

The Dilemma of an Interventionist Deity in Islam and Science Relationship—A Critique

The Qur'an consists of Allah's revealed information (qawl), world-view, precept, principles, teachings, commandments and guidance etc. The Qur'an gives principles of its own interpretation too. The world-view and the guidance derived from the Qur'an following Qur'anic principles of interpretation, merits to be called 'God-given revealed knowledge' though scope for the better interpretation of the Qur'an with the change of time, place, quantity and capacity in line with the above principles is always there.

No doubt nature is creation of Allah. To call it 'Work of God' (instead of 'Creation of God') as compared to 'Word of God' is dubious because of its connotation. Yet, in the perspective of Sir Seyyed Ahmed Khan's thought, this study has used it in the same manner.

'Science' as a study of the 'Work of God', is a purely human endeavor. It studies the Work of God in its empirical aspect alone. Its man-made methodology, admits no source of knowledge other than the empirical one and the rationality compatible with it.

Methodology of science, principles of research and basic presuppositions are not coherent with the Scripture. Beside its focus on empirical aspect of reality alone, it has its own self-made concepts of natural and supernatural. So we are justified using the term 'man-made knowledge' for the methodology of science, discoveries regarding structure and nature of the universe, the world-view based on science, and the philosophy arising in its wake. Reconciliation between Islam and science means reconciliation between 'God-given revealed knowledge' and 'man-made knowledge of science (and philosophy)'.

Dr. Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy (b.1369/1950), a Pakistani nuclear physicist, in his book 'Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality' identifies a very genuine problem that lies beneath failure of all Muslim attempts at bringing about reconciliation between Islam and science. Professor Hoodbhoy formulates this problem as 'The Dilemma of an Interventionist Deity'. Dr. Hoodbhoy argues that until the problem identified in the dilemma is satisfactorily addressed, no attempt at the reconciliation between Islam and science (and philosophy), or for that matter, developing an Islamic Science, Islamization of Science, or Islamization of Knowledge etc. is destined to succeed.¹

Dr. Hoodbhoy highly deserves our appreciation for this contribution. This study examines the dilemma and strives to meet the challenge. The study

¹ Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*, (London: ZED Books, 1991), 14-15.

argues that all traditional Muslim attempts at reconciliation between Islam and science, from Ibn Sina to Iqbal, and the contemporary schools and scholars after Iqbal, invariably suffer from a very serious flaw in their ontology and the cosmology.²

The study argues that Qur'anic ontology consists of three entities: i) Allah – the Absolute Originator of everything; ii) Khalq (the Creation), iii) Amar (the Command) as compared to traditional Muslim bipartite ontology which consists of: Allah and Creation; or eternal (Qadeem) and contingent (Hâdith). Similarly the Qur'anic cosmology consists of a Divinely Administered Universe in which there remains no question of Divine Intervention, as compared to the traditional Muslim cosmology which consists of a universe mechanically running in accordance with the laws of nature, and God who has set these laws and can intervene in the Order of the universe if He so Will.

The problem identified in 'the dilemma of an interventionist deity' actually arises in the backdrop of traditional Muslim ontology and cosmology. Until these are reconstructed in Qur'anic perspective, neither the dilemma can be resolved nor the much needed and much desired for reconciliation be accomplished.

The Conception of a Divinely Administered Universe

Before we start examining the dilemma, let us say as preliminary remarks that the Qur'an gives the conception of a 'Divinely Administered Universe and of God as Creator and Administrator of the universe when it says:

'Verily your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then He established Himself on the Throne (of authority): He covers the night and the day with each other, each seeking the other in rapid succession: He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, (all) subservient [to the laws of their *nature*] under His Command (*Amar*). **Behold! His is the Creation (*Khalq*) and His is the Command (*Amar*)**. Giver of blessings is Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!' (Q. 7:54).

Traditional Muslim View of the Universe

As compared to conceiving Allah as Administrator of the Universe, the traditional Muslim view of the universe sees God as an Interventionist Deity. The dilemma, as we shall see, actually assumes the traditional Muslim conception of the universe in its formulation as is given below:

² Ontology investigates into the nature of ultimate principles of reality. This is why one definition of metaphysics is 'doing ontology'. Cosmology deals with God-universe relationship, nature and structure of the universe etc. The modern science conceives cosmology as "a scientific study of the large scale properties of the universe as a whole. It endeavors to use the scientific method to understand the origin, evolution and ultimate fate of the entire Universe. Like any field of science, cosmology involves the formation of theories or hypotheses about the universe which make specific predictions for phenomena that can be tested with observations. Depending on the outcome of the observations, the theories will need to be abandoned, revised or extended to accommodate the data. The prevailing theory about the origin and evolution of our Universe is known as Big Bang theory." NASA, Cosmology: The Study of the Universe. 6 3,2011 https://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/universe/WMAP_Universe.pdf (7 28,2019).

‘That the universe is created by Allah, its laws are set by Him, and it is automatically running in accordance with these laws of nature. The laws of nature are subservient to Allah’s Power and not the *vice versa*. Being the Creator of the universe and Setter of its laws, and being All-Knowing, All-Powerful, and The Wise, He can intervene in the system of the universe if He so Will, and He does intervene.’

The study argues that the above view of the universe traditionally ascribed to Muslims is not in accordance with the Qur’anic teachings. The objection formulated in the dilemma is directed towards this mistaken view of the universe. Until it is reconstructed in accordance with the Qur’anic teachings, the dream of developing a science (and philosophy) in line with the Qur’an cannot be fulfilled.

Are Islam, and Science (and Philosophy) Compatible?

Examining instances of traditional Muslim paradigms towards Islam-science relationship, extending from Ibn Sina (369-428AH/980-1037), Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal and contemporary Islamization of science schools and scholars of the first quarter of the 21st century (1421-1440AH), we have reached the conclusion that the question

“Is Islam, and science (and philosophy) compatible? If so how can they be reconciled?”

is a false question. To attempt at proving them harmonious means striving for the solution of a pseudo problem, and that too, in the wrong direction. A world-view derived from the Qur’an, the ‘God-given revealed knowledge’ in line with its own revealed principles of interpretation, and a world-view derived from a purely ‘man-made knowledge’ of science (and philosophy) which admits nothing except empirical knowledge as the only source of knowledge, are two drastically different and irreconcilable world-views. Any attempt at harmonizing them is necessarily bound to fail.³

The Real Problem and Its Formulation

What is the real problem and how should it have been genuinely formulated? Taking insight from several instances where the Prophet (pbuh) taught his followers to benefit from time-tested, beneficial, man-made

³ Abdul Hafeez Fazli, “Evolving A Qur’anic Paradigm Of Science And Philosophy: Ibn Sina, Sir Seyyed Ahmed Khan, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, and Some Contemporary Scholars” in *The Qur’anic Theology, Philosophy and Spirituality*, (Lahore: PU Press, updated version 2018), 275-315. First edition of this book was published in 2016 by PU Press, as 500 copies and was distributed to local university libraries and scholars. In the second version the article “Evolving a Qur’anic Paradigm of Science and Philosophy: Ibn Sina, Sir Seyyed Ahmed Khan, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, and Dr. Israr Ahmed” was extended to include some contemporary Islamization schools and scholars too and was published on Amazon.

knowledge,⁴ and taking guidance from the Qur'anic principle of *innovation* (*bida't*) we argue that the real problem to be asked is

‘What are the Qur'anic principles for relating ‘man-made knowledge’ of science (and philosophy) with the ‘God-given revealed knowledge’ of the Qur'an?’

and the way it should have been formulated as question is that

‘What are the Qur'anic parameters for relating ‘time-tested, beneficial, well researched ‘man-made knowledge’ of science (and philosophy) with ‘the God-given revealed knowledge’ so that if anytime a prevalent view of science is replaced by a new theory of science, the Muslims are not compelled to make the same effort of reconciling them anew?’⁵

The study argues that to respond to this challenge we need to keep in mind following five points:

Innovation (*Bid'at*)

Bid'at is a Qur'anic principle for relating the outcome of beneficial, time-tested man-made knowledge with the revealed knowledge within the Qur'anic parameters. *Bid'at* is that Qur'anic principle which guarantees the applicability of Qur'anic teachings in all circumstances and for all times till the Last Day. This is the principle which makes Islam as the most progressive revealed religion of the world. Unluckily because of the short-sightedness of some renowned religious scholars in Muslim history, ‘*bida't*’ has acquired a highly undesirable connotation since centuries and the Muslims are unaware of its significance as a Qur'anic principle for relating beneficial man-made knowledge with the ‘God-given revealed knowledge’. No innovation in respect of prohibitions is allowed. Not everyone is qualified for carrying out this job. The sound in knowledge (*ar-rasikhûn fil-ilm*) are the ones who are best qualified for working out an appropriate relationship between Islam and manmade knowledge in line with the Divine decree: *la talbisul Haqqa bil batili ...* (Mix not falsehood with truth!) (02:42) It is Qur'anic principle of innovation (*bida't*) which provides basis to *ijtihad*.⁶

⁴ In the Battle of the Trench (also known as battle of the Confederates), the Prophet (pbuh) approved the suggestion of Hazrat Salman Fârsi and ordered the excavation of a trench around Madinah as a defense plan against the Arab confederates who were coming to attack on Muslims at Madinah. By accepting Hazrat Salman (r.a.) suggestion the Prophet (pbuh) taught His followers to make use of time-tested and beneficial knowledge within the Qur'anic parameters. In the Battle of Badar, the Prophet (pbuh) approving the suggestion of a companion (r.a.), shifted his camp to a place situated near water resource but the Prophet (pbuh) did not abandon the enemies from taking water as suggested by that companion. Naeem Ahmad, *Ayyam-e-Habib* (Urdu), (Lahore: Ch. Muhammad Ayyub, 2004), 579.

