

CONCEPT OF WORLDVIEW BETWEEN ASSUMPTION AND TRUTH (OBSERVATIONS ON SELECTED WESTERN AND MUSLIM VIEWS)¹

By

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan menyelusuri beberapa pandangan mengenai konsep "worldview" dan elemen-elemen dasarnya menurut Barat dan Islam. Ia juga berhasrat untuk menjelaskan halatuju utamanya dan menghuraikan pelbagai elemen yang terdapat dalam makna "worldview" tersebut. Oleh yang demikian, beberapa definisi "worldview" telah dikemukakan untuk diperbincangkan. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa konsep worldview melibatkan perbincangan mengenai beberapa aspek ilmu seperti epistemologi, ontologi, kosmologi, teologi, antropologi, aksiologi dan sebagainya. Di samping itu, worldview daripada perspektif Islam menekankan kepentingan wahyu, kehidupan dunia dan akhirat serta kekhalfahan dalam persepsi seseorang terhadap alam berdasarkan fakta dan kebenaran al-Qur'an dan bukannya asumsi manusia sahaja. Sebaliknya, kebanyakan konsep worldview yang dipaparkan oleh Barat tertakluk kepada asumsi manusia terhadap alam semata-mata.

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¹ The article is neither meant to compare and contrast between Western and Islamic views on worldview conceptualization nor does it aim at analyzing all Western and Islamic views on worldview. It mainly provides some observations on the need to sort out the main aspects of worldview and its main demarcations. As such from a Western perspective the article highlights some trends such as defining worldview as assumptions, relative truth, rational interpretation...etc. From an Islamic perspective, issues such as entire existence, seen and unseen worlds, revelation and vicegerency are mentioned.

INTRODUCTION

Research on worldview² and its application to various spheres have intensified in the last three decades. There are many contributions reserved for the study of worldview; including its subject matter, objectives, methods, kinds, conceptual frameworks and applications to different contexts and activities. Among the many works on worldview, one may underscore the works contributed by several Western and Muslim scholars. Most of the studies discuss, among others, epistemological, ontological, cosmological, theological, anthropological and axiological dimensions of worldview. Both Western and Muslim scholars deal with the concept of worldview but from different stances. This article attempts to discuss selected Western and Islamic views on the concept of worldview. It examines the following questions: What is worldview? What are the main aspects of worldview? What makes a worldview? How does Islam, in particular, perceive the concept of worldview?

Generally speaking, there are Western views that define worldview as a frame of reference in which all world matters discussed and practiced by people in the real world would find an explanation and meaning. As such, worldview is perceived by some, as a map or guideline that provides a model of reality and proposes a way of functioning therein. Whereas, some other scholars argue that it is an all-encompassing way of understanding the world surroundings and human relations to it. In another explanation worldview is conceptualized as a systematic way with which a group of people view the world around them, their basic assumptions³

² From among the earliest Western scholars who dealt with the issue of worldview is Immanuel Kant, who argues that “if the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the phenomenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world (worldview). For only by means of this power and its idea do we, in a pure intellectual estimation of magnitude, comprehend the infinite in the world of sense entirely under a concept, even though in a mathematical estimation of magnitude by means of numerical concepts we can never think it in its entirety.” Immanuel Kant (1987). *Critique of Judgment: Including the First Introduction*, translated and introduced by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, pp. 111-112.

³ David K. Naugle (2002). *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, Cambridge: William B. Eedmans Publishing Company, pp. 64-65.

about the world and man's relationship to it.⁴ Therefore, worldview is considered as a set of basic beliefs about God, the world, human beings, history, death, knowing, as well as much more mundane things that make up what a person assumes to be true.⁵ Seen from a Western positivistic and rationalistic epistemological standpoint, worldview appears to be a knowledge and mental construction that comes as a result of intellectual and historical developments. Indeed, one of the major features of the Western perception of worldview is its hypothetical nature in the sense that many of its beliefs and foundations rest on assumptions. Hence, worldview becomes more as assumptions and personal views leading to the supremacy of reason and human intellect over the whole process of establishing worldview. This, in turn, leads to some sort of movable worldview which is subject to change according to circumstances.

Turning to the Islamic religious view, the case appears almost the opposite of what has been mentioned previously within the positivistic perspective. From Islamic religious point of view, worldview is seen as a revealed guidance. In fact, Muslim scholars perceive it as a guided vision of existence and vicegerency. This revealed feature of worldview has always been one of the crucial aspects of worldview conceptualization within the Islamic frame of reference. Works of Muslim scholars bear witness to the impact of this feature on any worldview analysis. Throughout the course of Islamic history, Muslim scholars have advocated what one may call the guided worldview which comes as a result of the revealed guidance. For instance, in the contemporary Muslim world, the concept of worldview has attracted the attention of many Muslim scholars who produced many studies on the concept highlighting what worldview is all about and its essential elements. To mention few contemporary Muslim scholars: Abul A'la Mawdudi,⁶ Muhammad Iqbal,⁷ Abul Hasan Ali Nadawi,⁸ Sayyid Qutb,⁹ Muhammad Baqir

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶ Abul A'la Mawdudi (1979). *Towards Understanding Islam*, (Trans. and ed.) Khurshid Ahmad. Pakistan: The Islamic Foundation & A.S. Noordeen.

