

# Worldview and the Construction of Economics: Secular and Islamic Tradition

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## Abstract

Economics as a system of thought and body of knowledge is constructed based on certain philosophical foundations derived from a particular worldview. The term worldview, which originated from the German *Weltanschauung* (composed of *Welt*, 'world', and *Anschauung*, 'view' or 'outlook') refers to a world perception, or the concept and framework of ideas through which human interprets the human life and world. The term worldview, in general, refers to belief, doctrine, perspective and values in the sense that it supplies views, assumptions and images of how to perceive things. The worldview which is the perspective in understanding the existence and realities decorates the scientific atmosphere, its direction as well as objectives. The worldview is also fundamental in supporting the development of a science and its progress. Mainstream economics is developed from the foundation of Secular Worldview which is characterized as materialist (excluding the metaphysics), reductionist (reducing the epistemological basis on positivism with atomistic perspective) and individualist (isolating individual from society). Islamic economics, on the other hand, is developed on the basis of Islamic worldview. The Islamic worldview is claimed to be more comprehensive, integrative and holistic in nature. This would make Islamic economics having a potential to answer the shortcoming found in conventional economics. The paper would explore the nature of worldview in Secular and Islamic tradition and its implications in developing discipline of economics and Islamic economics. The paper also seeks to develop some foundations for Islamic economics to be a distinct discipline.

**Keywords:** Economics, Islamic Economics, Secular Worldview, Islamic Worldview, Body of Knowledge.

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## Abstrak

Ilmu ekonomi sebagai sebuah sistem pemikiran dan bangunan ilmu didirikan berdasarkan landasan filsafat yang digali dari *worldview* tertentu. Istilah *worldview* berasal dari *weltanschauung* dalam bahasa Jerman (terdiri dari *welt* berarti 'dunia', dan *anschauung* berarti 'pandangan') mengacu pada persepsi dunia, atau konsep dan kerangka gagasan, dengannya manusia menafsirkan kehidupannya dan dunia. Secara umum, istilah *worldview* mengacu pada keyakinan, doktrin, perspektif, dan nilai-nilai dalam arti bahwa ia memberikan pandangan, asumsi, dan gambaran tentang cara memahami sesuatu. *Worldview* yang merupakan cara pandang atau perspektif dalam memahami realitas menentukan suasana ilmiah, arah, dan tujuannya. *Worldview* juga mendukung pengembangan dan perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan. Arus utama ilmu ekonomi didirikan di atas fondasi *worldview* yang sekuler yang bercirikan materialistik (dengan mengeluarkan aspek metafisika dan spiritualisme dalam bangunan ilmunya), *reduksionistik* (mereduksi basis epistemologi kepada aspek positivisme dan bersifat atomistik), dan *individualistik* (mengasingkan individu dari masyarakat). Ekonomi Islam, sebaliknya, dibangun berdasarkan *worldview Islam* yang lebih komprehensif, integratif, holistik, dan seimbang dalam melihat realitas. Dengan cara pandang seperti ini akan membuat ekonomi Islam berpotensi memberikan jawaban yang menyeluruh terhadap berbagai masalah ekonomi dan juga kekurangan ilmu ekonomi saat ini. Makalah ini akan menggali *worldview* yang mendasari kedua ilmu ekonomi tersebut, dan implikasinya dalam pengembangan keilmuan, di samping berusaha membangun fondasi ilmiah ekonomi Islam.

**Kata Kunci:** Ilmu Ekonomi, Ilmu Ekonomi Islam, Worldview Sekuler, Worldview Islam, Bangunan Ilmu.

## Introduction

Any system of thought is founded on a worldview. The worldview decorates the scientific atmosphere, its direction as well as objectives. This is because worldviews are perceived as not only ontologically defining the nature and characteristics of a science, but also fundamental in supporting the development of a science and its progress.

The worldview plays a key role in developing the discipline of economics in secular and Islamic experience. The implication of worldview on establishing body of knowledge in secular and Islamic

tradition is mainly in establishing the conceptual foundations of discipline upon which methodology of economics is developed and body of knowledge will be established.

The paper attempts to explore the role of worldview in constructing the economics discipline and some of worldview implication in the body of knowledge of economics. The discussion will attempt to compare and contrast the Islamic worldview with that of the worldview underlying conventional mainstream economics, especially as they relate to the development of the subject-matter of the discipline, methodology/-ies to appraise theories, and in establishing the scientific conceptual scheme and foundations of the discipline.

### Understanding the Worldview and Science

The term worldview, which originated from the German '*weltanschauung*' (composed of '*welt*' means 'world', and '*anschauung*' means 'view' or 'outlook') refers to a world perception, or the concept and framework of ideas through which human interprets the human life and world. The term worldview, in general, refers to belief, doctrine, perspective and values in the sense that it supplies views, assumptions and images of how to perceive things.

Worldview is also understood as *mabda'* which is the basis, foundation or the prior most foundation of any activities, including scientific activities.<sup>1</sup> Worldview, in this regard, conceptually functions as the basis of a system of thought and fundamental principles that form the basis for other subsidiary concepts dealing in a general matter with all aspects of life. It is the basis of a set of ideals of how should something be and an explanation for the disparity between the way things are and the way they ought to be. It therefore functions as the basis for any action, reaction, and our perception of the world. Worldview, according to *naş* is the basis "by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality".<sup>2</sup> It is a map that people use to orient and explain, and from which they evaluate and act, and put forward prognoses and visions of the future.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Samih 'Atef El-Zein, *Islam and Human Ideology*, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald H Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, (USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Diederik Aerts, Bart D'Hooghe, and Nicole Note, "Worldviews, Science and Us,

In the scientific development, worldview provides framework of thought, and objectives as well as a set of axioms and principles on which that system of thought operates. The worldview will always be associated in a system of thought to initiate changes, show direction, and ensure progress and development of that particular system of thought.