⁵ As Ptolemaic theory of Science was replaced by Newtonian mechanics; which in turn is replaced by Einsteinian theory of relativity Physics. Ibn Sina attempted to reconcile Qur'an with Ptolemaic science, Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan attempted to reconcile it with Newtonian mechanics, and Iqbal tried for ‘the construction of a scientific form of religious knowledge’ in Einsteinian perspective.

⁶ Abdul Hafeez Fâzli, “Introduction” in *The Qur'anic Theology, Philosophy and Spirituality*, (Lahore: PU Press, 2018), 21. *Rahbaniyyat* (monastic asceticism) was an innovation (*bida't*) of the Christians, Allah did not enjoin it on them. They had initiated it with the purpose of seeking Allah's pleasure. [Allah does not disapprove it.] They could not confine themselves within viable limits as they should. (Q. 57:27) “And

The Qur'anic Ontology

'Un-Qur'anic ontology, having origin in Greek philosophy, is bipartite as compared to Qur'anic ontology which is tripartite. The world-view based on bipartite i.e., traditional Muslim ontology acknowledges only two realities: God and Creation (*Khalq*); or eternal (*qadeem*) and contingent (*hâdith*).⁷ The tripartite ontology (propounded by this study) conceives three basic realities as Allah says: "Verily to Him belongs the Creation (*Khalq*) and the Command (*Amar*)."(Q.7:54) These ontological realities are: Allah (the Absolute Originator of everything), the Creation (*Khalq*), and the Command (*Amar*). *Khalq* (Creation) and *Amar* (Command) are originated ontological realities having no divinity in them or likeness with Allah in anyway.⁸ All traditional Muslim paradigms for relating Islam and Science assume bipartite ontology borrowed from Greeks through Christians.⁹

proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways." (Q. 22:27) Can the Muslims go on hajj as stated in this verse now? This is *Bidat-e-hasana* that now we go by air for acting upon this injunction.

⁷ Abu 'L-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Isma'il Al-As'ari, *Al-Ibaanah an Usul Ad-Diyaanah*, Eng. tr. *The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation* by Walter C. Klein, (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940), 66, 67, 76

⁸ The originated ontological categories of *amar* and *khalq* suggested by us with reference to the Qur'an must not be confounded with *alam al-amar* (celestial world) and *alam al-khalq* (terrestrial world) of the Muslim *wahdat al-wujud* sufism which they accept under the impress of Greeks.

⁹ Cf. Al-Ash'ari, *Ibid*, p. 66, 67, 76; also see translator's note at page 66.

'Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, the founder of Ash'arite school, not accepting Mu'tazilites contention that the Qur'an was created therefore contingent (*hâdith*), admitted with reference to verse "...Behold! His is the Creation (*Khalq*) and His is the Command (*Amr*)..." Q. 07:54 that 'Creation' and 'Command' were two different categories and asserted that the Qur'an did not belong to the category of Allah's Creation (*khalq*).

The ontology both Muslim schools had inherited from Greeks held the principle: 'What is uncreated is eternal.' As Muslims they could not permit anything to share eternity with Allah other than His Attributes.

On the problem of 'Eternity vs. Createdness of the Qur'an' the Mu'tazilites held the Qur'an to be 'created' while the Ash'arites, not admitting the Qur'an to be created, had only two options:

- i) Either to admit Allah's command (*amar*) as an ontological category at *par* with the category of Allah's creation (*khalq*) and uphold the Qur'an to be belonging to the category of Allah *amar*, so uncreated but not eternal like Allah and His Attributes;
- ii) Or to identify Allah's *amar* with any of Allah's Attributes and identify, in turn, the respective Attribute with Allah, rendering Allah's *amar* part of divinity, so uncreated and eternal.

Had they adhered to the first option, the Mu'tazilites would hold the Qur'an to be created and contingent, and Ash'arites would hold the Qur'an to be Allah's *amar* so uncreated but not eternal. Both stand points remained within Qur'anic parameters.

It seems that it did not occur to the minds of the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites both that the bipartite ontology they adhered to was not coherent with the Qur'an, and the principle 'What is uncreated, is eternal.' had no basis in the revelation; and that from verse Q. 07:54 they can safely draw a tripartite ontology. The Ash'arites opted for the second alternative and held the Qur'an to be *uncreated* as the predicate of Divine Attribute of *Knowledge* and *Will*, and as such identified with Allah as un-articulated *Speech* from ever; so eternal too.

Klein, in the Eng. translation of al-Ash'ari's above mentioned book writes as a note at page 66 that

The Qur'an says:

'And they ask you about *the Ruḥ* (soul/spirit). Say please: Soul belongs to [the category of] my Lord's Command (*Amar*), and you have been given but very little knowledge of it.' (Q. 17:85)

'*The creation*' and '*the command*' are two categories. Allah is the Creator of everything. *Ruḥ* (soul or spirit) belongs to the category of Allah's Command (*amar*). Life (*ḥayât*) does not belong to the category of Allah's Command. Life and death both belong to the ontological category of Allah's *Khalq*. (Q. 67:2)

He determines the purpose of creation of everything. Grants whatever is needed to anything for the fulfilment of its purpose of creation, and infuses or installs his *command* in everything to make it operative according to its purpose of creation. *Fiṭrah* (enduring *nature*) is a manifestation of Allah's *amar* (command) instilled in things. In verse 30 of Surah ar-Rome(30) Allah uses the word '*fiṭrah*' for the enduring nature /natural disposition which He has set up in mankind and uses the word '*fatara*' for creation of mankind.(Q. 30:30) Similarly in verse one of Surah *Fâtîr*(35) Allah says: "Glory be to Allah, the *Fâtîr* (the Originator, the Creator, the Bestower of *fiṭrah*) of the heavens and the earth..." This implies that origination of things by Allah is always with a specific *fiṭrah* (*nature*).¹⁰

"In this section al-Ash'ari repeats himself frequently. He attempts to show, on the one hand, that the Qur'an is not created, because it has not the characteristics of a created thing and exists independently of creation, and, on the other hand, that it is eternal and uncreated because, it is in a sense, a predicate of God's attributes like His Knowledge and His Will...."

¹⁰ Professor Suheil Umer says that the root meaning of the term '*fiṭrah*' is 'to split' or 'to cleave' and hence implies 'opening up' and 'coming out' as employed in verse "*Have not the truth-concealers beheld that the heavens and the earth were all bound up, and then We tore them apart, and out of water fashioned every living thing?*"(Q. 21:30) He admits that the verb *fatara* is employed to mean "to bring forth" and "to originate" too. Professor Suheil also says:

"The idea that human beings recognize *tawḥîd* ...innately is often expressed by using the term *fiṭrah*, which is commonly translated as "primordial nature" or "innate disposition."

We would agree with the meaning 'innate nature' but not with 'primordial nature' for it has connotation referring to something eternal. Neither *khalq* nor *amar* is primordial/eternal. Allah's *amar* (Command) always functions as *innate* nature in His *khalq*. At footnote 141 Professor Suheil of his article he says:

"The Qur'ân employs the word *fiṭrah* itself only once, along with the verb form of the word. Here we translate the verb as "bring forth." The Qur'ân is addressing Muhammad (pbuh) and, by extension, every Muslim: "Set thy face to the religion as one with primordial faith [*Lild-dîni Ḥanîfāan*]- the *fiṭrah* of God [*amar* according to which *Allah*] according to which He brought people forth. There is no changing the creation of God [*Lā Tabdîla Likhalqi Allâhi*]. That is the right religion, but most people do not know. [Set thy face to the religion] by turning to Him. And be wary of Him, and perform the *ṣalât*, and be not one of those who associate others with Him." (30: 30-31)"

Suheil Umer, "Physics and Metaphysics: 'The Infinite as Pure Potentiality or Possibility' (Scientific, Philosophical and Mystical Perspectives on the Question of Ultimate Reality— Iqbal's Immanent-Infinite, Vertical Causality and the Implicate Order)", unpublished article.