⁷ Muhammad Iqbal (1986). *The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in Islam* (ed. and annotated) Saeed Sheikh. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, First Edition.

⁸ Hasan Ali Nadawi (1973). *Islam and the World*, 2nd Edition, (Trans.) M. Asif Kidwa'i. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf.

⁹ Sayyid Qutb (1984). *The Characteristics of the Islamic Concept*. Delhi: Hindustan.

al-Sadr,¹⁰ Mutahhari Ayatullah Murtaza,¹¹ Isma'il al-Faruqi,¹² Seyyed Hossein Nasr,¹³ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas¹⁴ ... etc. Reviewing some of these works shows clearly the impact of the Holy Qur'an and the authentic tradition of the Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H) on worldview theorization and understanding. Hence, it is important to observe this feature in any discussion. The next section shall provide a brief account on the selected Western views on worldview.

GLIMPSES ON WORLDVIEW¹⁵ AS PERCEIVED BY SELECTED WESTERN SCHOLARS

For a better exposition of the various perceptions on the selected Western views, the present section shall limit the discussion into two main aspects namely: worldview as assumptions about the world and personal accomplishment and worldview as interpretation of the universe and history.

¹⁰ Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1989). *Our Philosophy*, (trans) Shams C. Inati, (forwarded) Seyyed Hossein Nasr London: The Muhammadi Trust.

¹¹ Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari (1985), *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought: God, Man and the Universe*, (Trans) Hamid Algar, Berkeley: Mizan Press.

¹² Ismail R Al-Faruqi (1982), *Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and life*, Herndon: IIIT.

¹³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1972), *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, London: George and Unwin.

¹⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1994), *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia.

¹⁵ For more details on the Western views on worldview see: Dewitt Richard (2004). *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science*. UK: Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing; Dockery David and T. Gregory Alan (2002). *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundation of Christian Higher Education*. Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers; Nash Ronald (1992). *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House; Smart Ninian (2000). *Worldviews: Cross Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall and Kearney Michael (1984). *Worldview*. Navato, CA: Chandler and Sharp, Quoted in Fathi Mallkawi (Summer 2005, Winter 2006), "Ru'yat al-'Alam wa al-'Alim al-Ijtima'iyah, in *Islamiyyat al-Ma'rifah*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Vol. xi, No. 42-43, pp. 53-98.

i) Worldview as Assumption and Personal Accomplishment

In general terms, many Western scholars perceive worldview as a comprehensive framework aiding people to build their basic beliefs¹⁶ about the world of creation reflecting the influence of worldview on one's existence, perception of the world and way of doing things. Based on this premise, worldview is perceived as everyday, ordinary language description of the world that shapes our lives, aiding us to understand, explain and explore the world around everything and us in it.¹⁷ This every day map always entails, as Robin Small argues, some sort of perspectives indicating that "the world is always understood within the perspective of some point of view; all knowledge is thus an interpretation of reality in accordance with the set of assumptions that makes one perspective different from another."¹⁸ Here, the focus on the idea of assumptions reflects one major feature of the contemporary Western mind and its perception of the world and relations therein. In fact, the idea of worldview as assumption has become one of the landmarks of various Western philosophies such as rationalism, positivism, materialism, existentialism...etc. One of the epistemological implications of considering worldview matters as assumption about the world is the supremacy of reason over the processes of interpretation. As an example of the impact of this perception of worldview the following definition¹⁹ is in order. The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* states that:

¹⁶ Simon Blackburn (1994). *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. UK: Oxford University Press, the word 'Weltanschauung'; The *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), Oxford: Clarendon Press, the word: 'Weltanschauung'; Anthony Flew (1979), *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, New York: St. Martin's, the word: 'Weltanschauung'.

¹⁷ Refer to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, *op. cit.*, term "worldview".

¹⁸ Robin Small (1983). 'Nietzsche and a Platonist Idea of the Cosmos: Centre Everywhere and Circumference Nowhere', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44, January-March, p. 99.

¹⁹ Paul Herbert behind the observable patterns of human cultures seems to have certain assumptions about the way the world is put together. Some of these assumptions, called existential postulates, deal with: - the nature of reality, - the organization of the universe, - and the ends and purposes of human life - Others: - values and norms, - differentiate between good and evil, - differentiate between right and wrong. Some of these assumptions are made explicit in the belief and myths of people. Whilst, other assumptions are made implicit in people's behavior by

A person's worldview, whether it be Christian, humanist or whatever is a personal insight about meaning and reality. It is how a person interprets, through his or her own eyes, a personal belief about the world. A person's worldview tries to give reasons for how the facts of reality relate and tie together. The summation of these facts provides the big picture into which the daily events of a person's life should fit."²⁰

From the above passage, it is evident that worldview entails various aspects and dimensions pertaining to one's perception of the universe. The emphasis on personal insights and assumption is obvious. Seemingly, James Sire in his work entitled '*The Universe Next Door: Worldview as a Concept*', argued to the same end that the concept²¹ worldview is:

A commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions and assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.²²

Further on, he suggests seven important questions to identify the content and boundaries of worldview namely:

1. What is prime reality - the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? Do we see the world as created or autonomous, as chaotic or orderly, as matter or spirit? Do we emphasize our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us?
3. What is a human being? Are we highly complex machines, sleeping gods, people made in the image of God, or "naked apes"?

