslims delved into the processes of natural science. They developed paper, pen, and ink by employing chemical analysis, for instance, and produced ink which would be glowing and long lasting. Thinkers like Imam Ghazali, Ibn Khaldoun, and Ibn Taymiyyah developed in their own way, what is regarded today as social sciences. Ibn Khaldoun is now recognized as the founder of the science of sociology and philosophy of history. First book on economics was Kitāb al-Kharāj by Imam Yusuf.

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<sup>8</sup> Al-Quran, 02:144.

In the Islamic philosophical framework, the first principle and the source of entire Muslim thought and practice is Tawhid (the doctrine of Oneness and Uniqueness of God). Prof. Ismail Raji Al Faruqi's 'Al Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life'<sup>9</sup> is very important in this regard as it concentrates on Tawhid and its implications, both for thought and society. Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal has also worked upon it very beautifully, first systematically in *Asrar-e-Khudi* and later in *Ramooz-e-Bekhudi*: The former deals with individuals and the latter with society. These two epic poems of Iqbal are seminal intellectual contributions and both of them provide the Islamic paradigm based on Tawhid. Iqbal's lectures titled 'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam', particularly the first four lectures, has also tried to show the centrality of Tawhid and its implications for thought, methodologies, society, economy, and polity etc.

With the doctrine of Oneness of God, the other concept is the unity of creation, which is the process of a law that sustains universe where there are patterns, similarities, predictability, and verifiability. Third is the unity of reality, leading to unity of knowledge, and then finally unity of humanity. These are the five basic principles of Islamic paradigm.

Under these principles, the critical concept is *Istikhlaf*, meaning that human beings are sent down with a mission to develop the world and to harness all the sources and resources for the establishment of justice, fair dealing, equity, and the differentiation in right and wrong, halal and haram, good and bad. So the entire human life is focused upon this moral choice, while enjoying the liberty of physical choice. This concept of *Istikhlaf* leads to the best here and the best in the hereafter, thus linking this life with the life to come. This linking process is beautifully described in the Hadith as 'this world is the seedbed, the pillage, or the harvest for the world hereafter.' So the path to the hereafter is not unconnected or unrelated to this world—it is through the betterment of this world that betterment of the hereafter can be achieved. The concept of *Istikhlaf* makes morality, ethics, the idea of desirable and undesirable, and halal and haram, as one of the most important factors in this paradigm. Be it the realm of natural sciences or the social sciences, values, morality, choice of good, social responsibility, individual social accountability are integral part of this paradigm.

Therefore, the part of secularism that focuses on the improvement of this world causes no conflict with Islamic paradigm, because Islam is concerned with the physical, physiological, and material aspects of this life. The disagreement arises with the secular focus on observable, whereas Islam couples 'unseen' with the 'observable'. It is very significant that in Surah Al Fateha, the first chapter of Qur'an, we are taught that our greatest need is Guidance: "Guide us to the straight path"<sup>10</sup>, while the second chapter, Surah Al Baqarah, provides us the answer: 'This is the Book of Allah, there is no doubt in it; — (it is) a Guidance for mankind, with clear signs of true guidance and a Criterion of right and wrong'<sup>11</sup>). However, the first demand of this guidance is to believe in the unseen, as in the very beginning of Surah Al Baqarah (2), Allah says that the Quran is a guidance for those "who believe in the unseen."<sup>12</sup> Now the 'unseen' does not mean any mystery. 'Unseen' means the realm which is not observable yet real, and which is not measurable yet exists. In the context of guidance, both 'observable' and 'unseen' make the totality of the reality. The key

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<sup>9</sup> Al Faruqi, "Al Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life."

<sup>10</sup> Al-Quran, 01:05.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Quran, 02:185.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Quran, 02:03.

element of the secular paradigm is the extraction or isolation of one from the other, but in the Islamic paradigm, both are interrelated, integral, and inseparable. Because of the separation of 'observable' and 'unseen', there are so many consequences that the denizens of modern world have to face.

## Conclusion

Islamic and secular are two distinct paradigms, but the superiority of Islamic paradigm lies in its all inclusiveness. While the secular paradigm has failed to deliver because of its limited, selective and partial approach, the Islamic paradigm presents an overarching model, containing the Divine source as the foundation, the intuitive source as a human supplement, intellect, reason, rationality as a epistemological tools, and empirical methodology as an essential instrument. There is no conflict between these four methodologies as each of these has a place and a role to play. It is this integrated, organic approach, which can avail of whatever has been achieved, even in the secular paradigm, and help the human mind in developing and harnessing resources for the services of humanity and for a better world order based on justice. The combination of secular and sacred is hallmark of Islamic paradigm that leads to the concept of Istikhlaf--the assignment to man on the earth.

The scholars and researchers of 21st Century need to develop epistemology that goes along the integrated paradigm of Islam. For this purpose, independent critical thinking and right vision are essential. One of the greatest failures of the contemporary social sciences is that it has concentrated on the analysis and ignored the vision. Analysis and vision must go together. Robert Heilbroner's and William Milberg's book 'The Crisis of Vision in Modern Economic Thought'<sup>13</sup> is an important reading in this regard in which they have shown how analysis without vision becomes barren, even destructive. So, with the right vision, mastering the techniques of analysis and synthetic, integrated approach, the researchers of today's world can redeem the failures of past centuries. Oliver Goldsmith's words are very pertinent at this point: "Our greatest glory is, not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, while learning from the failures, the younger generation needs to take up the intellectual, cultural, economic, and political challenges that confront the modern man. Teachers and students shoulder a great responsibility of providing leadership and thought.

It is also important to remember that throughout the history of mankind, one finds rise and fall of many civilizations, yet something which is common irrespective of all the civilizations is that their rise is associated with intellectual leadership, innovation, creativity, a dynamic approach towards responding to challenges, and their decline is associated with intellectual lethargy, imitation, dependence, lack of creativity. The scholars of Muslim world, who have the responsibility to present Islamic model of development in the world of social and natural sciences, need to provide intellectual leadership and explain to the world the forgotten concept of Istikhlaf, i.e. human beings have been created for a purpose as the Supreme Lord's deputy (Khalīfah) on earth, with a mission and a responsibility to seek their fulfillment through the adoption of the Divine Guidance and fulfilling its demands. That would lead to success here and Hereafter.

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<sup>13</sup> Heilbroner, *The Crisis of Vision in Modern Economic Thought*.

<sup>14</sup> Goldsmith, *Letters from a Citizen of the World*," 6.

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