

ALI 425: Religion & Science

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HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

- The Muslim experience
- Heliocentric model of the solar system
- Darwin's theory of evolution
- Scientific explanations for nature
- *Science is based on facts and religion is based on faith*

DEFINITION OF SCIENCE

- Defined by methodology

Science is the pursuit of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.

- Natural sciences inc. biology, chemistry & physics
- Social sciences include psychology, sociology, anthropology
- Accurate but limited

ISLAM AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

- Qur'an encouraged the study of nature
- Qur'an encouraged studying nature through observation
- Qur'an encouraged repeated observations of nature
- Qur'an encouraged believers to learn the natural causes/systems
- Qur'an encouraged studying all aspects of nature

DEFINITION OF RELIGION

- Religion comprises of three areas of knowledge:
 - Beliefs: an explanation of reality that is based in reason
 - Ethics: an explanation of desired human characteristic based in reason
 - Laws: an explanation of duties and responsibilities based in reason and scripture
- Scripture is not a scientific text.
- Qur'an contains
 - **some scientific realities**
 - **everything required for human perfection.**

THE CONFLICT

- Key is to understand issues before predicating a position
- There are two mutually exclusive areas of conflict:
 - Science and theology or faith based ethics
 - The existence of God, the soul or the hereafter
 - The possibility of miracles/effect of prayers
 - Human rights
 - Science and scriptural narratives
 - Historical facts: creation of Adam (a), flood of Noah
 - Scientific facts: theory of evolution, development of foetus

SOLUTIONS: A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEOLOGY

- Theologies are of two types: compatible with science and incompatible with science
- Causality is an example of this.
- Pre-modern western understanding:
 - Natural phenomena have natural or metaphysical causes.
- What happens with growth in understanding of natural causes?

SOLUTIONS: A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEOLOGY

- Islamic philosophical view:
Natural phenomena have a natural and a metaphysical cause.
- Supported by verses of the Qur'an:
And He who sends down (from time to time) water from the sky in due measure [43:11]
- The Sunnah of Allah (s) is to effect change through their means
God refuses to run the affairs except through their means. (Hadith)

SOLUTIONS: KNOWING THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

- Science cannot explain every idea
 - Eg. The validity of the empirical method
- Science can only explain the observable world
 - Both the cause and the effect have to be observable
- Science can only inform us of the usual process
 - Empiricism is inductive reasoning
 - Inductive reasoning cannot formulate a logical principle

SOLUTIONS: DELINEATION OF SCOPE

- Scientific claims should be assessed by the scientific methodology
- Theological claims should be assessed by methods in theology
- Multiplicity of species was caused by mutation and natural selection: this is a scientific claim
- Theory of evolution disproves the existence of God: this is a theological claim
- There is no conflict between religious theology and science as long as their scopes are delineated.