²⁰ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000), Fourth Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, term "worldview".

²¹ For more details see: Sire James W. (2004), *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, USA: Downers Grover, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, Chapter 7.

²² James Sire (2004), in *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, Fourth Edition, USA: Downers Grover, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, p. 17. For more details see: James Sire W. (2004), *op. cit.*, Chapter 7.

4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?²³

Looking at the above questions and their essentiality in one's existence in this world, it seems that answering them through mere assumptions may risk the entire existence and put mankind at the brink of some wrong assumptions which may result in fatal consequence. Therefore, worldview must not be put at the mercy of human assumptions which change from one mind to another and from one reality to another. Hence, one should emphasize the need for a real worldview which rests on facts and truths.

On the other hand, there are some Western views which perceive worldview as an individual accomplishment. In this respect, the attempt of Edmund Husserl is a good example. He emphasizes the individual accomplishment and personal involvement in the construction, internalization and implementation of worldview. According to him, a worldview basically is an individual oriented accomplishment. It is a sort of personal religious belief. This religious belief is distinguished from traditional dogma and faith, that of revealed religion. Further on Husserl asserts that revealed religion claims possession of truth and that its claims are applicable to all men. On the basis of this explanation Husserl²⁴ strongly denies that religion can be given this right. He argues that "just as scientific truth about the absolute is not possible, so it is impossible to establish a world-view truth which is totally valid for each human being. Any such claim would mean that knowledge upon rational – i.e., scientific – grounds was possible about the absolute and its relation to man."²⁵

In this respect, two points are worth noting. First, worldview cannot claim absolute truth and there is no such a worldview that is fit for every human being. Hence, worldview in the final analysis is an individual and

²³ James Sire (2004), *op. cit.*, , p. 17.

²⁴ For an extensive elaboration on Husserl views see: David Naugle (2002), *op. cit.*, p. 108.

²⁵ Edmund Husserl (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, (trans and intro) David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p. 398.

personal property and accomplishment. Second, on the basis of the first argument one cannot, as Husserl claims, provide rational evidence and scientific ground which could prove that worldview can offer a vision for every human being. In this respect, it seems that Husserl's claim begs more evidence as he did not carry scientific and objectives studies on various worldviews to check the possibility of finding a revealed worldview that can prove its ability of offering a universal worldview or vision of life. In the same way, James Olthuis argues that worldview is a vision of life but need not be articulated or put in the form of a creed or dogma. He stated that:

A worldview (or vision of life) is a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it. This vision need not be fully articulated: it may be so internalized that it goes largely unquestioned; it may not be explicitly developed into a systematic conception of life; it may not be theoretically deepened into a philosophy; it may not even be codified into a creed form; it may be greatly refined through cultural-historical development.²⁶

It is thus far clear from the above passage that worldview, from this Western standpoint, need not be creed oriented and preferably refined through cultural and historical development. This sense of relativity in dealing with worldview issues marks one of the main differences between the Islamic and Western conceptions of worldview as shall be highlighted in a later part of this study. Even the language of the above passage reflects some sort of laxity as it is hypothetical and loose. Many of worldview aspects are not firmly dealt with and left to perception, assumption and need to be fully articulated. Therefore, even when some Western scholars speak of certain worldview facts or truths, they tend to doubt them and subject them to all sorts of skeptical orientations. This sense of relativity in handling worldview facts and truths is clearly reflected in the following passage:

On Certainty concerns the role of facts which serve as frameworks for world view. They might be called framework facts because in some ways they are like other facts, though in

²⁶ James Olthuis (1989). "On Worldviews," *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Sciences*, (ed.) Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw, *Christian Studies Today*. Lanham: Md. University Press of America, p. 29.

other ways they are not like other facts at all. They are facts which...are the basis for our thought, our language, our judgments, and our actions. Such world view facts include also the various strata we call common sense. They include the vast numbers of things which we take for granted and which provide the settings for all our questions and investigations, as well as for our language activities. They are facts which we do not doubt because, among other things, they define what doubting is or what it makes sense to doubt. They establish what is accepted or agreed-upon in ways of talking and acting.²⁷

David Naugle comments on this passage stressing that these frameworks or worldview/picture “facts,” however, are not the positivistic or absolute facts...facts which there served as the ultimate foundation for truth about reality and action in the world. Rather, these *Weltbild* facts are doubt-proof.²⁸ Hence, looking at these worldview facts as the above passage indicates using language such as common sense, things taken for granted, they define what doubting is... clearly reflects the doubtful and hypothetical language. In other words, even when one worldview rests on facts, those facts are doubtful and related to things which are human and subject to alteration and change. The language of the absolute and sacredness is absent from this kind of worldview orientations. This same tendency on approaching worldview is found in Freud’s works who argues that worldview is an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one ordinary hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us has its fixed place.²⁹ If worldview rests, first hand, on hypotheses and excludes any type of revealed facts or divine truths, then it leads to what has been referred to earlier as relative perception of the worldview. This, in turn, advocates worldview a personal and individual business subject to the individual’s jurisdiction and authority. The next point shall shed some light on this Western aspect of worldview.

