AN OVERVIEW OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY, RESEARCH PARADIGMS, AND THE ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Rodrigue Fontaine[2]
Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Gapur Oziev
Institute of Knowledge Integration, Georgia
ikiacademy.org

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to resolve a dilemma. Muslim students doing PhDs in management need to complete their thesis without contradicting their faith. Choosing the right paradigm is crucial. This study uses a literature review approach combined with feedback from a focus group of six PhD students. It presents an overview of Western philosophy. This overview provides the background to better understand the three main research paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism. This is followed by the Islamic perspective of the Western narrative. Despite its popularity, positivism rejects religion and morality. It is therefore anti-Islamic. By contrast, critical realism seems to fit both the need for moral values and empirical research. It is not perfect though as the Islamic worldview is to prepare human beings for the Day of Judgment.

Keywords: Philosophy, paradigm, management research, Islamic perspective

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[2] Corresponding author, Email: ridhwan_fontaine@iium.edu.my

INTRODUCTION

Every Muslim student doing a PhD in management has a dilemma. They need to complete their studies without contradicting their faith. This is challenging as many assumptions underlying the social sciences are rooted in secularism (Zaman, 2013). Choosing the right paradigm is key. However, few Muslim students have been exposed to the history of Western philosophy. Few students realise how existing research paradigms originate in this history of philosophy. Unfortunately, many Muslim students doing a PhD in management use a quantitative approach and choose positivism as their research paradigm; not realising that positivism rejects religion and morality (Zaman, 2013; Safi, 1996).

Several studies have highlighted the inherent contradictions between Western paradigms - that often reflect secular values - and the religious beliefs of Muslims (e.g. Safi, 1996). However, such studies are relatively rare and often in the form of a complex argument presented in a 200-page book. In any case, such studies rarely present an overview of the history of Western philosophy but hone in directly on logical positivism (e.g. Safi, 1996).

The aims of this study are two-fold. First, a focus group of students doing a PhD in management was created. This focus group helped edit the draft of this paper throughout the writing process. Second, a literature review of the history of Western philosophy was conducted. This overview would provide the background to understand the three dominant research paradigms in the field of management. Lastly, an Islamic perspective. This approach would allow researchers which research paradigm fits best with the Islamic perspective.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aims of the study, the authors used a qualitative approach (Grossoehme, 2014). Grossoehme notes that three approaches to qualitative research are common: ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology. For this study, a grounded theory was used.

The authors contacted the postgraduate coordinator of the PhD in Management program at the International Islamic University Malaysia. She emailed all students doing a PhD in management and asked for volunteers to take part in the focus group. Six PhD students volunteered.

There was an initial meeting in January 2024 to explain the scope of the study. They agreed but they requested that WhatsApp be used as a means of exchanging documents and ideas. At regular intervals, a draft of this study was presented, and their feedback was sought to improve the clarity of the writing. Apart from better understanding the existing research paradigms, the focus group wanted to understand the Islamic perspective.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Fontaine (2018) has already presented an overview of the history of Western philosophy. The study of Fontaine (2018) was presented to the focus group. Their feedback was that the information was useful but too detailed. An account that is too detailed burdens the student. An account that is too brief does not help the students answer questions in an oral exam. Based on the feedback, three drafts were given to the focus group. The outline below, based on the feedback from the focus group, provides PhD students with enough detail without overburdening them. Additionally, Kenny (2007) was used for additional references. Marias

(2014) is often used as a textbook for undergraduates. Kenny (2007), in four volumes, is a much more detailed and scholarly work.

Branches of Philosophy

Philosophy is often divided into three branches (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). The first is epistemology, which deals with the question, "*how does one know something*?". The second is ontology, which deals with the question, "*what exists in the universe*?". The third is ethics, which deals with the question, "*how should one behave*?"

The relationship between these three branches is complex. Fontaine (2018) and Zaman (2013) note that Western scholars of philosophy are generally atheists. Their epistemology excludes revelation. Their ontology denies angels, *jin*, God, and the Day of Judgment. Their ethics often reflect the cultural norms of the social group they belong to.