Worldview therefore constitutes not only the *conceptual basis* of a person's internal mental framework of consciousness and cognitive understanding about reality and life meaning, but also would embrace in *practical realm* of human thought and action.<sup>4</sup> The worldview then *affects* the way a society operates in its social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions. The impacts of worldview could then be seen in various aspects of life, religious ritual, philosophical and scientific belief, ethical position, and so on so forth.<sup>5</sup>

The worldview in Islamic perspective refers to the way we comprehensively see *the existence* and the interaction of all *realities* in it. It is an overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the worldly life and beyond. This perspective is in contrast to conventional understanding of worldview which mostly defines it as "the *theory of universe* that contains the thoughts of society and the individuals which compose it about the nature and object of the world, in which they live, and the position and the destiny of mankind and of individual men within it".<sup>6</sup> That understanding of worldview is termed by Syed

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Global Perspective" in Diederik Aerts, Bart D'Hooghe and Nicole Note (Eds.), *Worldviews, Science and Us: Redemarcating Knowledge and Its Social and Ethical Implications*, (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, Singapore), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Worldview therefore precedes the emergence of ideas as well as institutions or organizational expressions which were the bearers of the message and implements of the objectives of those original ideas (Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Whither Islamic Economics?", *Islamic Quarterly*, 30 (4), 211-220). It is in Schumpeter's word "a pre and extra-scientific vision of the economic development process" (J. A. Schumpeter, "Science and Ideology", In Daniel M. Hausman, *The Philosophy of Economics: An Anthology*, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 233.

<sup>5</sup> Levin, et.al, observe that worldview affects the society in developing the social system of the organization and relationships among people, such as the type of education, medical and social service; the political and economic system of the way government is organized, the role of citizens in the government and their rights, the method to organize resources, produce and distribute the goods and services they need; and culture system of the society's way of life, including language, rules of behavior, religion, spirituality, arts, literature, sciences, traditions, and other everyday aspects of life that can be observed (Phyllis Levin, Teddy Moline, and Pat Redhead, *Our Worldviews*, (Toronto: Thomson, 2007), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1987), 49.

Muhammad Naquib al-Attas as *nazrat al-Islâm li al-kawn* which he criticizes as deficient as this would imply a speculative contemplation of a mere *mind's view of the physical world/universe and of man's historical, social, political and cultural involvement in it.*<sup>7</sup>

To al-Attas, such a perspective would lead to 'God-negation metaphysics' and would limit reality to a purely secularist and materialist view as in modern conventional understanding.<sup>8</sup> The Islamic worldview goes beyond that. It is *the way Islam looks at the existences (al-wujûd) of God, human-beings and the total universe (ru'yah al-Islâm li al-wujûd)*. This perspective of worldview gives us an insight that worldview supplies perspectives that provide a more or less coherent way of thinking not only about the physical world and universe, but goes deeper in explicating the concept of existences and realities.

This conception of worldview is founded on Islam as a religion that embraces all facets of human self and all dimensions of human life; social, economic, politic, culture, law, governance, and civilization. The Islamic worldview is a religious based worldview where all answers to the worldview's ultimate questions of God, universe, man, life, knowledge, values and morality, stem from religion (*dîn*) itself as revealed in the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup> This source of explanation has a strength in that it explains truth and reality in totality based on certainty (*yaqîn*) and not from a speculative or philosophical reasoning that is based on doubt (*zann*), leading to a vulnerable and insecure worldview.<sup>10</sup> Its

<sup>7</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> One of the implication in scientific development as we have currently in economics is that economics is capable of explaining a half-part of reality (lack of realism) and hence cannot satisfactorily explain, for example, the nature of human self, or in a bigger picture of explaining the character, origin or destiny of human life. Therefore, Abdul Wahid Hamid describes scientific worldview as "a powerful searchlight in the long winter night, lighting up a small area in its beam but unable to shed light beyond its border." See Abdul Wahid Hamid, *Islam: The Natural Way*, (UK: MELS, 2004), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Islamic worldview is categorized under religious-worldview whose source is religion and a metaphysical-based instead of secular-worldview whose source is philosophical speculative and material-based.

<sup>10</sup> For elaboration of Qur'anic weltanschauung see for example the works of Toshihiko Izutsu, namely *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (1964); *The Concepts of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam* (1965); and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (1966). For a preliminary attempt to develop ethical foundation of Islamic economics based on Izutsu's semantic approach see Mohamed Aslam Haneef and Hafas Furqani, "Developing the Ethical Foundations of Islamic Economics: Benefitting from Toshiko Izutsu", *Intellectual Discourse, Special Issue on Japanese Contribution to Islamic Studies*, 17 (2), 2009, 173 – 199.

scope of explanation would take into consideration this worldly life and the hereafter, physics and metaphysics, visible and unseen realities, and would provide man a broader perspective of life and hence give man a positive perspective of his current and future life direction.<sup>11</sup>

While the Islamic conception of worldview might be seen as something beyond human (since the ultimate sources is the religion and God's revelation; the Qur'an), the processes of derivation, construction and systematization into a workable framework in human life dimensions are thoroughly human. The sources provide only parameters and a general picture of how Islam views the realities and existence of God, human beings and nature, and how Islam views human life and goals. From that general picture, we then develop a set of 'visions' to manage our life in this world in accordance to time and space. Therefore, although Muslims share the same fundamental worldview, they might have relatively different visions on how to manage their life.