²⁷ Finch Henry LeRoy, Wittgenstein, “The Later Philosophy: an Exposition of the Philosophical Investigation,” quoted in David Naugle (2002), *op.cit.*, pp. 157-158.

²⁸ David Naugle (2002), *op. cit.*, p. 158

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, “The Question of a Weltanschauung,” quoted in David Naugle (2002), *op. cit.*, p. 213.

ii) **Worldview as Personal and Individual's Self Empowerment Orientation**

According to Heidegger, worldview is "A self-realized, productive as well as conscious way of apprehending and interpreting the universe of beings."³⁰ This general definition stresses on the self as the center of worldview construction and realization. Heidegger attempts to link between the concept of worldview, history and human destination, thus, considering it as a view of life that is developed and constructed within a human natural and cultural context. He is among the pioneers to advance this view. He asserts that:

"From the forms and possibilities of world-view thus enumerated it becomes clear that what is meant by this term is not only a conception of the contexture of natural things but at the same time an interpretation of the sense of purpose of the human and hence of history. A world-view always includes a view of life."³¹

However, this view of life comes as a result of intellectual and cultural historical developments. Ken Funk, argues that:

"A worldview is the set of beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality that ground and influence all one's perceiving, thinking, knowing, and doing. One's worldview is also referred to as one's philosophy, philosophy of life, mindset, outlook on life, formula for life, ideology, faith, or even religion."³²

Elaborating on this definition, Ken Funk provides the following illustration:

³⁰ Martin Heidegger (1982). "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology," (trans. and intro) Albert Ofstader, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*. Bloomington: Indian University Press, pp. 4-6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

³² <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.html>

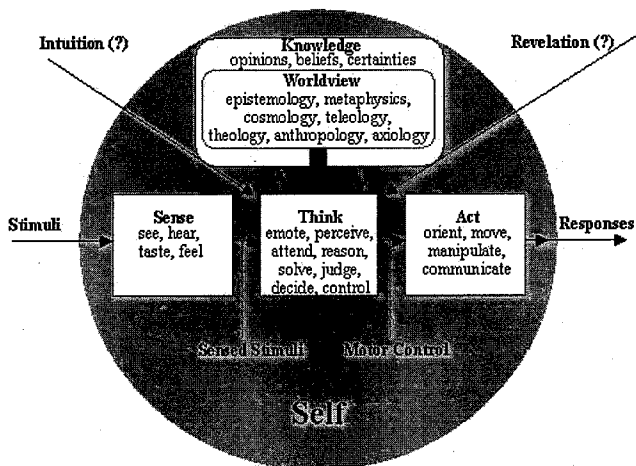


Figure 1: The worldview in the context of the self.³³ (Western Perception)

According to the above illustration, there are several elements that distinguish the Western perception of worldview from others. First, the concept of worldview revolves more around the self in the sense that ‘the self’ is situated in the centre of the conceptualization. Second, this in turn shows how this ‘self’ is more attached to the physical world and realities. Therefore, senses, mind and action are the core elements in the construction as well as realization of worldview. In other words, the entire process of worldview conceptualization and construction revolves around the ‘self’ that receives the stimuli through the senses which see, hear, taste and feel. In the next step, the self thinks and reasons through the mind which is considered as motor control that has the ability to emote, perceive, attend, reason, solve, judge, decide and control. In this motor control process, the mind requires knowledge and worldview as well. The former, includes opinions, beliefs and certainties. Whereas, the latter includes epistemology, metaphysics, cosmology, teleology, theology, anthropology and axiology.³⁴ All these aspects constitute the core of

³³ <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.html>

³⁴ Michael Palmer argues that worldview involves the following: “six parts: Ideology (e.g. beliefs in God, cosmology), Narrative (e.g. sacred writings and myths), Norms (e.g. ethics and morality), Rituals (e.g. activities designed to renew bonds), Experience (e.g. emotional and spiritual elements), and a social element (educating future generations), Michael Palmer (1998), *Elements of a Christian Worldview*, Logion Press, p. 28-30.

knowledge on which worldview rests. Put more specifically, “this core of fundamental knowledge, the worldview, is not only the basis for the deductive reasoning that ultimately leads to action, but also is the foundation for all reasoning, providing the standards of value to establish the cognitive goals towards which reason works and to select the rules by which reason operates.”³⁵

On the basis of the above analysis it is clear that on the one hand, the whole process of worldview conceptualization is the result of the self³⁶ and reason, and on the other hand, all elements that form the worldview are self-made elements or related to the self. Hence, within this sort of Western conceptualization of worldview, revelation and intuition are considered alien and non-scientific elements. Accordingly, this tendency of exclusion marks one of the main features of worldview conceptualization in the Western context. The impact of this marginalization of revelation and intuition from the scientific inquiry on worldview has appeared and is still influential on many philosophies and worldviews adopted and applied in the Western context and life. Examples of this impact can heavily be recorded in rationalism, positivism, materialism, post modernism and others.