Above translation of this verse is not compatible with the *Muḥkamât* verses (the *Ummul Kitâb*) of the Qur'an as desired by Q. 39:23. It should be like this:

Allah's *amar* manifests itself in things as their *fiṭrah*. It is *fiṭrah* of things which interlinks them together. They are never discrete as the Ash'arite Atomism conceives them. It is this *amar* (command) as *fiṭrah* (nature) in things which holds up the system of the universe together. Spirit (*Ruh*) which Allah infuses or instills in man endows *fiṭrah* to mankind.¹¹

Qur'an and Ḥadīth Relationship

The Qur'an is *Qawl* i.e., the standard of truth as word, information, precept, command, guidance, message and speech. *Ḥadīth* is 'amal (action/practice). To work out parameters for the implementation of Qur'anic injunctions in changing circumstances is *Fiqh* (jurisprudence). So *Fiqh* corresponds to discernment and knowledge. The Qur'an is Allah's Command/Injunction (*ḥukam*). The Qur'an says: "وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا" (Q. 13:37)¹² And thus has We revealed this Judgement of Authority in Arabic." *Ḥadīth* is reported implementation of the Divine injunctions (*ḥukam*) ascribed to the Prophet (pbuh). The Qur'an as Divine Command is absolute. Implementation of absolute Command cannot be absolute; it is must to correspond with the requirements of time, place, quantity and capacity. To work out the conditions of its implementation in changing circumstances, as said earlier, is *Fiqh*. The Qur'an is source of *Shariah* (Divine law) and is ultimate, absolute and universal. The implementation of *Shariah* cannot be a source of *Shariah* itself. *Ḥadīth* is the *precedent* for the implementation of *Shariah* (Divine law), set by the Prophet (pbuh) in the circumstances when it was being revealed. *Ijtihad* of the right-guided caliphs, the honourable companions of the Prophet (pbuh) and the scholars of earlier centuries, too, have the status of being the precedent. To associate absoluteness and universality with them is to close the doors of *ijtihad*.

Allah calls the Qur'an '*Aḥsan al-Ḥadīth Kitāb*' (The Fairest of Statements Book) when He says: *Allah has revealed the fairest of statements, a Scripture consistent [Aḥsan-al-Hadith Kitāb] (Qur'an, 39:23); (It is) the Qur'an in Arabic, containing no crookedness [i.e., inconsistency].... (Q, 39:28). Allah also calls the Qur'an 'Ḥadīth-e-Aṣḍaq' (the Most Authentic Ḥadīth). (Q. 4:87) 'The*

'So set thy face to religion as a man of pure faith. This is the natural disposition (*fiṭrah*) set up /instilled in mankind by Allah. (...) فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا... There is no altering in Allah's creation; and this is the right religion (dīn al-ḥanīf). But most of the people do not realize it.' (Q. 30:30)

Oneness of Allah, no doubt, is innate in everything. The universe is replete with the signs of Allah's Oneness. It requires that man gives no importance to one's own or anyone's desires as against Allah's Pleasure. Legislating and implementing one's own or anyone else's desires at par with Allah's injunctions is to change the *fiṭrah* /innate nature of mankind. So Allah forbids it and decrees to set one's face directed towards true faith single-mindedly. *Oneness* of God does not require that one transforms religion into philosophy."

¹¹ Cf. Hazrat Fazal Shah and Muhammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer Fazli* vol.5, Eng. tr. Edt. Abdul Hafeez, (Lahore: Fazli Foundation, 2015), 187, 292.

¹² A. H. Fāzli, "The Qur'an: Creation or Command!" in *Ibid*, 61-70. With reference to its ontological status, the Qur'an too, belongs to the category of Allah's Command. It does not belong to the category of 'creation' (*khalq*).

Fairest of Statements Book' cannot be other than the 'The Most Authentic Book.' It is as much necessary for the interpretation of *ḥadīth* (tradition) to be coherent with the *muḥkamāt* as it is necessary for the *mutashabihāt* verses of the Qur'an to be coherent with the *muḥkamāt*.¹³

Only Allah's Revealed Word i.e., the Qur'an is 'The truth' (*al-ḥaqq*)

The principle "Truth cannot contradict truth." devised by philosophers of religion for relating 'man-made knowledge of science (and philosophy)' with the 'revealed God-given Qur'anic knowledge' is a false principle. It elevates 'man-made knowledge of science (and philosophy) at *par* with the Qur'an as *truth*. The epithet *al-Ḥaqq* is ascribed to the Qur'an by Allah. It is Allah Who says that what has been revealed to Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) is *al-Ḥaqq* (*the truth*). (*Wa 'Āmanū Bimā Nuzzila 'Alā Muḥammadin Wa Huwa Al-Ḥaqqu Min Rabbiḥim ... بِمَا نَزَّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ ...* Q. 47:02. Also see 34:6; and 38:29.) The revealed knowledge of the Qur'an is '*the standard of truth*'. Only that which is coherent with *al-Ḥaqq* is *ḥaqq*. To assert man-made knowledge of science (and philosophy) as 'rational version of truth' is false, void and without authority. Reinterpreting the Qur'an to make it compatible with science (and philosophy) is unjustified and contrary to the Qur'anic teachings.

Theory vs. Truth

'Science' and 'philosophy' consist of *theories*, whereas the Qur'an consists of '*truth*'. It is highly unfair and unlawful to strive for reconciling '*truth*' with '*theory*'. A further distinction exists in science itself between '*scientific theories*' and '*established scientific facts*'. A 'scientific theory' and an 'established scientific fact' differ with each other as to their status. An '*established scientific fact*' can never be inconsistent with the Qur'an.

¹³ The Qur'an divides all verses comprising Qur'anic text, into two categories.(Q. 3:7) Some verses are those which are outright in the form of Injunctions. These are definite in meaning, fundamental, precise and unambiguous). While the others are those which make it obligatory for the reader or the listener to act upon them according to what is narrated in them. The former are *muḥkamāt* and the later are *mutashabihāt* (ambiguous /the allegorical). The *muḥkamāt* (Imperative verses) have the status of *Umm-ul-Kitāb* (the Foundation of all Books). These are the criterion in every matter. Whatever conclusion is drawn from the *mutashabihāt* shall have to be verified from *muḥkamāt*. Otherwise there will be no proof for the validity of that conclusion. It further implies that such interpretation of a *mutashabih* verse which does not cohere with the *muḥkamāt* is not correct. Those who are perverse at heart, do not accept the orders of Allah Almighty. They try to determine the meanings of the *mutashabihāt* arbitrarily and according to what suits to their desires and what suits to their agenda. Allah holds them mischief-makers.(Q. 3:7) By implication, the same judgement applies to those who do not examine the text of *ḥadīth* in the light of the *muḥkamāt* of the *Aḥsan al-Ḥadīth Kitāb* and do not keep the interpretation of *ḥadīth* subservient to them.

The Qur'an (the Word of God) calls itself as 'The Fairest of Statements Book' (*Aḥsan al-ḥadīth Kitāb*) (Q.39:23); it also calls itself 'Most Authentic Statement /Hadīth' (*Ḥadīth-i-Aṣḍaq*). (*Mann aṣḍaq min-Allah-e-ḥadīth*. Q.4:87) *Prophetic ḥadīth* is a reported narration of the saying or action ascribed to the Prophet (pbuh). By implication, it is absolutely necessary that the text and interpretation of a *ḥadīth* reconciles with the *muḥkamāt* of the *Aḥsan al-ḥadīth Kitāb* and the *Aḥsan al-Ḥadīth Kitāb* confirms the authenticity of the text and interpretation of a *ḥadīth*. The way for this is that the interpretation of a *ḥadīth* is based on the *muḥkamāt* of the Qur'an. To make *Prophetic ḥadīth* judge (*authority*) over the interpretation of the Qur'an is to make everything upside down.

A philosophico-scientific world view is a theory only. It never is an ‘established scientific fact’. All attempts to develop compatibility between ‘a philosophical or a scientific theory’ and ‘the Qur’anic truth’ can never bring fruit. A scientific theory, how *well-accredited* may it be considered by some philosophers, scientists or religious scholars, is after all a theory. What the Qur’an presents are not *theories*, they are *revealed* as *ultimate truth*.¹⁴

Scientists’ Conception of the Universe — First Horn of the Dilemma

Keeping all said above in view let us start examining the dilemma.

First horn of the dilemma of the Qur’an and science relationship, formulates scientists’ conception of the universe which is as follows:

‘Science has no concern with whether God exists or not; or whether any divine agency has ever created it, set its laws and made it running or not.

Even if any such agency has created it and set its laws and made it running, the divine agency has no further role in it or can intervene in the order of nature in any way. The universe is autonomous and running in accordance with its laws of nature. Science is an empirical study of nature.

Every event that happens in the universe has a natural cause.’ That no event in the universe ever takes place without a cause, no matter we could ever identify it or not.

Traditional Muslim Perception of the Universe — Second Horn of the Dilemma

Second horn of the dilemma formulates conception of the universe traditionally believed in by Muslims as Islamic world-view which can be stated as follows:

Allah has created the universe, and set its laws according to which it is running.