In general, the acquisition and internalization of worldview into one's mind /society's collective mind and practices, according to Acikgenc can take place in two ways: *first*, in a 'natural way' where the mind uses its natural capacity to develop a perspective for itself (no conscious effort by the individual), thus a worldview is formed as a matter of habit that is dominant in his life through his culture, technology, scientific, and speculative ideas (natural worldview); and *second*, in a 'systematic way' in which the worldview is systematically inculcated through a system which is mainly developed through proper education (transparent worldview). The latter is done through (1) the intellectuals (i.e., the illuminated personalities, not scholar or scientist in strict meaning), who develop a transparent worldview within an environment of scientific activities and (2) the intellectuals who understand the works of illuminated intellectuals ('*ulamâ'*) and articulate them further in their

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Attas characterizes Islamic worldview as "based upon revealed knowledge through religious experience, and embraces the objective, metaphysical and ontological reality as well as the subjective, mystical and psychological experience of that reality." See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", In Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University), 33.

scientific works. Their works which have been shaped and concretized within that worldview will be disseminated further to the general masses who can understand the concrete ideas more easily.<sup>12</sup>

The impacts of worldview's infiltration to the scholar's mind and later on in the effort of discipline formation might be in two ways; (1) at the scholar's individual level, the worldview within which one perceives reality affects one's theoretical understanding of reality and hence in the theoretical-appraisal process and (2) in a bigger social environment of intellectual tradition, the worldview influences the formation of system of thought and intellectual traditions of intellectuals which then manifests itself in their effort of developing and systematizing body of knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Scientific development therefore in Kuhn (1970) perspective is "dependent upon the adoption of a particular worldview and all subsequent research is designed to be in harmony with this worldview." Worldview not only reflects scholars' theoretical understanding of reality but also constructs the hardcore elements of science and delineates the research program. This hardcore, in the views of Kuhn is a *paradigm* or *belief system* in Schumpeterian sense, which is permanent and will not be falsified since any changes or modification by the scientist to this hard core means that he has opted out of that particular research program or attempted to shift the paradigm in a highest sense.<sup>14</sup>

Once the worldview (in this regard acts as the basis as well as doctrine) manifests (concretizes) itself into a solid system of thought (in the form of science, discipline, or theory), a clear separation of doctrine and science becomes void. As a result, Schumpeter argues, the ideological character of any premises and the ideological bias of any argument are everywhere obvious in the science itself.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is not wrong to say that science (in this case economics) is structured, systematized and employed to support and justify certain beliefs as

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<sup>12</sup> Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Science: Towards A Definition*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996a).

<sup>13</sup> See: Ziauddin Sardar, *Explorations in Islamic Science*, (London & New York: Mansel Publishing, 1989)

<sup>14</sup> Alan F. Chalmers, *What is This Thing Called Science?*, (Buckingham: Open University, 1982), 81.

<sup>15</sup> J. A. Schumpeter, "Science and Ideology", in Daniel M. Hausman (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Economics: An Anthology*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 233.

constructed by the worldview.<sup>16</sup> This is because economics is built on a doctrine and directed to certain purposes as shaped by worldview. Economics is preceded by a “vision” or an “ideology” which is “the hard core that constitutes the basis of an economy and of the pronouncements about it that comprises economics” and particularly defines the basic understanding of the man-God and man-nature relationship.<sup>17</sup>

From the worldview, knowledge structure is formed that would prepare a ‘general scientific conceptual scheme’ and the ‘specific scientific conceptual scheme’ respectively in order that the scientific activities could be carried out conceptually. Science is the product of this effort. Science, therefore could be defined as “an organized body of knowledge which arise a result of the process in determining subject matter, investigated by a certain method yielding theories.<sup>18</sup> Science is a *systematic organized body of knowledge* that consists of subject-matter, methodology/-ies, theory/-ies and systematic knowledge accumulation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Therefore, we see the inconsistency in scientific development whereby the economic vision or theory derived from certain worldview if we follow the scientific method is subjected to scientific treatment; it is either being verified or destroyed by practice or analysis, but in practice, the theory is developed to support them instead of falsified through facts (practices). For example, while in realities the individuals are acting not only based on their self-interest, but motivated by a broader motive, the primary axiom in conventional economics is still that individuals act for their self-interest. Economic theory, as Galbraith mentions “was not being politically and socially neutral. It was persuading its communicants to avert their eyes from reality”. It is there to support the doctrine (worldview) in this case individualism and humanism. See, John Kenneth Galbraith, “Economics as A System of Belief”, in Andrea D. Williams (Eds), *A Contemporary Guide to Economics, Peace, and Laughter*, (USA: Houghton Muffin Company, 1971), 60-61.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore it is not strange to read for example Niehans who says that “economics is, like religion, a matter of faith”, or Heilbroner who says that “economics is a belief system as it is not only inherently ideological, but imbued as well with beliefs as to human nature for which there is usually no basis for explanation.” See Jurg Niehans, “Economics: History, Doctrine, Science, Art”, *Kyklos*, 34 (2), 1981, 165-177 and Robert Heilbroner, “Economics as Ideology” *Economics as Discourse: An Analysis of the Language of Economics*, in Warren J. Samuels, (USA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 114.

<sup>18</sup> Alparslan Acikgenc, *Scientific Thought and Its Burdens: An Essay in the History and Philosophy of Science*, (Istanbul: Fatih University Publication, 2000), 16.