Having provided this brief account on selected Western views on the issue of worldview and having stressed the idea of assumption and personal individual accounts of the Western perception of worldview, we turn now to analyze some selected Islamic views on worldview conceptualization.

GLIMPSES ON WORLDVIEW AS PERCEIVED BY SELECTED MUSLIM SCHOLARS

Having provided this brief account on selected Western views on the issue of worldview and stressed on the ideas of assumption and personal individual accounts of the Western perception of worldview, we now turn

³⁵ <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.html>

³⁶ Richard C. Foltz, says: “By worldview, I mean the culturally constructed way in which one sees the world and one’s place in it... A worldview includes assumptions about what matters and what does not, about is more and what is less important,” by Richard C. Foltz (ed.) (2003). *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment: A Global Anthology*. USA: Wadsworth/ Thomson Learning, Preface and Introduction, pp. xiv and 2.

to analyze some selected Islamic views on worldview conceptualization. This section shall focus on some features of worldview analysis from an Islamic perspective highlighting the importance of truth, facts and revealed sources of the Islamic worldview, besides the collective and vicegeral nature of the Islamic worldview.

The above analysis has led us to the conclusion that some Western approaches to worldview emphasize more on cultural, historical and rational aspects of worldview paving the way to the supremacy of reason on worldview conceptualization. Despite the presence of some religious inputs and views on worldview, the fact remain that the weight of human elements in constructing an image and perception of the world is too heavy. The present section, then, attempts to analyze the Islamic perception of worldview and examines its conceptualization as has appeared in the works and views of selected Muslim scholars.

To start with, the Islamic worldview, in general terms, offers a comprehensive vision of life. In other words, "Islam provides man with a comprehensive world-view that is rooted in a coherent system of ideas and beliefs that together impart strength and consistency, a logic and vitality to the faith."³⁷ This vision of life is grounded on one basic foundation i.e., the *al-Tawhīd* or unity of God as a vision of existence and vicegerency. Thus, the core of the Islamic worldview resides in this key concept without which Islam itself loses all its dynamism and originality. Indeed, "*al-Tawhīd* is a general overview of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time of human history and destiny."³⁸ Hence, any conceptualization of the Islamic worldview should revolve around *al-Tawhīd*³⁹ and its implications to belief and life. In other words, any approach to the Islamic worldview should focus on the fact that:

"this worldview emanates from the fundamental belief that life and existence came into being as a result of the will, desire and design of the One and Only Creator. The Islamic conception of

³⁷ Mona Abul-Fadl (1991). *Introducing Islam from Within: Alternative Perspectives*. USA: The Islamic Foundation, p. 13.

³⁸ Ismail R Al-Faruqi (1982). *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁹ See: Jane Idleman Smith (1994). 'Towards a Positive World-view of Islam', in (eds.) Abdul Monir Yaacob and Ahmad Faiz Abdul Rahman, *Towards a Positive Islamic World-View: Malaysian and American Perceptions*, Kuala Lumpur, p. 54.

God has therefore to precede any discussions on the nature of the universe and man's relation to it."⁴⁰

On the basis of this initial explanation, the article tends to underscore some features of the Islamic worldview as perceived by some Muslim scholars.

The Islamic Worldview from the Perspective of the Divine Text

In one of the systematic approaches to the conceptualization of the Islamic worldview, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas argues that within the Islamic worldview there is an inseparable link between the seen and unseen aspects and between the present world realities and the hereafter ones. According to him, the worldview of Islam comprises both *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirah* aspects, in which the *dunyā*-aspect is related profoundly to the *ākhirah*-aspect, and in which the *ākhirah*-aspect has ultimate and final significance.⁴¹ On the basis of this epistemological and ontological premise, al-Attas defines the Islamic worldview as follows:

According to the perspectives of Islam worldview⁴² is the vision of reality and truth that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence⁴³ in its totality that Islam is projecting... The Islamic view of reality and truth, which is a: metaphysical survey of the visible and invisible worlds including the perspective of life as a whole, is not a worldview that is formed merely by the gathering together of various cultural objects, values and phenomena into artificial coherence. Nor is it one that is formed gradually through a

⁴⁰ Mohd. Kamal Hassan (1994). 'The Islamic World-view', in (eds.) Abdul Monir Yaacob and Ahmad Faiz Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁴¹ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1994). "The Worldview of Islam: An Outline," *Islam and the Challenge of Modernity: Historical and Contemporary Contexts*, Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium on Islam and the Challenge of Modernity: Historical and Contemporary Contexts held at and organized by ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur, August 1-5, p. 25.

⁴² See also his work, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1995). *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, pp. 1-2.