¹⁴ “Since the publication of the English translation of his book, *La Bible, le Coran et la Science* (1976) as *The Bible, the Qur’an and Science* (1978), [by] Bucaille ...several studies have been devoted to “prove” the divine origin of the Qur’an on the basis that the Qur’an contains certain scientific facts which were unknown to humanity at the time of its revelation.” cf. Review article by Muzaffar Iqbal on Leif Stenberg, *The Islamization of Science : Four Muslim Positions, Developing an Islamic Modernity*, (New York: Coronet Books, 1996).

“[But] Bucaille does not state that the Qur’an is a book of science, but that modern science can clarify and give the full meaning of certain verses of the Qur’an. He offers a very fruitful idea in his writings that ‘established scientific facts’ should be distinguished from ‘scientific theories’. He is absolutely sure of the divine origin of the Qur’an that he asserts that an ‘established scientific fact’ has never contradicted with the Qur’an, nor shall it contradict it ever.” This is a very important point. Leif Stenberg, *The Islamization of Science : Four Muslim Positions, Developing an Islamic Modernity*, Coronet Books: New York, 1996, p. 240.

Also see A. H. Fâzli, “Evolving a Qur’anic Paradigm ...” in *ibid*, 303.

He is All-Powerful. The laws of nature are subservient to His Power, and not the *vice versa*.

Being the Creator of the universe and Setter of its laws, and being All-Knowing, All-Powerful, and The Wise, **He can intervene** in the system of the universe if He so Wills.

The upholders of the dilemma argue that the problem of bringing about harmony between the Qur'an and science actually lies in harmonizing above divergent horns of the dilemma. They further argue that belief in an Interventionist Deity in traditional Muslim perception contradicts with basic suppositions of science, shakes man's conviction in the immutability of the laws of nature, harms the tendency for the scientific explanation of phenomena and pushes man towards explaining events and happenings with reference to a supernatural agency. It, in turn, weakens science's ability to predict and control the events of nature. Propounders of the dilemma argue that the above Muslim belief in an Interventionist God is sufficient to make the Qur'an and the science essentially incompatible. Until and unless the Muslims resolve this dichotomy, no viable reconciliation between Islam and science is possible.

Ibn e Sina (369-428AH/980-1037), Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan (1232-1315AH/1817-1898) and Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1294-1357AH/1877-1938) has strived to solve this problem in their respective epochs. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT, established in 1981 in Virginia), Ijmali school led by Dr. Ziauddin Sardar (b.1371AH/1951), traditionalist school of Seyyed Hussain Nasr (b.1351AH/1933), Maurice Bucaille (1338-1418AH/1920-1998) school of scientific interpretation of the Qur'an, Dr. Muhammad Basil Altaie and many other schools, Islamic centers and scholars in the world are exerting their best abilities in the Islamization of Science/Knowledge project as a team or in their individual capacities. Ibn Sina, taking Aristotelian philosophy and Ptolemaic science as 'the rational version of truth' and the teachings of the Qur'an as 'the revealed version of truth' tried to bring about reconciliation between the two on the basis of the principle '*Truth cannot contradict truth.*' Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450-505AH/1058-1111) about 70 years after Ibn Sina, rejects Avicennian reconstruction of Muslim philosophy and science in terms of Aristotle and Ptolemy with very solid arguments.¹⁵ In the second half of the 17th century, Ptolemaic science is

¹⁵ "It is evident from his writings that Imam Ghazali firmly believed that the truth and the untruth can never be reconciled. He believed that any attempt at such thing would necessarily give rise to contradictions. He wrote *Tahafatul Falasifa (Incoherence of the Philosophers)* in which he critically examined twenty selected problems from Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina's works and argued that

- (i) Either the very principles *i.e.*, premises on the basis of which they reached their conclusions were wrong; or
- (ii) In case the premises were correct, they had violated the principles of logic which they themselves proclaimed; so the conclusions were incorrect.
- (iii) If the conclusions stated by them were correct, these do not follow from their premises.

replaced by Newtonian Mechanics.¹⁶ In the 19th century Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan comes forward to reconcile Islam with Newtonian mechanics and the philosophy of naturalism arising in its wake. He terms the interpretation of the Qur'an as the study of the 'Word of God' and the 'Newtonian mechanics' as the scientific study of the 'Work of God', and argues that the disharmony between the two is not possible. He further argues that in case of conflict between the two, 'the Work of God' will override the Word of God. It means that in case of disagreement between the two, the Qur'an (Word of God) will be reinterpreted to make it reconcile with the findings of Newtonian mechanics (and philosophy of naturalism).¹⁷

This theory propounded by Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan as a solution for the problem of reconciling the Qur'an and science together, or for bringing about a science in line with the Qur'an, makes the interpretation of 'the Qur'an' (the God-given revealed knowledge) subservient to the findings of Newton's theory of science (the man-made knowledge). It is apparent that it is highly offensive for most of the Muslims. Look at the irony of fate, Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan dies in 1898 and only seven years after his demise, Einstein's 'special theory of relativity' supersedes Newtonian mechanics in 1905, and his 'general theory of relativity' in 1916. The effort made by Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan in reinterpreting the Qur'an to make it harmonize with classical mechanics and the classical *naturalism* becomes null and void just seven years after he has passed away.

The Muslims find them once again confronted with the challenge to prove that the 'Qur'anic view of the structure and the nature of the universe, they believed in as part of their faith, harmonize with the 'scientific world-view' propounded by the relativity physics and such other modern sciences. Here Iqbal comes forward. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal in his lectures *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* takes up the same problem, now arising in the perspective of 'theory of relativity physics'. These lectures are published in 1933, just five years before his death. We can justifiably consider Iqbal at maximum maturity of his thought while publishing these lectures. Iqbal

Imam Ghazali held that on sixteen out of these twenty problems the Muslim philosophers can be exonerated of deviation from established Islamic beliefs but they cannot be given this leave on the remaining four problems which are as follows:

- (1) The problem of the eternity of the world
- (2) The problem of the denial of God's Knowledge of particulars
- (3) The problem of the denial of miracles
- (4) The problem of the denial of bodily resurrection"

A. H. Fâzli, "Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah on the Origination of the World" in *Ibid*, 251-71.

¹⁶ Newton (1642-1726 AD) is widely recognized as one of the most influential scientists of all times and a key figure in the scientific revolution. With the publication of his book *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in 1687 he laid the foundations of 'classical mechanics'. 'Newtonian mechanics' remained the dominant world view till it was superseded by the world view based on 'the theory of relativity'.

¹⁷ Cf. Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Iqbal's Approach to Islamic Theology of Modernity" in *Al-Hikmat* (Research Journal of the Dept. of Philosophy, PU, Lahore, Pakistan 2007), 12.

propounds “the construction of a scientific form of religious knowledge” as a solution to the problem.¹⁸

This study argues that the solution offered by Iqbal is based on two presuppositions: i) conceiving Allah as Absolute Ego on the analogy of finite human ego; ii) identification of Allah with Time (*ad-Dahr*). This study further argues that both these presuppositions are contrary to the teachings of the Qur’an.¹⁹ This is why Iqbal, too, does not succeed in giving a viable Qur’anic philosophy of science.

We have also examined the views offered by some contemporary schools of thought and renowned scholars after Iqbal on this problem but have found that none of the medieval, modern and contemporary institutes, schools, Islamic centers and scholars have yet been able to find such a viable concept of science in line with the teachings of the Qur’an which fills a Muslim student, research scholar or the scientist’s heart with that immense spiritual bliss which is experienced in deep prayer with sense of piety, purification and nearness to Allah.

The study argues that the principle of ‘Truth cannot contradict truth’ or the assertion that ‘Word of God and Work of God cannot conflict each other’, or the conception of ‘the construction of religious knowledge in scientific form’ or ‘Islamization of science’ are false principles, assertions or conceptions based on un-Qur’anic ontology and un-Qur’anic cosmology.

These principles, concepts or premises are false because ‘man-made theories of science (and philosophy)’ for not admitting revelation as the higher source of knowledge can never reach to the level of being called ‘*truth*’ at *par* with the Qur’anic knowledge. Any attempt at harmonizing Islam and science (and philosophy) based on these principles, concepts or premises is necessarily bound to fail. This only shows that the problem is not rightly identified, understood or formulated on genuine lines.

Divinely Administered Universe vs. Mechanically Running Universe.

This study argues that besides assuming a bipartite un-Qur’anic ontology, all traditional Muslim paradigms for reconciling Islam and Science, also assume un-Quranic cosmology. Since the dilemma is prepared in the backdrop of this traditional Muslim position, it also assumes the same cosmological misconception too. Cosmology is that branch of philosophy which deals with

¹⁸ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. & annotation, M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, reprint 1986), 1; 48-50. Also see, Basit Bilal Koshul, “Muhammad Iqbal’s reconstruction of the philosophical arguments for the existence of God” in *Muhammad Iqbal: A Contemporary*, (edt.) Muhammad Suheil Umar and Basit Bilal Koshul, (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2010), 127.