<sup>19</sup> In the literature, science (latin: *scientia*, Islam: ‘ilm) itself is being defined in various perspectives that reflect it is a complex enterprise and could be approached in various perspectives. Science is sometimes defined in terms of the activities of its practitioners to acquire knowledge (e.g., the observation, identification, verification, falsification, description, experimental investigation, theoretical explanation of phenomena and etc.); in terms of its operating rules (eg., empirical, testable, observable, comprehensible, etc); or in terms of its purposes (e.g., describe, explain, predict, control, falsify, verify, and etc.).

## The Secular Worldview and the Construction of Economics

Modern economics which emerged initially as systematic body knowledge in 1776 through Adam Smith's writing "*The Wealth of Nation*" is influenced and constructed by the secular worldview which determines the nature, subject-matter and methodology of discussion.

The secular worldview supported by the materialist and reductionist principle has deeply influenced the establishment of economics (its conception, system of thought and values). Modern economics is developed within the ontological belief of detaching metaphysics (religion) and economics. The enlightenment and renaissance in modern Europe opened up a new chapter in the Western scientific tradition that brought up a spirit of separating church (religion) from the realm of knowledge. The doctrine of the church or religious dogma was viewed as an 'intellectual error' that should be dismissed for an 'intellectual progress'.<sup>20</sup>

Two important schools of thought marked the Western enlightenment spirit, rationalism and empiricism. The school of rationalism such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, etc., argued that knowledge authority lies with the intellect/reason using deductive method. The school of empiricism promoted by Locke, Hume, Bacon, Berkeley, Carnap, Ayer, etc., emphasized that knowledge authority lies in sense experience/observation of natural history (the detailed, systematic collection of facts about nature) by using inductive method to derive laws of nature from these facts.<sup>21</sup>

The scientific endeavor promoted in the new paradigm post enlightenment, aims at establishing knowledge based on purely human's intellectual-reasoning and human's historical-experience accumulation which continually could be developed by improving means and long-life learning from experience process without depending on God's guidance.<sup>22</sup> Knowledge could be objectively

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For sample of definitions in Islamic and Western tradition, please refer to the compilation by Franz Rosenthal who has collected 107 distinctive definition of science (*'ilm*) in Islamic tradition and also in the website <http://www.gly.uga.edu/trailsback/1122sciencedefns.html> for the conventional definitions. See Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Stephen J. Hunt, *Religion in Western Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15.

<sup>21</sup> C. Wayne Mayhall, *On Logical Positivism*, (USA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 112.

<sup>22</sup> The logical positivism's philosophy of science is developed to support the idea and attempts to argue that (1) it is possible to define ethics once God is eliminated; (2) it is

acquired through scientific method utilizing the tools of mathematics, logic and observation. It is believed that this method would provide secure foundations for knowledge by rejecting authority as the basis for knowledge.<sup>23</sup> The scientific method is responsible for removing metaphysics and ethics from economics especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century when the natural sciences (its methods and substance) came to be seen as successful, and the attempt was made to emulate that success in the field of economics by applying natural science methods, including mathematics, to economic phenomena.<sup>24</sup>

Economics as a science would observe only physical/material/observable realities of economic phenomena and their interactions. It is concerned with means/instruments instead of ends/values. This is because scientific methods require source of knowledge from a 'verifiable' source and not a 'dogmatic' or mythological doctrine or 'subjective' emotion and spiritual experiences. Those visions which are constructed from the secularist-materialist worldview of Western civilization and experience are elaborated continuously according to the socio-physical parameters of the society within which it developed that creates scientific consciousness in organizing and systemizing economics science.<sup>25</sup>

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possible to pass meaningfully to a "command-in-itself," to the "categorical imperative"; and (3) a new ethics within the context of physicalism should therefore be developed as an alternative with certain injunctions and modes of behavior so that correlations may then be set up. The acceptable ethical system would be one in which the field's investigations are pursued in a "wholly behaviorist fashion as part of unified science". See Detlef Pollack and Gert Pickel, "Religious Individualization or Secularization: An Attempt to Evaluate the Thesis of Religious Individualization in Eastern and Western Germany", in Detlef Pollack and Daniel V.A (Eds.), *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.

<sup>23</sup> In fact, in a modern society, science has a functional equivalent of religion as a source of cosmology, worldview, and institutional framework, and also the foundation of its social cohesion. See, Mohd. Hazim Shah, "Science as "episteme" and science as "techne": The differing roles of scientific knowledge in pre-modern and modern cultures", in Mohd. Hazim Shah (Ed.), *History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science: Essays in Honour of Ungku Aziz*, (Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 2006), 97.

<sup>24</sup> The metaphysical perceptions of reality then lose their sacred character and replaced by a rational-causal explanation of the world. The paradigm of "metaphysics based ethics" in the old-traditional scientific world conception then has been successfully replaced into a "physics based ethics" that marked a new scientific world conception. C. Wayne Mayhall, *On Logical Positivism...*, 112; Roger E Backhouse, *The Penguin History of Economics*, (England: Penguin Books, 2002), 67.