⁴³ For an epistemological and philosophical survey on the meaning of existence and its degree refer to: Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1994). *The Degrees of Existence*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, pp. 1-58.

historical process of philosophical speculation and scientific discovery, which must of necessity be left vague and open-ended for future change and alteration in line with paradigms that change in correspondence with changing circumstances. It is not a worldview that undergoes a dialectical process of transformation repeated through the ages, from thesis to anti-thesis then synthesis.⁴⁴

From the above passage, there are three focal points worth highlighting namely: 1) The Islamic worldview deals mainly with existence in its totality which includes the seen and unseen worlds; 2) The Islamic vision is a metaphysical survey and revealed knowledge that aspires towards clearing the confusion and setting the truths about existence and 3) The non-dialectical nature of the Islamic worldview and non-historicity of its source which is revealed as complete and comprehensive text providing clear and profound interpretations about the truth of existence. These three features distinguish totally the Islamic worldview from the previous Western perceptions.

THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW AS A KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION GUIDED BY THE REVEALED GUIDANCE

The other view on approaching the Islamic worldview underscores the construction and realization aspect. This view holds that the Islamic worldview is contained in the Qur'anic text and it should be derived and organized in the form of knowledge construction which includes the 'Aqīdah, Sharī'ah and ethical principles and rules of Islam. For instance, Choudhury perceives the Islamic worldview as an Islamic design of reality relating it, on the one hand, to the epistemology of the Divine Unity and, on the other hand, to the world reality and circumstance. He states that:

The Islamic Worldview is thereby, the comprehensive and universalizing, overarching and complementing design of reality that is premised on the epistemology of Divine Unity and is evolved into intellection through the process-orientation model of unification of knowledge in world-system as derived from the primal source of Divine Unity.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1995), *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁵ Masudul Alam Choudhury (2000). *The Islamic Worldview: Socio-Scientific Perspective*. London and New York: Kegan Paul International Limited, p. 9

The above passage stresses the intellection aspect of worldview construction. It acknowledges the Divine source of the Islamic worldview i.e., Holy Qur'an and authentic *Sunnah* and reserves a room for the intellection and reasoning processes. This view emphasizes both the Divine sources which are unalterable and the intellectual processes which demand the human intellection for interpretation following the rules and principles enshrined in the Islamic texts and held by the learned scholars of Islam.

Referring back to al-Attas' view, who considers the Islamic worldview as a pure metaphysical survey conveyed through the revealed Qur'an which is not subject to any dialectical processes, one can see in the attempt of Choudhury an emphasis on the intellection process. Even though both al-Attas and Choudhury affirm and acknowledge the Divine source and origin of the Islamic worldview, it is clear that al-Attas firmly stresses on the revealed dimension of the Islamic worldview, whereas, Choudhury leaves a room for the socio-historical processes on the construction and realization of the Islamic worldview in a cultural and civilizational context. In other words, the concept of the Islamic worldview in the final analysis is the result of the Muslim's endeavor to understand and impart the Islamic vision of reality, which is enshrined in the Holy Qur'an, to its adherent in light of the revealed guidance of Allah.

On the other hand, the above view also holds that the foundations and principles of the Islamic worldview which are firmly adopted by *Ummah* through out the course of history are not subject to any modification. However, there are some intellectual and practical aspects of the Islamic worldview that involve details of life and intellectual efforts are subject to variation of opinions.⁴⁶ What should be clear is that the Holy Qur'an is the source for a *Tawhīdic* worldview including the belief system, the *Sharī'ah* system, the ethical system and the principles of a comprehensive vision of reality and truth, whereas, the *Sunnah* and practice of the prophet (P.B.U.H) provides a method and a human model for the gradual understanding and realization of the worldview of Islam in a human

⁴⁶ One should be clear that the Qur'an as a source of the Islamic worldview is the complete and all-encompassing word of God. This source has not been subjected to any form of human construction or development. It is the original word of God as it was revealed and transmitted without any modification or dialectical development. However, the Islamic worldview is developed by the *Ummah* in a gradual process in accordance with the truth and teachings provided by the Holy text.

context. Having said this does not imply in any way that Islamic 'Aqīdah, Islamic Shari'ah and Islamic ethical system are subject to change but they are subject to interpretation, which in turn, should refer to the principles and methods derived from the text itself. Hence, it is not confusing to say that the Islamic worldview entails the pure authentic revealed commandments and teachings as well as the human interpretation.⁴⁷

In line with the above discussion there are few Muslim scholars who consider the worldview as a knowledge construction that requires human intellection. For example, Murtaza Mutahhari argues that worldview is our vision of the world, but by its very nature is not the product of our feelings and emotions rather it is the result of our thoughts and speculations.⁴⁸ Precisely, Mutahhari states that:

The term 'worldview'⁴⁹ contains the idea of sight, but we must not fall into the error of interpreting worldview as world feeling. Worldview means world knowledge and cosmology; it relates to the well known question of knowledge, which is exclusively human property, as opposed to feeling, which man shares with other animals. Therefore, world knowledge is exclusive to man and is a function of his reflection and intellection.⁵⁰

It is obvious in this explanation that the concept of worldview is more an integrated knowledge construction which is formed in the life span of an individual or a community. Taking into consideration, the Islamic situation, one may say that the Islamic knowledge construction requires only the intellection processes, as in the case of many Western perceptions, but it is originally rests and emanates from the Divine sources. This shows that the realization of this Islamic knowledge construction as a worldview cannot be separated from the Islamic Divine sources and any human interpretation should also revolve within the orbits

⁴⁷ Here I would like to stress on the fact that the 'Aqīdah, Shari'ah and ethical aspects of the Islamic worldview are purely Qur'anic and derived mainly from the Divine source.