By contrast, Muslim scholars include revelation as part of their epistemology. Their ontology includes everything mentioned in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Their ethics depends on what is pleasing to God. This might coincide with cultural norms. But it might also be opposed to cultural norms (Fontaine, 2018; Zaman, 2013).

The Ancient Greeks

Conventionally, the history of Western philosophy starts in ancient Greece (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). Two philosophers merit a mention. Heraclitus (500 BCE) was the pioneer of empiricism. Empiricists rely on data and believe that the mind can mislead. He relied on his senses and noticed change everywhere. His tagline was, "*everything is becoming*." Parmenides (450 BCE) was the pioneer of rationalism and logic. Rationalists assume that data can be misleading. By thinking things through clearly in one's mind, one can arrive at the truth. Although things look like they change all the time, they nonetheless continue to exist. His tagline was "*everything is being*." This debate between Heraclitus and Parmenides inspired Socrates and Plato (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

Socrates (470 BCE - 399 BCE) was a unique philosopher. Not much is known of his ideas but he taught and inspired Plato. He encouraged people to think for themselves. He asked people in Athens questions, like what is justice? He showed that their answers were not very good. He refused to provide any answer himself so readers have to work things out for themselves. His main influence was that he provided a new model, very different from the Greek heroes of antiquity (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

Plato (380 BCE), inspired by Socrates, wanted to synthesise the ideas of Heraclitus and Parmenides. He developed his theory of the Forms. There is an ideal unchanging world (the world of the Forms) and this world is a poor replica of this ideal world. He focused on universals (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

Plato's main student was Aristotle (350 BCE). He criticised Plato's theory of the Forms and developed an empirical view of the world. He pioneered scientific observations and developed a theory of causes. He focused on particulars (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

The ideas of Plato and Aristotle had an enormous influence on Christianity. For over 1,000 years, the Christian world experienced numerous heresies and controversies. But in the 1500s,

a spiritual crisis emerged that led to the Reformation (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007; Law, 2007).

There are almost 1,800 years of philosophy that have been skipped. The focus group found that this was the part of Western philosophy that was the least relevant to them.

The Reformation

The Christian world entered a series of political and religious crises that lasted almost a century (from the 1500s to the 1600s) (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). There are a variety of factors that contributed to these crises. By and large, the Roman Catholic Church had become the subject of a lot of criticism from some Christians. This led to the Protestant Reformation which divided the European Christian world into many factions.

This was a very traumatic period for many Christians. They had an unwavering faith in the sanctity of the Church. It provides spiritual comfort but also a certainty about the world. This certainty was now shattered and many Christians were unsure about how to move forward. Other discoveries bewildered people at the time. The discoveries of North America and then South America forced people to reconsider the way they perceive the world around them. Nothing could be taken for granted anymore (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

Although several philosophers wrote important works - notably St Augustine and St Thomas -, the focus group felt that these works were not directly relevant to PhD students in management.

The Rationalists

In the 17th century, some important rationalist philosophers appeared. One of them, Rene Descartes, left a significant mark (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). Descartes tried to restore confidence in the Christian religion. He wrote his *Meditations* by doubting everything (1st meditation). This approach - doubting everything - was necessary to respond to the doubt created by the Reformation) (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). Using only his reason, he concluded that the only certainty was that he was a thinking thing (2nd meditation). The other certainty was that he had an idea of God in his head and therefore God must exist (3rd meditation). In his last three meditations, he concluded that almost everything that he had doubted in the first meditation turned out to be true.

One of Descartes's ideas has remained, the problem of interaction, sometimes referred to as the "*mind-body problem*". The mind is a non-physical matter and the body is a physical matter. How are the two connected? How can the mind comprehend the world "*out there*"? How do we develop "*consciousness*"? How do we develop an identity of our "*self*"? These are ideas that people still struggle with today. The Islamic version of the mind-body problem is the problem of the existence of the soul, which many Western philosophers deny, but is attested in the Qur'an (Fontaine, 2018).