¹⁹ A. H. Fâzli, “Evolving a Qur’anic Paradigm, 284-295. Also, Ibid, “*Kiya Allah ad-Dahar hay?*” (Urdu) [Is God Time!], in *Muslim Fiker ki Qur’ani Jihât*” (Lahore: PU Press 2018), 129-144.

the general structure of the universe besides dealing with its origin, laws, characteristics such as space, time, causality and God-universe relationship.

When we examine the second horn of dilemma we see, it is based on a misconceived cosmological notion of a universe autonomously running in accordance with the laws of nature set by Allah, and of an Interventionist Deity which can intervene when He wills (to bring about a 'miracle'). It is a misrepresentation of Qur'anic cosmological doctrine. It is based on the conception of a bipartite ontology. The dilemma could have not been formulated, had it not assumed the same misconceived cosmological doctrine.

The Qur'anic cosmology gives the conception of a Divinely Administered Universe based on a tripartite ontology. According to tripartite Qur'anic ontology the universe is not a mere physical reality. Allah's *Amar* (Command) is issued, infused, descended, blown or installed into it. Allah Almighty Himself is neither *Khalq* nor *Amar*, neither physical nor non-physical, neither *natural* nor *supernatural*.²⁰ Being the Absolute Originator of everything, He is Singularly Unique and Supremely transcends from all analogy, likeness, comparison (e.g. in polar concepts) from whatever he has brought about. He encompasses everything, in His Knowledge and in His Power. He is Present everywhere, but transcends any kind of immanence in (*saryaniat*), or unity (*ittehad*) or in-givenness (*halool*) with anything or anyone.

The Qur'anic notion of God is that of the Creator and the Administrator of the universe. The order of the universe runs in accordance with the laws of nature only because Allah's Command (*amar*) instilled in everything sets its laws, gives it direction, keeps it running and sustains it according to Allah's Knowledge, Wisdom and Will. As Administrator of the order of the universe Allah's *amar* (command) continues to be descended in the heavens.(Q, 65:12) Laws of nature function under His Command. The Qur'an states everything in the universe as replete with signs of His Oneness, Will, Wisdom, Knowledge, Power, Presence and whatever. Whenever He Wills to bring about anything He says: *KUN!* (BE!) And there it is. It does not necessarily mean coming into being of a thing, event or change instantaneously. The Word '*KUN*' (*Be!*) puts a *Caption*. To say '*KUN*' means determining the *Caption* of coming into existence of something. As soon as Allah determines the *Caption* (*unwân*) of the coming into being of a thing, event or change, causes begin to take shape and everything begins to operate accordingly. Execution of His Order takes no time. Causes are always subservient to the Will of the Causer.(cf. Q. 16:40) It is the Dignity of the Absolute Master that He creates with means as well as without means (*ex-nihilo*).²¹ The Volition of the Absolute Knower is the hidden form of a thing. The Command of Allah is the *Caption* and the overt

²⁰ Sir Seyyed Ahmed Khan's Rational Supernaturalism is a typical example of bipartite ontology.

²¹ If birth cannot take place without the means of a father or a mother, then how did the birth of Adam (pbuh), the first man, take place? Allah Almighty created Adam from clay and then He said, 'Be!' and he came into existence. Allah creates with means as well as without means.

manifestation takes place as Willed by Allah. Allah's command is always obeyed.(Q. 36:82)

Occasionalism (Ash'arite Atomism)

The study does not brag that none among the Muslims have ever visualized the concept of a Divinely Administered Universe and this is the first time that this view is being promulgated. Not at all! The *mutakallimeen* (the theologians) especially the Ash'arites, in the very early centuries of Muslim thought, grappling with the problem of the creation of the world have contrived a very ingenious theory known as 'Ash'arite Atomism' known in the west as Occasionalism. Bakar defines Occasionalism as

"The belief in the exclusive efficacy of God, of whose direct intervention the events in nature are regarded as the overt manifestation or occasion. Occasionalism implies that all things and events in nature are substantially discontinuous by nature. The world is a domain of separate, discrete entities which are independent of each other. There is no connection whatsoever between them, save through the Divine Will."

"The Ash'arites postulate the existence of indivisible particles. These particles are the most fundamental units that could exist, and out of which the whole world is created. Accordingly, we will refer to them as the 'Ash'arite atoms.' The world, which the Ash'arites define as 'everything other than God' consists of two distinct elements, atoms (*jawahar*) and accidents (*a'raq*). The atom is the locus which gives subsistence to the accidents. An accident cannot exist in another accident but only in an atom or a body composed of these atoms. Conversely, a body cannot be stripped of accidents, positive or negative, such as color, smell, life, knowledge, or their opposites."²²

The first major characteristic of the Ash'arite atoms is that they are devoid of size or magnitude (*kam*), and are completely homogeneous. In other words, they are entities without length or breadth, but which combine to form bodies possessing dimensions.

'The atoms cannot have magnitude because extension is a property of physical space, involving the idea of boundary or surfaces. But since space too is atomized, and their theology demands that the atoms be completely independent of one another, there can be no question of the atoms occupying physical space.'²³

Ash'arite occasionalism is a very original attempt to give a world view based on the idea of a Divinely Administered Universe in line with the Qur'anic teachings. They explained everything *i.e.*, time, space, causality, laws of nature etc. on the basis of this theory. Ash'arites gave a view that the

²² Osman Bakar, "The Atomistic Conception of Nature in Ash'arite Theology" in *Tawhid and Science (Essays on the History and Philosophy of Science)*, (Kuala Lumpur: Secretariat for Islamic History and Philosophy of Science University of Malaysia & Nourine Enterprises, 1991), 77-103. <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct91/2.htm> Accessed 7/18/2019

Besides Bakar one more, good account of this theory can be seen in M. B. Altaie, "Creation and the Personal Creator in Islamic Kalam and Modern Cosmology", in *Humanity, the World and God, Studies in Science and Theology*, Vol. 11, 149-166, Lund University, Sweden 2008. <https://islam-science.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Creation-and-the-Personal-Creator-in-Islamic-Kalam-and-Modern-Cosmology-by-Mohammed-Basil-Altaie.pdf>, 1-17

²³ Osman Bakar, *ibid*

universe is restless and is continuously developing; nothing in the universe would stay two moments in a stationary state.²⁴ Altaie states five basic theological principles on which this 'theology of nature' (or *Daqîq al-Kalam* as they called it) is based as given below.²⁵

1. Temporality: This stipulates that the world is temporal, finite and limited and that the creation took place *ex nihilo* i.e., out of nothing.
2. Discreteness: This stipulates that the structure of space, time, energy and matter and every associated property is discrete.
3. Continual creation: This stipulates that the world has to be re-created every moment anew.²⁶
4. Indeterminism: This stipulates that the laws of nature that we recognize are contingent and undetermined. (Altaie sees this notion resonating in the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory.)
5. Space-time integrity: This stipulates that space has no meaning of its own and would exist only if a body existed, and that time has no meaning of its own without an event taking place in space.²⁷

These principles are believed by them as derived from the teachings of the Qur'an. This is why al-Baqillani and other fellow theologians transformed the doctrinal status of this 'theory of nature', from being a mere premise in support of specific religious beliefs, to an essential part of Ash'arite creed.²⁸

This study does not agree with converting philosophico-scientific theories into creed. Such approach attaches finality with views and closes minds for centuries from further probe.

The Qur'anic Ontology

Study of the detailed account of Ash'arite theory, bewilders a serious reader. How grand a 'theory of nature' the Ash'arite were able to construct in pursuance of Islamic theological principles just in the third century of Islamic civilization! But why could they not succeed in developing a methodology of science? The reason lies not in their cosmology, but in their misperceived ontology. The Ash'arites, like all other Muslim theological, philosophical, exegetical schools, and schools of jurisprudence failed to identify '*amar*' (Allah's Command) as the third principle of Islamic ontology. As mentioned above in this study, the Qur'anic ontology consists

²⁴ M. B. Altaie, *Ibid*

²⁵ Stated by Altaie with reference to H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, (Harvard University Press:1976) 359-372.

²⁶ According to Altaie a modern analysis and discussion of this principle is given by Wolfson in his *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 392-406. He also states that a very good account of this principle can be found in al-Juwayni's, *al-shamil Fi Usul al-Deen*.

²⁷ Cf. Altaie, *ibid*. In the words of al-Baqillani, the accident 'perishes in the second instant of its coming-to-be.' This perishability of atoms and accidents is a direct consequence of their theological belief that God directly intervenes not only in the coming of things into being, but also in their persistence in being from one instant to another.