<sup>25</sup> The content of scientific theories produced and the methodological requirements is socially shaped. It is organized through and produces results in a social-political-historical-cultural context. See, Hendrik Pinxten and Nicole Note, "A Naturalistic and Critical View of Social Sciences and the Humanities", in Diederik Aerts, Bart d'Hooghe and Nicole

This scientific consciousness and scientific knowledge that characterizes modern economics implies “economics as essentially a product of European civilization with some of its origin dating back to the Greco-Roman and medieval worlds”<sup>26</sup> or as Heilbroner states “economics is not a science of society, but its purpose is to help us better understand the capitalist setting in which we will most likely have to shape our collective destiny for the foreseeable future.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, mainstream economics as a body of knowledge, explains the modus operandi of an idealized capitalist economy and its concept of man, property, freedom, competition, wellbeing and the role of it envisages for the sates, are all derived from the particular ethos and cultural milieu of at most eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore the *neutrality* argument (i.e., economics science is objective and unbiased as merely describes phenomenon, and not bearing any ideological contents) and *universality* claim (not partial and applicable to all societies as it has been ‘neutralized’ through proper and universal methods of analysis) of economic science cannot be taken for granted.<sup>29</sup> Modern economics is in fact *partial*, derived, analyzed and structured within the capitalist prescribed framework and capitalist

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Note (Eds.), *Worldviews, science and us: Redemarcating Knowledge and Its Social and Ethical Implications*, (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2005), 94. This is not surprising since science and scientific activities are the result of a specific ontology which relates the scientific endeavor of the individual to his environment and furnishes their motivational basis. This scientific consciousness is the epistemological ground which is *a priori* in the mind that hold these within a unity. Therefore, knowledge (in Islam) is not neutral as commonly argued in western epistemology. Alparslan Acikgenc, *Scientific Thought and Its Burdens: An Essay in the History and Philosophy of Science*, (Istanbul: Fatih University Publications, 2000), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph J Spengler, *Origins of Economic Thought and Justice*, (USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), xii.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 310. The statement reflects aspirations underlying the theories put together over nearly 200 years by the great economic thinkers that he reviews: Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Alfred Marshall, Thorstein Veblen, John Maynard Keynes, and Joseph Schumpeter. Their legacy is a quest for “socially as well as economically successful capitalisms”. Baghirathan, et al. “Structuralist Economics: Worldly Philosophers, Models, and Methodology”, *Social Research*, vol. 71, no. 2, (2004)

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, “Restructuring the Study of Economics in Muslim Universities, in Isma’il R. Al-Faruqi and Abdullah Omar Nasseef (Eds.), *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective*, (Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1981), 72.

<sup>29</sup> Economics as a science is “entirely neutral between ends”. Friedman also argues that economics is “independent of any particular ethical position or normative judgment”. See Lionel. Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, (London: Macmillan, 1945), 240 and Milton Friedman, *Essays in Positive Economics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

guided society. It does not represent the whole domain of reality and to some extent its theoretical conclusions or policy prescriptions contradict with the Islamic principles. In the word of Muntasir Mir “a scientific culture is inextricably tied to the matrix of the civilization that produces it. Science is not an abstract or faceless phenomenon; it is based on a set of presuppositions derived from a social and cultural framework, and it has a character, temper, and an identity.”<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the claim of neutrality, universality, and comprehensiveness could be true only if the worldview (the basis of science itself) is comprehensive and universal, able to capture and explain the whole domain of realities in an integrated and holistic manner and explain truth in its proper meaning; something that is impossible in such a worldview characterized by secular, dualist, isolationist, and individualist notion. To quote Willis Harman:<sup>31</sup>

“The modern worldview that began to take shape in the seventeenth century was the result of a revolt of what seemed to be common sense against a system of thought that have come to seem repugnant. It was a declaration of faith in the senses as opposed to the speculative mind, and in the visible world as opposed to the unseen. It emphasized the empirical (as a reaction against the authority of Scholasticism) and the reductionist (as a better explanation than the medieval spiritual forces)”.

If we accept this view, then modern neoclassical economics neither is necessarily universal, value-neutral nor ideologically free. Hence, the possibility of having an economics based on the Islamic worldview is legitimate. Differences in worldview, consequently, lead to different perceptions of the nature and object of study and different conclusion on certain issues.

## The Islamic Worldview and Economics

The previous explanations provide us evident that economics is not neutral. In fact, economics is built on certain worldview and philosophical foundations which are shaped by the beliefs of the western philosophers and also constructed in the context of western society. For that reason, Haneef in his article “Islam, the Islamic

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<sup>30</sup> Muntasir Mir, “Scientific Exegesis of the Qur’an – A Viable Project?”, *Islam & Science*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2004), 33-42.

<sup>31</sup> Willis Harman, *Global Mind Change: The New Age Revolution in the Way We Think*, (New York: Warner Books, 1988), 25.

worldview, and Islamic economics” argues that “since alternative worldviews/ideologies exist, different types of economics are not only possible but natural and legitimate as well.”<sup>32</sup> Chapra also insightfully contends that “if there is a substantial difference in the worldviews and the visions, there is no reason why there cannot be greater differences in the disciplines.” He elucidates that the differences in conclusions about the meaning and purpose of human life, the ultimate ownership and objective of resources at the disposal of human beings, the relationship of human beings towards each other and their environment, and the criteria for efficiency and equity could therefore be seen in different perspective from Islamic economics.<sup>33</sup>

The quest to establish a science (discipline) of economics based on an Islamic worldview is basically a Muslim response to the secular worldview which has established a dominant secular economics in the scientific realm concerning that dimension of life termed ‘economics’. In this response, Khatami asserts “in rejecting the West we wish to free ourselves from its political, mental, cultural, and economic domination, for as Muslims, we differ from them fundamentally in worldview and values”.<sup>34</sup> This ontological stand would constitute the basis that influence scholars’ internal consciousness in developing a system of thought on the basis of an Islamic worldview.