Around this time, several scientific discoveries changed people's perceptions about how the world worked. The work of Isaac Newton (1644-1726) had an enormous philosophical impact (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). If every atom in the universe moves according to scientific laws, then there is no free will. But if there is no free will, there is no morality. Newton's work inspired many empiricists.

The Empiricists

If the 17th century was the age of rationalism, the 18th century was the age of empiricism. John Locke (1632-1704) dismissed innate knowledge and the idea of a self. He argued that everyone starts with a "clean slate". As people go through life, their experiences are imprinted on their minds and they learn (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

Hume (1711-1776) built on Locke's ideas. Hume is more of a psychologist than a philosopher. He argues that we cannot know the world. At the end of the day, our minds are receiving impressions and interpreting them. We have no way of knowing whether our interpretation of these impressions coincides with reality. He argued that it is impossible to prove causation. It can only be assumed. Hume argued that morality cannot be based on reason. Ultimately, it is the custom of a people and people use reason to defend their morality. Hume's work created a lot of controversy. Kant in particular thought that he could refute Hume (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

Kant

Kant (1724-1804) wrote two important works: the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant wanted to reconcile the empirical and the rational schools. He argued that human beings do not passively receive sensory information. Human beings actively interpret sensory information through categories. These categories - including time and space - are innate knowledge that is necessary for us to make sense of the world around us. As such, we can't have an objective view of reality as everything depends on interpretation. This means that all knowledge - including morality - is suspect (Fontaine, 2018, Marias, 2014, Kenny, 2007).

In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, he concludes that even though we cannot know what is morally right, we have to live our lives as if morality were a universal value.

Kant, as a philosopher, wanted to save knowledge and morality from the attacks of Hume but his work had the opposite effect (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). The work of Kant opened the door for what would become postmodernism. After getting feedback, it was felt necessary to clarify the views of Human and Kant in a Table format.

Table 1: Hume Versus Kant

Hume	Epistemology and ethics	We can only rely on empirical data. Cause and effect cannot be proved. Ethics cannot be based on religion because religions do not have empirical validity	Most management research follows Hume. Positivism is an adaptation of Hume's work.
Kant	Epistemology and ethics	If we only have sensations, our minds would be a mess of sensations. People need to organize these sensations. There is no blank slate. The mind is changing this mess of sensations into coherent thought	Kant showed the limits of empirical research. Empiricists ignore Kant and continue to research as if Kant had not written his work.

Source: Fontaine (2018)

The focus group had lots of queries about the section on Kant. It was rewritten several times to find the right balance between detail and brevity.

The next development in philosophy was postmodernism.

Nietzsche and Postmodernism

The period after Kant includes numerous philosophers (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). The focus group felt that one name alone would be sufficient. The authors chose Nietzsche.

Nietzsche (1844-1900) had an enormous impact on the 19th and the 20th century. The context is important. Kant's work destroyed the hope of European intellectuals to find Truth. At the same time, the Napoleon wars destroyed the traditional aristocratic system that held Europe together for two thousand years. This allowed the bourgeoisie to come to power with a completely different set of values. Concerning epistemology, Nietzsche concluded that truth is relative. He also concluded that morality was relative. People must be "authentic" and figure things out for themselves. He was an extreme individualist for man.

Since Nietzsche, many intellectuals have pursued these ideas further. This led to the post-modern project. Post-modernism is the belief that modernism (the idea that science will eventually solve all our social problems) has failed and everyone needs to create their own "reality". Some people concluded that everyone is free to think for themselves, like Sartre (1905-1980). Others concluded that this world is meaningless and that life is absurd, like Camus (1913-1960). Another thinker that deserves attention is Marx (Fontaine, 2018).

Marx

Around the same time, Marx emerged as an important philosopher (Fontaine, 2018; Marias, 2014; Kenny, 2007). Due to the complexity of Marx's argument and his critique of capitalism, the authors referred to Wolff (1984).