⁴⁸ Murtaza Mutahhari (1985). *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought: God, Man and the Universe*, (trans.) Hamid Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press, p. 68.

⁴⁹ Even though he is not referring in this passage specifically to the Islamic worldview, his explanation in different passages indicates that he perceives it as knowledge construction guided by the Qur'anic text.

⁵⁰ Murtaza Mutahhari (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 67.

of what the Qur'anic text allows. This, in turn, reflects the main strength of the Islamic worldview which on the one hand empowers the human intellect in certain matters but on the other hand it guides all its steps through providing it with the correct 'Aqīdah, Shari'ah and ethical system. This same approach to worldview is advanced by Alparslan who states that:

The mental framework is the totality of concepts and mental attitude developed by the individual throughout his life, and as such it constitutes what we call "worldview". A worldview is the ultimate foundation of all human conduct, including scientific, philosophical and technological activities. Since we take the worldview to be the prior-most foundation of any action, we conclude from this that every human action is ultimately traceable to its worldview; and as such it is reducible ultimately to that worldview.⁵¹

He further elaborates:

A worldview is formed by our mind as a matter of habit that is dominant in our life, either: 1) through culture, technology, scientific, religious and speculative ideas that we acquire through education and other means, or; 2) through a conscious effort to acquire knowledge or; 3) in both of the above.⁵²

Having mentioned all that he defines worldview as:

An architectonic network of ideas, conceptions, beliefs, and aspirations in which all that make it up are organized in a coherent manner, but not necessarily in a systematically interconnected network...A Worldview is that vision of reality and truth, which, as an architectonic mental unity, acts as the non-observable foundation of all human conduct.⁵³

Assuming that worldview is constructed and acquired in continuous human endeavor with the influence of various elements and factors, the question that begs little clarification is: what is the function of religion in the construction of worldview? Looking at this question within the Islamic frame of reference raises certain confusion. Some people may argue that

⁵¹ Alparslan Acikgeng (1996). *Islamic Science: Towards a Definition*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, p. 14-15.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 29.

the Islamic worldview is the Holy Qur'an itself and therefore it is the revealed knowledge that has been received and transmitted by the Prophet (P.B.U.H) and there is no alteration or modification to it whatsoever. In other words, it is the word of God without any human interference. Therefore, how could one consider the Islamic worldview as the Muslim mind's construction? Or how could one view the Islamic Worldview as a worldview that undergoes social, historical and cultural processes?

To answer this question one should make clear distinction between the sources of the Islamic worldview i.e., the Holy Qur'an and the authentic *Sunnah* and the human interpretation. Additionally, one should be clear about the fact that the construction and realization of the Islamic worldview, not Islam, in a human context involves both the unchangeable and preserved teachings of Islam and the processes of *ijtihad* and interpretations that vary from one scholar to another and from one period to another. Indeed, this combination between the unchangeable truths and the flexible *ijtihad* makes the Islamic worldview able to cope with the change of realities and circumstances of different people, cultures and situations. Hence, the Qur'anic text remains always as a reference and journal for all kinds of human intellectual efforts.

To sum up this discussion one should on the one hand, hold the view of Prof. al-Attas that the Islamic worldview was not, in any way, formed gradually through historical processes, as far as the text is concerned, but on the other hand, one should emphasize the fact that the Islamic worldview was revealed and implemented gradually. Thus, there is no contradiction between the unchangeable Qur'anic text and the gradual understanding and implementation of worldview of the Muslim and his view of existence, reality and truth.

THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW REDEFINED

It is so far clear that worldview requires always a frame of reference or a source. It is a vision of life emanating from a stand point or a philosophy of existence. This philosophy may be contained in a revealed religion or man made philosophy. According to Kamal Hassan Islamic worldview refers to "[a] comprehensive conception of the universe and man's relation to it from the Islamic perspective, thereby serving as a basis for one's philosophy or outlook of life."⁵⁴ One of the important

⁵⁴ Mohd. Kamal Hassan (1994). *op. cit.*, p. 12.

points laid down in this definition is its emphasis on the Islamic perspective and one's philosophy or outlook of life. In other words, when one develops a worldview, one should stand on a point of reference or on a standpoint that provides him with the necessary guidelines and injunctions to construct such worldview. Hence, with regard to the Muslim, his worldview is developed with reference to Islam. That is to say, Islam becomes the permanent source from which the Muslim seeks guidance and orients his intellectual efforts and *ijtihād*. This same view is advanced by Muḥsin 'Abd al-Ḥāmid who defines the Islamic worldview as: the Islamic perception (view) on issues pertaining to the universe and its Creator, Prophethood, society, man, hereafter as opposed to other worldviews that address the same issues but from their standpoint or perspective.⁵⁵