²⁸ Bakar, *ibid*

of three entities: Allah (the absolute Originator of everything), *Khalq* (Creation) and *Amar* (Command) whereas the Greeks and Christian acknowledged two realities as ontological principles.²⁹

As has been stated earlier, the Qur'an is '*al-Haqq*' (the standard of truth/the authority). '*Al-Haqq*' is the epithet used in the Qur'an for Allah's Word descended by Him to His Messenger (pbuh). The Ash'arite confounded the word '*al-Haqq*' (*the truth, the authority, the criterion of truth*) regarding which Allah says:

“...وَأَمَّنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ... Wa 'Āmanū Bimā Nuzzila `Alā Muḥammadin Wa Huwa Al-Ḥaqqu Min Rabbihim” ‘...And affirm faith in that which has been descended to Muhammad (pbuh)—for it is *the truth (al-haqq)* from their Lord...’ (Q. 47:02. Also see 34:6; and 38:29)³⁰

What is descended to Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) is *al-Haqq*. Allah is the Descender of *Al-Haqq*. To call Allah, *Al-Haqq*, is to confound Descender of *Al-Haqq* with what He has descended to His Messenger Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh). This is clearly unjustified, unlawful and unfair.³¹

Exactly this is the fault which these theologians have committed in the formulation of their cosmology known as Ash'arites Atomism, known in the west as 'occasionalism'. 'The scriptures including the Qur'an', 'the *Shariah*', 'soul (*Ruh*)', *fiṭrah* and Allah's *Amar* which descends in the heavens and the earth etc. all belong to the category of Allah's *Amar* (Command) as distinguished from *Khalq* (Creation). Since the Ash'arites did not identify *Amar* (Command) as an originated ontological reality like *khalq*, they identified it as one with Allah through His Attributes.³²

²⁹ A. H. Fâzli, "The Qur'anic Ontology and Status of al-Haqq" in *The Qur'anic Theology...*, 49-60; also "The Qur'an: Creation or Command!" in *ibid*, 61-70.

³⁰ A. H. Fâzli, "Is al-Haqq One of al-Asmâ al-Ḥusnâ" in *Ibidi*, 29-46. The word '*al-haqq*' is a derivative of the root '*ḥa-qâf-qâf*'. Examining almost all the instances in which derivatives of this root occur in the Qur'an (including such verses too, which are liable to be misinterpreted to signify *al-haqq* as one of *al-asmâ' al-Ḥusnâ*.) the study argues that the epithet '*al-haqq*' refers to the Qur'an and cannot be applied as epithet to Allah unless '*al-haqq*' descended on Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Descender of '*al-haqq*' (Allah) are asserted to be one and the same! Which is a sheer self-contradiction.

³¹ *Ibid*, 39-46.

³² Interpreting verse 29 of Surah al-Hijr of the Qur'an, it is usually said that after creating man Allah blew some of the divine spirit into him, and ordered the Angels that

'When I have normalized him (in due properties) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him'. (Q. 15:29)

Commenting on this Altaie says:

'Thanks to the infusion of the divine spirit, which has become an essential part of his makeup. I believe that one manifestation of this divine infusion is the ability to think conceptually and construct things to enable mankind to explore the world with such ingenuity. It is as if man has acquired, by that divine infusion, some of the divine attributes. This makes it possible to view man's mission in this world to build up his own understanding of the Creator through investigating the world.' (Altaie, *ibid* article.)

This study argues that the concept of *ruh* (soul or spirit) as something divine is reminiscent of bipartite ontology. *Ruh* (spirit) relates to the ontological category of Allah's Command (*Amr*) and equally belongs to

In the case of the problem of ‘eternity vs. createdness of the Qur’an’ they identified it with Allah through His Attributes of Knowledge and Will.³³ In the case of creation of the universe and sustaining it, they identified Allah’s *Amar* with Allah through His attribute of Power and Will as is clear from the quotation given below from Bakar.

“If the atoms and accidents perish in the second instant of their coming-to-be, if they are created and annihilated at every instant, then how do we explain the fact that, as far as our ordinary experience tells us, it is the same world that continues to exist?”

Osman Bakar presents Kalam’s answer to this question well-summarized (as he says) by Professor al-Attas which is as follows:

“The world, after its initial existence, does not endure or continue to exist (*baqa*), but passes out of existence (*fana*); it ceases to exist at every moment of time, and what we observe of its continuance in existence is in reality the continuous renewal of its similars. The divine activity of ‘perpetually bringing forth similar worlds from non-existence into existence’ takes place at the atomic level, and may be explained as follows: When God creates an atom of a body, He also creates in it the accidents that cast it into being. The moment this atom passes out of existence He replaces it with a similar atom by creating in it similar accidents, that is, accidents of the same species as the one subsisting in the preceding atom, so long as He wills the same body to continue in existence. If He wills otherwise, then He would cease creating the accidents in question.”³⁴

As is evidently clear from the above that Ash‘arite ‘theory of nature’ (their cosmology), though very much based on the conception of a Divinely Administered universe, did not allow them to believe in the objective reality of *fiṭrah* (enduring nature of things/innate nature of things/natural disposition of things) and in the objective reality of ‘the laws of nature’ because of believing in an un-Qur’anic bipartite ontology. They didn’t have any ontological category to denote *fiṭrah* (an enduring nature) of things.³⁵ The question is how they could refuse to accept the objective reality of the *fiṭrah* (an enduring nature) and of the laws of nature when the Qur’an says:

‘So set your face towards religion as a man of pure faith. This is the natural disposition (*fiṭrah*) set up /instilled in mankind by Allah. (فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا...) There is no altering in Allah’s creation; and this is the right religion (*dīn al-ḥanīf*). But most of the people do not realize it.’ (Q. 30:30)³⁶

the originated order as the body and life & death belong to the ontological category of *khalq*. Neither *khalq* nor *amar* participate in the divinity to the least.

³³ Ref. Footnote no.8 above.

³⁴ Bakar, *ibid*.

³⁵ Because of not acknowledging Allah’s *Amr* as an ontological category, the controversy between the Mu’tazilites and the Ash‘arites became focused on the question ‘Is the Qur’an eternal (*qadeem*) or contingent (*ḥādith*). Should they have identified *Amr* as an originated ontological category, the controversy had been like this: ‘Is the Qur’an a creation (*khalq*) or Allah’s command (*amar*). If the Mu’tazilites asserted the Qur’an to be belonging to the category of Allah’s creation (*amar*), the Ash‘arite would take the stance that it belonged to the category of Allah’s command (*amar*). So the discussion had remained within Qur’anic parameters.

³⁶ Hazrat Fazal Shah, Muhammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafseer-e-Fazli*, 7 vols. (Lahore: Fazli Foundation, 1985-1998) according to our knowledge, is the first ever complete ‘*Tafseer of the Qur’an based on the Qur’an*’.

What is evident from the above is that

- (i) Allah has created mankind on the *fiṭrah* of ‘pure faith’. This is the basic make up, the enduring nature, the innate nature, the natural disposition instilled in mankind.
- (ii) Creation on ‘pure faith’ implies that Allah creates everyone in ‘a holy state’.
- (iii) Allah commands mankind not to legislate at individual, social, national and global level for altering the *fiṭrah* (natural disposition) of Allah’s creation. The same command is to be observed in education, research in science, development of technology, human rights and all other fields. This is what the Qur’an calls *dīn-al-ḥanīf* (the right religion). Allah states Hazrat Ibrahim (pbuh) as a prototype of being on the *fiṭrah* of *dīn-al-ḥanīf*. (Q. 3:67)
- (iv) The scriptures which Allah descended for mankind consisted of guidance, which was most suited to the ‘*fiṭrah*’ of mankind. The Qur’an is the last of the scriptures, and for whole mankind, and is intact. Allah calls it ‘*the truth*’ (*al-Haqq*).³⁷
- (v) To legislate for the implementation of human likes and dislikes in individual, social or international level or in the system of education, research in science or development of technology as opposite to Allah’s revealed truth is to legislate for altering the *fiṭrah* of mankind. To value human likes and dislikes at *par* with Allah’s prescribed values and disvalues is polytheism (*shirk*) and opposite to what the Qur’an calls *ad-Dīn al-Hanīf*.

Allah has created everything on *fiṭrah* endowed by Him. The heavens and the earth, and everything within them have also been created on *fiṭrah* setup in them. Allah calls Himself as ‘The Bestower of *Fiṭrah*’ when He says:

‘Say, ‘Shall I take for myself a patron anyone other than Allah, the Bestower of *Fiṭrah* to the heavens and the earth, (فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.. *Fāṭiri As-Samāwāti Wa Al-‘Arḍi*) Who feeds but is not fed?’ (Q. 6:14)

‘Verily I have turned my face as a true believer towards Him Who ‘created and bestowed *innate nature (fiṭrah)*’ to the heavens and the earth (فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.. *Fāṭara As-Samāwāti Wa Al-‘Arḍi*). I am certainly not of those who associate partners in His Divinity.’ (Q. 6:79)

‘Praise be to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and earth (*Fāṭiri As-Samāwāti Wa Al-‘Arḍi*), who made angels messengers having three, four [pairs of] wings. He adds to the creation as He Will: God has power over everything.’ (Q. 35:1)

The Qur’an disapproves the views mentioned above as second horn of the dilemma. Allah is the Originator (and the Bestower of nature —*The Fāṭir*) of the

The translation of verses given in this article is mostly taken from it or from English translation of its five volumes published so far, or appropriated according to it if taken from somewhere else.