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was born in Germany but wrote his greatest work, *Das Kapital*, in the United Kingdom. His work is a critique of Adam Smith and David Ricardo (Wolff, 1984). He studied the historical events that led to peasants losing control over their modes of production, being kicked off the land, and being forced to work in factories at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Wolff, 1984). The intricacy of Marx's argument is outside the scope of this study. Three points are important though.

First, Marx argued that economic matters were the single most important factor in understanding history. Economic matters would come to dominate the thinking of almost every policy-maker ever since (Wolff, 1984). In 1992, a strategist in Bill Clinton's campaign developed the slogan, "*It's the economy, stupid.*" This slogan summarizes the main thrust of Marx's analysis (Fontaine, 2018).

Second, he noted that traditional economic theory did not explain the origin of profit. If a seller makes a large profit in a competitive market, other sellers will sell their goods at a lower price. Logically, all profit margins would stabilize around a ceiling that takes into account the risk and the payback period of the investment. Marx calculated that the industrialists' ability to

maximize profit is derived from their ability to hire workers and pay them below their fair wage (Wolff, 1984).

Third, Marx thought the market was a mystifying place. Economists, like Smith and Ricardo, assume that a market is a transparent place in which people exchange goods (including labour) in a free and fair manner. Marx disagreed. He argued that although the market seems like a free and fair place, in reality workers are forced to sell their labour at a discounted rate. However, workers are socialized to believe that selling their labour at the market price is a good thing. For Marx, workers are not the only victim of the capitalist system. The owners of capital as also victims in the sense that they do not realize that they are caught in the same system (Wolff, 1984).

PHILOSOPHIES UNDERPINING ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Having presented an overview of the history pf Western philosophy, it now possible to link these facts with the philosophies underpinning academic research. Three paradigms have emerged. Positivism is really an extension of the empirical idea championed by Hume. Interpretivism is an extension of the relativism that appeared after Kant and Nietzsche. Critical realism is an extension of the rational school. The rational school does not deny empirical evidence but says that the senses alone can mislead (Fontaine, 2018). Table 2 shows the most common approaches and their associated method.

Table 2: Philosophies Underpinning Academic Research

Paradigms	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology	Method
Positivism	Naive realism	Objectivism	Quantitative	Questionnaires, surveys, tests
Critical realism	Unintended consequences	Realism	Mixed method	Interview, observations, experiments
Interpretivism	Relativism	Subjectivism	Qualitative	Interviews, content analysis

Source: Adapted from Sousa (2010).

Table 1 is only a summary as other paradigms exist, such as constructivism (Handema, Lungu, & Shikaputo, 2023). However, as it is an extension of interpretivism, it was ignored.

During the literature review, the most useful quote that summarised the issues for Muslim PhD students was found in Sousa (2010). Sousa (2010: 499) writes,

> *"Rejection of positivism does not mandate an allegiance to postmodernism, for there is (critical) realism. Positivists and realists, despite sharing in part the assumption of a mind-independent world, differ strongly concerning the existence of observables and unobservables in the world. Positivists take observation and experimentation procedures as primordial ways to attest ontological claims, thus privileging the observable over the unobservable – the "empiricist prejudice". Positivists thus fail to take the existence of unobservables into account – or at the least neglect unobservables. Realists, however, consider both the observables and unobservables of the world as objects of potential inquiry."*

Thus, there are three options. The interpretivists follow the postmodernist school and argue that everything is socially created. There is no objective reality and epistemology does not matter. This is unthinkable for Muslims.

The second option is positivism. However, empiricists reject anything to do with religion. Furthermore, as Sousa (2010) points out, the positivists deny anything that is "unobservable". In practice, they deny any religious or ethical values. This is equally unacceptable for Muslims.

The third option - critical realism - allows for both observable and unobservable concepts to be studied. This seems to be the only school that coincides with Islamic principles. It also makes a lot more sense than positivism. In many social situations, unobservable concepts like trust are critical. Sometimes, critical realism is called "pragmatism" (Panya & Nyarwath, 2022).