On the basis of the above analysis this paper, defines the Islamic worldview as, The collective *Ummatic* vision of existence through which the Muslim interprets and provides answers to ultimate questions pertaining to the Creator, existence of the seen and unseen, universe, life, man, Prophethood, vicegerency, society, history and the hereafter life. This vision is derived from the Qur'an through exerting *ijtihād*. This vision guides man to excel in all his pursuits of life as a vicegerent⁵⁶ of Allah who is entrusted with the *amānah* of worship,⁵⁷ *I'mār*,⁵⁸ *Da'wah*⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Muhsin Abd al-Hamid (1996). *Tajdid al-Fikr al-Islami*. Virginia: IIIT, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁶ Allah declares: (And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth,' they said 'Wilt THOU place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? - and we glorify THEE with THY praise and extol THY holiness,' HE answered, 'I know what you know not.) [al-Baqarah, 2: 31].

⁵⁷ (I have only created Jinns and men, that they may worship Me.) [al-Dhariyat, 51: 56].

⁵⁸ (It is He who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein.) [Hud 11: 61] (But seek, with the wealth which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: But do thou good as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not occasions for mischief in the land) [al-Qasas 28: 77].

⁵⁹ (Invite all to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: For thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance) [al-Nahl, 16: 125].

and fulfilling the conditions of being witness⁶⁰

The above definition emphasizes several important points in approaching the concept of the Islamic worldview. First, it accentuates the collective *Ummatic* nature of the Islamic worldview. The latter, is not an individual oriented worldview, in the sense that neither each and every Muslim has his own worldview that differs from other fellow Muslims nor does he has the absolute right to change his worldview or abandon it as in the case of a personal worldview resting on assumption. On the contrary, the Islamic worldview belongs to the *Ummah* that agreed, through out the course of history, to abide by the Qur'an, *Sunnah* and the consensus of the learned scholars to uphold this vision of life and transmit it to all its succeeding generations. It is also a collective worldview in the sense that it is shared by all Muslims regardless of their races, cultures, languages and doctrinal alienations as long as they are within the accepted parameters of Islam.

Second, the Islamic worldview deals with existence in its totality that includes the seen and unseen worlds. In this respect, the Islamic worldview entails issues pertaining to this life and hereafter, past, present and future, intellectual, spiritual, moral, ethical, social, political, economic, cultural and civilizational spheres. Third, the Islamic worldview is derived from the Holy Qur'an and conforms to all teachings of Islam. Fourth, the main purpose of the Islamic worldview can be summarized in one word i.e., *istaklif* or vicegerency. In other words, the Islamic worldview provides the necessary guidance for the Muslim to strive in his endeavor as a vicegerent of Allah and achieve his objectives in this world and in hereafter. In his function as a vicegerent of Allah, the Muslim is requested to excel in 1) spiritual, moral and ethical aspects, 2) material, civilizational and cultural aspects, 3) *Da'wah*, *Ta'aruf* and civilization aspects 4) and *'Ilm* that is, comprehensive knowledge and sciences. Given all these explanations the article prefers to name the Islamic worldview as the "vicegeral worldview." That is to say, it is a worldview that revolves around the *amānah* (trust) of *istaklif* (vicegerency) in its comprehensive

⁶⁰ Allah declares: (Thus have We made of you an *Ummah* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves) [al-Baqarah, 2: 143] and (You are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah) [Ali 'Imran, 3: 110]. over other civilizations and a leading role model in all pursuits of life.

meaning that requires a belief system, a *Shari'ah* system, an ethical system and a civilizational vision of reality and progress. This in turn implies that the Islamic worldview rests on truth and facts and not mere assumptions.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above analysis it is clear that almost all worldviews aspire towards granting a general and comprehensive vision of life to their adherents and followers. The Islamic perception and vision of worldview, however, offers a consistent and all-inclusive explanation of creation, reality, universe, life and human experience. Moreover, it presents the necessary knowledge and guidance with regard to responsibilities of man in the world. It explains the relation of man to other worlds of seen and unseen as well as promotes commitment and responsibility among people and makes them conscious of their duty towards themselves and their societies. Worldview also provides justification for man's action and motivates him to accomplish it, formulating the common ground for a better human interaction and recognition, attaching meaning to man's life and aiding him in discerning the goals of creations and the purpose and function of man therein.

In particular, the Islamic worldview, as a worldview which is laid upon and constructed in the light of the revealed Qur'anic text, offers a comprehensive and rationalistic vision of life. It constitutes the collective *Ummatic* vision of existence through which the Muslim interprets and offers answers to ultimate questions pertaining to the Creator, existence of the seen and unseen, universe, life, man, Prophethood, vicegerency, society, history and the hereafter life.