³⁷ A. H. Fāzli, “The Qur’anic Ontology and Status of Al-Haqq” in *Ibid* (Lahore: PU Press 2016), 50-51.

heavens and the earth but He has not originated the world once for all and bestowed the laws of nature, with which it is running forever.

‘Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, ... Surely His is the Creation (*Khalq*) and the Command (*Amar*)... (Q. 7:54)

‘He adds to the creation as He Will: God has power over everything.’ (Q. 35:1)

Creation and administration of the Order of reality is with Allah’s Knowledge and Power. He encompasses everything in His Knowledge and with His Might He established on the Throne (for administering the order of reality) when He says:

‘He manages and regulates every affair from the heavens to the earth.’ (Q. 32:5)

‘It is Allah Who has created seven heavens and of the earth the like thereof. His *Amar* (Command) descends throughout them that you may realize that Allah has Power over all things and that Allah surrounds all things in His Knowledge.’ (Q. 65:12)

What does the above verses mean! Allah has created everything in the heavens and the earth on a *fiṭrah* (enduring nature). He is *The Fâṭir*—The Bestower of a distinctive nature (*fiṭrah*) to species and genres He has created. Everything is infused with Allah’s *Amar* (Command) as its *fiṭrah* (nature). Everything is active in the domain prescribed by its *fiṭrah*. Everything is governed by the laws of nature prescribed by its *fiṭrah*. Belief in the descent of Allah’s command (*amar*) throughout heavens and the earth must make man realize that ‘the universe is not the locus of arbitrary intervention of a capricious deity but the administration of All-Powerful and All-Knowing Allah.’ All consequences flow from the Will of Allah manifests His Power, and that His Will is based on His Knowledge manifests His Omniscience. Allah encompasses everything in His Knowledge and Power. So for Allah’s *Amar* as ontological principle of reality is concerned, Allah says:

‘They ask you about the *soul*. Please say to them: “*Soul (Ruḥ)* belongs to [the ontological category of] your Lords Command. ‘You have been given but a little knowledge of this [category].’ (Q. 17:85)

The search for *laws of nature* means striving to discover *fiṭrah* (*the innate nature*) regulating a specific kind of phenomena. Optimums and measures are included in everything’s *fiṭrah*. As has been said above, ‘His *Command* descends throughout the seven heavens and the parts of the earth like thereof.’ As much as the man will discover, it will give him better prediction and control over the *nature*, but he will ever find himself confronted with the challenge of much more to be known about nature and its laws. Man’s knowledge will never be ultimate, will never encompass Allah’s Command (*Amar*). Man’s knowledge about the nature of reality will always remain to be little, will never come to an end. As much he will come to know, as much new vistas of knowledge will open for him to discover.

Ash‘arite denial of the objective reality of objects and of their *fiṭrah* is incoherent with the verses mentioned above. Ash‘arite denial of causation is also contrary to the Qur’anic teachings. To interpret the Divine Command *KUN* (Be!) necessarily to mean instantaneous coming into being of a thing, is not correct. Allah creates with means as well as without means (*ex nihilo*). His Command *KUN*

determines a Caption, and affairs begin to take place according to the *fiṭrah* (nature) prescribed for them by Allah's Will.³⁸ He directs all affairs. (*yudabbir ul amar*). (Q. 10:3) 'Allah created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then established on the Throne. (Q. 7:54) 'Ársh (Throne) is the place from where the universe is being administered. Allah is 'the Nourisher of the Throne' (*Rabb ul-Ársh*) too. (Q. 9:129) *Throne* belongs to the ontological category of *khalq*. Six days are *the past* and are still. Seventh day is *the present* and is active. The Qur'an specifies that the world is created within a finite period of time by Allah, the Omnipotent Creator. 'Established on the Throne' means that *the seventh day* He made the creation active with His Command (*amar*) and set on the administration of the Universe. The universe is running as per Allah's *amar* infused in it as *fiṭrah* and in accordance with Allah's *amar* which descends in the heavens and the earth. (Q. 10:3)

Nothing whatsoever is discrete as visualized by the Ash'arites. Everything is interlinked as required by their *fiṭrah*. The universe is founded on *truth* (*ḥaqq*). The Qur'an is the statement of *Truth* as Word (*Qawl*). 'The Truth' (*al-ḥaqq*) is real. The untruth, evil (*al-bāṭil*) is unfounded, baseless. *Al-Bāṭil* has no parallel existence with *Al-Ḥaqq* from ever. Deviation from truth (*ḥaqq*) is *bāṭil* (evil). *Bāṭil* or *evil* has no reality of its own.

The Qur'an does not give the conception of a universe which is unreal, appearance, momentary, ephemeral or of a universe which does not have any well-defined *fiṭrah*. The Qur'an states the present order of reality as *dār-al-ʿamal* (the world meant for proving oneself true by doing good deed). This is the accumulative *fiṭrah* of the present order of reality. The order of the universe as a whole, and each thing in its individual capacity too, is functioning coherently to this purpose. The Qur'an also does not give the conception of a universe created once for all, and running autonomously in accordance with the laws set for it. The Qur'an gives the conception of a Divinely Administered and perpetually expanding universe when it says:

'With power did We construct the Heaven: and We are extending it.' (Q. 51:47).

The Qur'an explicitly stipulates that the universe (heavens and earth) will collapse at its final stage:

'The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for letters; even as We produced the first Creation, so shall We re-produce a new one: a Promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfill it.' (Q. 24:104).

The order of reality to be created anew will be meant for requital (*dār-al-Jaza*). This end will determine the *nature* of the world-Hereafter. Activity of everything in that world will be directed towards the fulfilment of this end. The Qur'an neither supports Ash'arite denial of *fiṭrah* (enduring nature) for things and the universe, giving them perpetually renewed existence, nor Sir Seyyed Ahmad Khan's concept

³⁸ Was it not possible for Allah to create the heavens and the earth instantaneously? He created as He willed according to the purpose of their creation.

of the ultimate laws of nature created once for all and mechanically running the universe. Allah has not used the word *miracle* (*mu'jiza*) in the Qur'an for the extraordinary happenings. Allah has pleased to use the word *signs* (*Āyât*) for them. The events commonly called *miracles* (in Qur'anic parlance called *signs*), as subservient to Allah's command (*amar*), are certainly as natural as other events. We must strive to find their explanation in terms of laws of nature. If we fail to discover their causal conditions, it will simply show that human beings cannot encompass Allah's Knowledge. It is possible that in this struggle some other aspects of *nature*, realms of existence, layers of reality, and their laws become exposed to us.

There are various spheres of nature, orders of existence and layers of reality. Chemistry, physics, biology, zoology, sociology, psychology, genetics, classical mechanics, quantum mechanics, oceanology, astronomy and whatever known and unknown disciplines of natural, biological, psychological and sociological sciences and all possible types of sciences, occult or non-occult, deal with various but interrelated spheres of phenomena. Each domain of existence or sphere of reality has its own (but not un-interlinked) laws. Dividing phenomena into *natural* and *supernatural* is outcome of bipartite ontology and classical mechanical cosmology. According to tripartite ontology if *khalq* denotes to the basic structure or substratum (*the hardware*), and the *Amar* denotes to *the fiṭrah* infused in *khalq* determining its purpose, defining orbit of activity and the optimums, giving it direction to its movement (*the software*), then the *khalq* and the *amar* operating together as one, bring about a thing called 'natural'. '*Supernatural*' is nothing. A thing beyond having a *nature*, means conceiving a thing without having a purpose, orbit and direction. There is no concept of supernatural (i.e., beyond having any *nature*,) in the Qur'an. This is a logical impossibility. Is sub-atomic phenomenon studied by quantum physics supernatural? Can anyone claim that he knows all layers of existence, all orders of reality and their orbits of activity?

The Qur'an mentions a self-conscious creature living in this very world with human beings called jinni. The Qur'an verifies that they are created out of fire.(Q. 14:27) This creature also has moral-consciousness, as the scriptures tell us, and will be held accountable for their deeds. Fire is a physical object. Mankind in all phases of their existence on earth, have come across such events which verify the existence of this creature. Can any scientist with any stretch of mind conceive the creation out of fire of such creature! They definitely have endowed with a *fiṭrah* (nature). Their activity is very much *natural*. But for most of the mankind, jinni and their activity is *supernatural*. The same may be conceived about the angels.