Islamic economics as a new body of knowledge in understanding economic phenomena is shaped and founded on the Islamic worldview that supplies perspective, directions, guidelines and goals of how human beings should arrange their economic life. That worldview is the cornerstone that would determine the direction of Islamic economics as well as distinguishes Islamic economics from ‘other economics’.

Economics in the Islamic worldview is considered as part of Islam as a grand system of life. Economics is perceived as part of religion where its spirit, teachings, norms and guidelines embrace all its dimensions.<sup>35</sup> The Qur’anic ethos makes up an Islamic value

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<sup>32</sup> Mohamed Aslam Haneef, “Islam, the Islamic Worldview, and Islamic Economics”, *IJUM Journal of Economics and Management*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1997), 43.

<sup>33</sup> M. Umer Chapra, *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2000), 29.

<sup>34</sup> Mohammad Khatami, *(Islam, Dialogue, and Civil Society* (Canberra: Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, The Australian National University, 2000), 104.

<sup>35</sup> For Christian economics, Koslowski investigates “the Ethics of Capitalism” as being founded in Christianity. He asserts that “the origin of western individualism lie, as

system that Islam intends to base its system of economy on. Islam's ethical teachings of economics, scattered in various places of the Qur'an, address all dimensions of man-God, man-man and man-nature relationships as well as man-wealth/resources relationship, in its broadest sense of realizing human wellbeing in the spheres of production, consumption and distribution of goods and services. The Qur'an prescribes the normative basis and principles of society as well as individual behavior. The Qur'an also indicates the desired quality of individuals and community to be achieved, not only to maintain human existence in the world in a proper manner, but without which their existence would not be meaningful (if those values and objectives are not pursued).

The economic realm is discussed in this framework. At the higher level, there are macro-goals that Islam attempts to promote, such as social-justice, equality, the symbiotic cooperative community; and at the micro level Islam attempts to promote individuals having necessary characteristics to be able to realize those goals in practice.

Starting from the basic argument that earth and its resources belong to God alone and is created solely for man, Islam declares the spirit of equality, mutual cooperation, mutual understanding in sharing the world and enjoying the bounties (al-A'raf: 10; al-Isra': 70; al-Furqan: 2; al-Mu'min: 64; al-Mulk: 15). Human beings are described as *'abd* (God's servant/slave) as well as *khalifah* who have the mission of worshipping Allah alone (*tawhid*) and gain wellbeing in the earthly and hereafter life (*falâh*) by prospering the earth (*isti'mâr*) (Hud: 61). The *khalifah* (as a role and function played by human in the earthly life) is addressed by the Qur'an both at an individual as well as collective level (al-An'am: 165). This shows that the mission can only be completed when individuals synergize with

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German idealistic philosophy repeatedly emphasized, in Christianity. The high order of subjectivity is religiously founded in the Christian conception of each man as an image of God the incarnation of God in the person of one man, the personal character of God, the individual judgment after death, and bodily (individual) salvation". Peter F. Koslowski, "The Ethics of Capitalism", in Svetozar Pejovich (Ed.), *Philosophical and Economic Foundation of Capitalism*, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1983), 37.

society and the society assists individuals to grow. Being *khalîfah* (al-Baqarah: 30) human beings are endowed with capabilities and facilities to implement God's authority to manage the earth and regulate the resources so that they can fulfill their physical needs and distribute among them justly in order to be able to develop themselves and realize all the potentials in the attempt of achieving happiness (Ali 'Imran: 29; al-A'raf: 32; al-Kahf: 7).

From the central concept of man's *khilâfah* (vicegerency), resources and wealth are considered as God's bounties/*fadl Allâh*, (al-Jumu'ah: 10) which are naturally good (*khayr*) and a trust (*amânah*). As the wealth is good (*khayr*) (al-Baqarah: 215, 272-3; Hud: 84; al-Hajj: 11; Luqman: 32; Qaf: 25; al-Qalam: 12; al-Ma'arij: 12), the work to acquire wealth is therefore highly praised (al-Nahl: 97), and in fact, it is an obligation of an individual to work for his own living (al-Nisa': 32). Nevertheless, wealth is also clearly stated in the Qur'an, as *amânah*. Although private ownership and consumption is recognized (Ali 'Imran: 14-15), they are not functionally created to merely satisfy man's wants (al-Rum: 34), but should be directed to the higher objective as implied in the mission of *khalîfah* (al-Mu'minun: 51-52, 115).

The concept of *amânah* implies that the wealth and natural resources to be exploited and utilized in the best means to fulfill the need of individuals and society for a better life (al-Nahl: 97) without any corruption or misuse/*ifsâd*, (Hud: 86), wastage/*isrâf* (al-An'am: 141; al-Furqan: 67), squandering/*tabdzîr* (al-Isra': 26). The concept of *amânah* also implies that the ownership of wealth is not exclusive to oneself, hence denying the share of society and neglecting the poor (al-Fajr: 17-20). Short-sighted self-interested behavior in acquiring and utilizing wealth by means of corrupting environment, or at the expense of society and future generations are highly condemned (al-Qasas: 77).

This is really a challenge as human earthly life is naturally designed in such a way of not being in equal divisions. In other words, inequality is natural as human beings are made up of the rich and the poor, the bright and the slow, the strong and the sick, the haves and the have nots. The very structure of society is built up on the basis of human inequality with the purpose to form the 'test', the moral struggle by individuals on the basis of mutual dependency and cooperation

despite the differences in Divine gifts (al-Baqarah: 255; al-Nisa': 37; al-Anfal: 74; al-Nahl: 74). Human beings are expected to cooperate among themselves to properly perform the task and mission of *khilâfah* (Hud: 61) in line with their role as *'abd Allâh*. Inequality requires the rich to help the poor and the needy (al-Taubah: 71; al-Nur: 22), rather than taking opportunity to exploit others (al-Ma'un: 1–7). While competition among society is appreciated, cooperation that results from the spirit of brotherhood among society is more appreciated (al-Baqarah: 277; al-An'am: 165; al-Nahl: 71; al-Isra': 30). Such social commitment is praised in the Qur'an that marks the individuals' spiritual ascent. God's love is in this spirit of sacrifice to others, to create a just society (al-Nisa': 80–81; al-Nahl: 55).<sup>36</sup>

There is a symbiotic relationship of individuals and society whereby one needs the other and one helps the other. In this perspective, there is a blend of an individual's right to freedom with that of social responsibility. Nobody is deprived of the opportunity to participate productively. In fact, private enterprise is welcomed for it encourages initiative and drive, facilitates innovations, and rewards productivity. But limitless individualism that pays no heed to society/community requirements is not acceptable. Instead, social responsibility becomes an individual's obligation as Islam requires the more fortunate to take care of the less fortunate in society. The institution of zakat, being the third pillar of Islam, is the most conclusive proof of this individual/social nexus. Individual happiness/wellbeing must go together with social justice/wellbeing.

To achieve *falâh* (the higher goals of human wellbeing in this earthly life and the life hereafter) is the aim of both individual and social dimensions to be sought after simultaneously. At the individual level, *falâh* requires *faḍâ'il* (virtues/goodness) to be achieved. Al-Ghazali describes those *faḍâ'il* as means (*wasâ'il*) to attain human self-happiness. Those are (1) *al-faḍâ'il al-nafsiyyah* (the goods of the soul): faith (*îmân*) and good character (*husn al-khuluq*); (2) *al-faḍâ'il al-jismiyyah* (the bodily goods): health, strength, long life and beauty, (3) *al-faḍâ'il al-khârijiyyah* (the external goods): wealth, influence, family and noble birth, (4) *al-faḍâ'il al-tawfiqiyyah* (the goods of divine grace): divine guidance

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<sup>36</sup> In this perspective, it is for human self-interest to sacrifice for society (Saba': 38) to purify their soul and make it beautiful so that love of God may be produced in it (al-Tawbah: 103) and hence God will blesses him (al-Tawbah: 71) for the well-being in the eternal hereafter life (al-Rum: 38).

(*hidâyah*), divine direction (*rusyd*), divine leadership (*tasdîd*) and divine strengthening (*ta'îd*). In this perspective, individual happiness is viewed in a holistic perspective in line with the nature of man that consists of body, mind and soul, as an individual and social being, and having material and immaterial (*rûh*) dimensions.

At the society level, commitment to social justice, equitable distribution of wealth, equal opportunities, fairness, having mutual cooperation and respect should be realized. In practice, the Islamic system of economics is structured to coordinate and harmonize the various economic interests of individuals or groups within the society to achieve those ideals. This social dimension is sustained by establishing important economic institutions such as *zakâh*, *warâtsah* (inheritance), *waqf* (endowment), *sadâqah* (charity), *infâq* (spending for good purposes) and others managed by the state or private institutions.<sup>37</sup> This is done on the basis of obligations as well as voluntary actions, emerges from an individual's consciousness of human brotherhood to contribute to society's development. This mix of individual freedom and social justice describe the egalitarian principles of Islam that ensure the system is both efficient and equitable.<sup>38</sup>

The State also plays a role in a dynamic setting of an Islamic economic system towards public interest. Such roles include provision of basic needs, arrangements for social security and equitable distribution of income and wealth, fulfillment of social obligations (*farâ kifâyah*) and provision of public services and amenities.<sup>39</sup>

In this man-society and man-nature relationship, the fundamental principle of *tawhîd* or *unity* is central in Islamic economics. The 'disequilibrium' or 'disharmony' between man and society, man and nature is due to the destruction of the harmony between man and God and vice versa. If this happens, man will be prone to having short sighted objectives related to self-pleasure, will no longer view wealth

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<sup>37</sup> In addition to that, several economic actions that would implicate to social enmity/ exploitation or reducing social wellbeing are prohibited. *Ribâ*, for example, is prohibited as this action only aims at increasing one's person welfare through unjustified means. *Zakât*, on the other hand, is obliged and encouraged as this would improve the welfare of the whole society.

<sup>38</sup> Mohammed Sharif, "The Feasibility of an Islamic Economic System in A Modern World", in M. Basheer Ahmad, Syed A. Ahsani and Dilwanaz A. Siddiqui (Eds), *Muslim Contributions To World Civilization*, (Herndon, USA: IIIT, 2005), 102.

<sup>39</sup> Munawar Iqbal and Tariqullah Khan, *Financing Public Expenditure: An Islamic Perspective*, (Jeddah: IRTI, IDB, 2004).

as ‘*amânah*’ from God (of which he must be responsible for) and will no longer view society as a place for him to develop himself and seek protection. Instead, nature will be viewed as an object to satisfy all wants to the fullest extent possible, while society is viewed as ‘other external entities’ that one has no responsibility towards- and to some extent- as a distortion/threat to his self-pleasure. ‘God elimination’ (spiritual alienation) makes man think of himself as the ‘master’ of society/nature.<sup>40</sup>

*Taqwâ* is a state of attitude and behavior that creates ‘God consciousness’ in individuals and reminds him of his primordial covenant and the true mission on earth and hence would prevent individuals and society from such excesses. Besides individual striving for this goal, as mentioned above, the State plays an important role as regulator and supervisor to ensure the institutional setting for the achievement of this outcome.