The Qur'an states that Hazrat Sulemân (pbuh) had Jinn and birds, too, in the ranks of his armies and in the position of his courtiers. ("And before Solomon were marshalled his hosts,- of Jinns and men and birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks." Q. 27:17) They were made subservient to Hazrat Suleman (pbuh). Allah had given him (pbuh) knowledge to communicate with them and to make use of their abilities.(Q.27:20-24, 27-28) He (a.s.) also heard ants and understood their speech.(Q.27:18) 'Whatever there is in the heavens and earth submit to Him

willingly or unwillingly.’ (Q.3:83; Q.13:15) Everything is directed by the *command* (*nature*) infused in it or descended to it, to act accordingly. This is its submission to Allah. Allah administers the universe and His *Amar* (command) descends throughout the universe when He Will, and His *Amar* is obeyed. (cf. Q.65:12 and cf. Q.41:11-12)

He created the earth in two Days. In further two days Allah set mountains on earth and bestowed blessings on earth and managed provisions for all things in due measure, then He turned towards heavens and completed them as seven firmaments in two Days, and He assigned to each heaven its duty and command. (Q.41: 9-11) The Qur’an also tells us that while creating the heavens Allah turned to the sky which was then smoke, and to the earth too, and said to them:

‘Come, willingly or unwillingly,’ and they said, ‘We come willingly’—and in two Days He formed seven heavens, and assigned to each its *amar* (Command) [*nature*].’ (Q. 41:11-12)

There are many other instances which show that consciousness is given to all creatures. It is possible that anytime science discovers *mind* as another dimension of reality. Will it not change our whole perception of reality as it has changed with the discovery of inter-convertibility of matter and energy, acceptance of *time* as the fourth dimension of reality or with the discovery of indeterministic probabilistic behavior of quantum wave-particles?

The Qur’an refers to special kinds of knowledge. A courtier, a human being, in the court of Hazrat Suleman (pbuh), was able to fetch a very heavy throne from the court of the Queen of Sheba (a.s.) to the court of Hazrat Suleman (pbuh), in the twinkling of an eye (i.e., in a nano-second). Allah did not say that he accomplished something *supernatural*. Allah Almighty calls him the one ‘who had a special knowledge from the Scripture.’ (Q. 27:39-40)

What an extraordinary thing he performed was based on a special knowledge endowed to him. Allah grants His *signs* (*âyat*) to His servants and Messengers whom He like. These are a special knowledge of utilizing provisions of reality not reachable by anyone with his effort. It is an instance of making miracles (so supernatural) for most of the mankind, but very much natural for the one who has been endowed with knowledge of the laws governing that specific realm of existence or layer of reality. Jinni are supernatural for most of us, and most of us will not believe them even. But their existence is very much natural for those who have been bestowed with a special knowledge relating their ‘realm of existence’ and ‘orbit of activity’. Man’s knowledge about the nature, structure and expansion of reality is so little that man’s big claims about it do not deserve to be called knowledge. Science and philosophy have been arguing for the eternity of the universe for centuries until in the beginning of 20th century, with the introduction of theory of relativity and concept of big-bang, science changed its stance and pronounced the world to be contingent, having a beginning in time at a limited temporal distance in the past. Before the advent of the relativity physics, religious belief in a contingent universe was un-scientific. To believe the universe to be three dimensional was scientific and believing other than this was unscientific.

Now science believes in a four dimensional universe. Is it not possible that in future we discover many more dimensions in nature?

In Newtonian classical universe, things were considered static and enduring. With the *time* perceived as an essential dimension of reality in ‘relativity physics’, and discovery of the structure of atom, the concept of a ‘*thing*’ transformed into ‘*event*’, and the concept of universe into a *universal event*, yet everything was still believed to be determined by law of universal causation. Less than a century ago, we did not have the idea of *probability laws* and of a universe running under laws of quantum physics. The advent of quantum mechanics has radically changed our perception of the past and future and whatever. Quantum universe is probabilistic as compared to classical universe which is causal and fully determined under law of causation such that complete knowledge of the past allows computation of the future; likewise, complete knowledge of the future allows precise computation of the past. But it is not so in quantum physics. Given complete knowledge of the past, quantum physics allows only probabilistic predictions of the future.³⁹

Quantum physics studies subatomic objects. They are neither particles nor waves; they manifest wave-particle duality. Their location is indeterminable. They manifest their location at more than one place at a time. They change their position as soon as someone perceives them. Big-Bang has acquired the status of a standard cosmology, as Newtonian classical mechanics had been considered previously for two centuries. ‘Singularity’ is the term used to describe that unprecedented situation in which the Bing-bang took place, a situation when there is neither *time* nor *space*; neither *matter* nor *energy* nor *causation*. Since no physics is possible in the absence of *time* and *space* to study that unique situation, so nothing could be said about it with certainty. Dark matter, super energy, anti-matter, virtual particles are the new concepts introduced under quantum theory. These concepts radically differ from concepts of classical mechanics. Theories of science change with the passage of time. Concept of wave-particle duality has superseded the classical particle concept; indeterminism of quantum measurement has replaced the determinism of classical physics. With the change of perspective, how can the concept of ‘laws of nature’ remain unchanged! Laws of nature do not need God in a deterministic classical mechanically running three dimensional universe, except for giving first motion to this universal machine. But an indeterministic four dimensional, expanding quantum universe very much needs a God, to coordinate different and at times diverse, layers of the order of reality. The nature follows the laws set for it by God but what we discover or formulate as laws of nature are neither ultimate nor mere constructs of our own mind. They depict present status of our knowledge of the *fiṭrah* (*nature*) of things and interpretation of phenomena unaided by the guidance of revelation.

³⁹ Chad Orzel, Six Things Everyone Should Know About Quantum Physics, 2015, 7.8.2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chadorzel/2015/07/08/six-things-everyone-should-know-about-quantum-physics/#8922ca7d4672> Accessed: 6.7.2017

The scriptures have always been telling us that the universe is contingent and created as the Qur'an has very clearly declared it. Following Ptolemy's cosmology Muslim philosophers al-Farabi (872-950) and Ibn Sina (980-1037) argued in favour of the eternity of the universe.⁴⁰ The Qur'an has been telling us that Allah is ('فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ' *Fa`ālun Limā Yurīdu*) 'The Accomplisher of what He Will'. (Q. 11:107; also see: Q. 85:19) But the Muslim philosophers, having accepted Aristotelian philosophical argument for the denial of 'Volition' (*Iradah*) as divine attribute, were compelled to pronounce 'Volition' — as not worthy of Allah's Dignity. It was al-Ghazali (1058-1111) who refuted their argument in his *Tahafat-al-Flasifa* and established 'Volition' as Allah's Glory.⁴¹ Dr. Altaie argues that 'for two hundred years we used to conceive the law of gravity to be God's mechanism for controlling the solar system. In spite of the fact that the astronomers are still accurately measuring the orbit of the planets and making predictions, yet neither the mathematical formulation nor the concept of Newtonian law of gravity has been found correct.'⁴² We must keep in mind that our concepts always accord with our present knowledge of the 'nature of things'. How much of the universe we know! is a question whose answer cannot carry least accuracy even if anyone says that we know about 4% of the universe, that we know it; about 44% of the remaining 96% universe, we know that we do not know it; and about the remaining 52% we even do not know that what is that which we do not know. None can guess what will be our concepts when we have discovered new realms of reality and layers of existence and dimensions of the universe yet unknown to us.

Conclusion: The traditional bipartite ontology which does not admit Allah's Command (*amar*) as an ontological category is un-Qur'anic. Similarly traditional cosmology which sees Order of the universe as autonomously running according to the laws of nature as if externally imposed by Allah, and sees Allah as an Interventionist Deity is un-Qur'anic.

The nutshell of the study is that besides admitting other principles of our suggested paradigm, as stated above, for developing a methodology of science in line with the teachings of the Qur'an, taking the Qur'anic tripartite ontology and the Qur'anic cosmology of a Divinely Administered Universe as the founding stone of our efforts is utmost necessary.

The Universe is a Divinely Administered Order of Reality with *fiṭrah* (*enduring nature*) instilled in everything. This enduring nature is Allah's *command* infused and revealed in everything. A Divinely Administered Order of Reality needs no intervention for it already has Allah's *amar* infused in it as its specific *nature* (*fiṭrah*). This divine guidance regulates its activity as *law of nature*.

⁴⁰ G.F. Hourani, "The dialogue between Al-Ghazali and the philosophers on the origin of the world", part-I, in *The Muslim World*, vol.48 Issue 4(1958), 308.

⁴¹ Ibid, 183; also see A. H. Fâzli, "Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah on the Origination of the World" in *Ibid*, 9.

⁴² Altaie, *ibid*, 163.

Our knowledge of the *nature of things (fiṭrah)* is very limited. When we fail to explain a phenomenon with our limited knowledge, we tend to ascribe it to supernatural powers or to a specific Intervention of the Deity which is incorrect.

If we embark upon any research project to discover the nature of things (*fiṭrah*) with the conviction that we are trying to see Allah's Glory and *Hikma* as Creator and Administrator of the Universe, and with the intention to utilize our knowledge within Allah's prescribed parameters, and to develop technology for the benefit of mankind for seeking Allah's Pleasure, this scientific study of nature becomes an act of deep prayer.