**Table 1. Economics in Islamic Worldview: Expected Ends and Means**

Prerequisites to achieve <i>falâh</i>	Instrumental Values	Desired Output	How to achieve <i>falâh</i> ?
Individual wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Al-faḍâ'il al-nafsiyyah</i></li> <li>- <i>Al-faḍâ'il al-jismiyyah</i></li> <li>- <i>Al-faḍâ'il al-khârijiyyah</i></li> <li>- <i>Al-faḍâ'il al-tawfiqiyyah</i></li> </ul>	<i>Taqwâ</i> (good individual) having moral consciousness and spiritual nourishment while fulfilling basic needs and other physical/external needs	Through the role of individuals, society, institutions and state in a dynamic setting of an Islamic economic system
Social wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fulfillment of society's basic needs</li> <li>- Social-distributive justice</li> <li>- Equity and fairness</li> <li>- Mutual cooperation and respect</li> </ul>	<i>Khayr ummah</i> (good society) having moral and ethical consciousness, mutual concern and cooperation and social distributive justice	

As a new system of thought addressing human economic life, Islamic economics is challenged to be able to actively promote the Islamic ideals in the economic realm and reform the adverse situation

<sup>40</sup> Hafas Furqani, “Individual and Society in An Islamic Ethical Framework”, *Humanomics*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2015), 74 – 87.

of human economy, supplement what is lacking in current practices and offer a new, better perspective in guiding man to achieve ultimate wellbeing. The multifaceted crisis faced by human beings such as the gap of material welfare achievement and other dimension of wellbeing, the massive poverty and injustice, ecological destruction, etc reflect that *present* economics is not really working (if not successful) in answering those issues and therefore a *new* alternative is needed.

At the conceptual and theoretical level, the philosophy of economics created from the understanding of Islamic worldview are expected to be incorporated in the body of knowledge as well as theories for economic analysis in an Islamic framework. As a science, Islamic economics will be constructed based on the Islamic vision of economics (as an Islamic conceptual environment) and directly operational within the *Islamic scientific conceptual scheme* (i.e. Islamic context of science).<sup>41</sup> It is also expected to develop an explanation of economic phenomena and the dynamic relationship of economic entities such as the individual, state, institutions and society with a socio-scientific explanatory power based on the revealed, rational and empirical sources of knowledge and having a balance and proper perspective of ethics/values.

In this effort, philosophical approach and foundational study to discuss the foundational issues of Islamic economics is urgent that would develop Islamic perspective in economics and crystallize those conceptual arguments as well as practical evidence into a solid body of knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The Islamic worldview constitutes the foundation, benchmark and criteria of Islamic science whereby as put by Acikgenc any "idea, doctrine, disposition, behavior, or discipline (in the sense of a science) is Islamic, only if it is developed out of or proceeds directly out of the Islamic worldview which is inclusive of various interpretations as well as within its own context." Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Science: Towards A Definition*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996a), 8.

<sup>42</sup> Acikgenc's observation could give us insight how the scientific discipline emerged in the Islamic scientific tradition. He observes that the establishment of such disciplines as *fiqh*, *kalām*, *tafsīr*, *hadīth*, language and literature science (*naḥw*, *adab*, *balāghah*) started from the establishment of Islamic scientific conceptual scheme based on the Islamic worldview as revealed through the Prophet pbuh. From that early tradition, in the second century we see other disciplines, such as physics, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, *begin* to emerge as sciences. The reason for this development, he argues, "is not, and cannot be, translations from Greek scientific and philosophical work; it is rather what he called as the *environmental context*, which has already been developed by the above mentioned disciplines based on Revelation". Alparslan Acikgenc, "Toward an Islamic Concept of Philosophy: A Response to the Modernists", in Sharifah Shifa al-Attas (Ed.), *Islam and the Challenge of Modernity*,

In the remaining part of this chapter, we take a more detailed look at how worldview impacts on the ontological, epistemological and axiological dimensions of a discipline, in this case Islamic economics.

## Conclusion

The main function of worldview for a science is in providing the foundation and basis for that science to operate and grow. As the basis, worldview constitutes the hard core of a science and it is organically attached in its substance (theory/*nazariyyah*) and its outer manifestation (application/*amaliyyah*). In the economics discipline construction the impact of worldview could be seen when the scholars attempt to answer three main questions: (1) how *economic problems are defined* (e.g., material, humanitarian, spiritual problems? What is and what ought to be problems?), (2) *what are goals to be achieved* (e.g., realization of well-being in material, humanitarian or spiritual sense?), and (3) *what are the mechanisms and methods for realizing them* (which is in conform to the nature of economic problems and desired concept of well-being).

Islamic economics differ to conventional economics, mainly due to the differences in the basis of discipline, namely the worldview. The Islamic worldview is founded in the Qur'an and established based on the principle of Islam as a religion. The Islamic worldview provides the foundations in understanding economic phenomena and subject-matter of Islamic economics as a science. As the discipline is in the making, further elaboration on the Islamic worldview and Islamic perspective in economics should be done by comprehensively understanding economic phenomena/realities; systematically developing conceptual foundations of Islamic economics and conceptual scheme of discipline; producing Islamic economics key-terminologies to clarify the necessary framework for establishing and building up the discipline; using Islamic economic methodology whose source of knowledge is divine revelation, intellectual reasoning and facts observation; and developing foundations of Islamic economics to be the basis of individual behavior analysis in an Islamic framework.[]

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(Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996b), 586.

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