Sousa (2010) is careful to point out that critical realism has been around for a long time. It is not a reaction against positivism or interpretativism. However, it was only recently articulated and promoted by Bashkar's "*A Realist Theory of Science*". However, earlier thinkers have argued in favour of critical realism, notably Karl Popper (1902-1994).

Karl Popper, a proponent of the critical realist school, is best known for his emphasis on falsifiability. Traditionally, researchers develop a hypothesis and find empirical data to "prove" that the theory is correct. Popper argued that the best thing to do is to try to "break" the hypothesis by looking for data that contradicts it. He argued that science could only progress by refuting false hypotheses (Gorton, 2006). Popper wanted to *"untangle the complex web of human interaction that produces unintended, and often, unwanted consequences*" (Gorton, 2006: 5). Popper argued that people are embedded in social institutions and it is the relationship between people and their social institution that is important.

Popper believed that social scientists need to explain a social situation and the actor's *perception* of the situation. Consider an example in which a person is trying to cross the street. There is a car coming but it is still at some distance. The person assesses the situation and believes that he can cross the street safely. He decides to cross the stress, not realizing the real speed of the car. The driver has to slow down suddenly to avoid the accident, forcing other cars behind him to break suddenly. The person crossing the street did not intend to create chaos on the road. But he still managed to do so (Gorton, 2006: 8).

Popper was opposed to positivists. He saw the positivists as "naive empiricists" who want the laws in the natural sciences to the transferred to the social sciences. They assume simple cause and effect relationships and ignore the unintended consequences of human behaviour and the role of social institutions. He thought this view was fundamentally false because people are "reflexive". That is to say that human behaviour is influenced by new knowledge (Gorton, 2005: 43).

Popper believed that social institutions are not consciously designed. They are rather the unintended consequences of human action (Gorton, 2006: 13). Popper compared social institutions to animal tracks in a forest. No animal intends to create a path, but as hundreds of creatures cross a forest, a path emerges. Once the path emerges, most animals follow that path. Similarly, nobody created the "free market". It is the aggregate result of countless individuals over centuries (Gorton, 2006: 14). social science aims to uncover the unintended social repercussions of intentional human action.

As social institutions are so complex and so difficult to predict powerful people can't manipulate social institutions. All conspiracy theories are therefore unfounded even though many people believe them and some political actors may act upon them (Gorton, 2006:14). Popper rejected any explanation that was based on collective action, such as social classes. Individuals act, not social classes or other abstract concepts. Similarly, Popper rejected any generic psychological explanation that ignored the social context. Individuals are always embedded in social institutions and interacting with other people embedded in their social institutions.

Popper had a lot to say about the work of Marx. Popper disliked Marx's conclusions but he admired Marx's approach. He saw Marx as "*the first to conceive social theory of the unwanted social repercussions of nearly all our actions*" (Gorton, 2007: 90). Before Marx, economists assumed that free markets only yielded positive results. But Marx saw that negative thing - like economic depressions, unemployment, and exploitation of employees - are all products of numerous individuals' actions rationally within their social situation. He saw class conflict as "institutional", not the product of sinister capitalists trying to oppress innocent workers (Gorton, 2006: 92-93).

Having argued in favour of critical realism, it might be useful to look at the comments made by Zaman (2013) as it reinforces the points made above and leads to the Islamic perspective. Zaman (2013) explores the history of positivism. Initially, atheists wanted to assert that science was superior to religion because religion focused on unobservable constructs - like God - whereas science focused on what can be observed. However, that notion was rejected as science depends on unobservable phenomena, such as gravity, atoms, or electrostatic charges. In 1910, Bertrand Russell introduced the theory of description. In it, he asserted that science need not concern itself with whether unobservable forces exist or not. What is important is that their implications can be observed (Zaman, 2013). He writes,

> "*What is crucial to understand here is that Logical Positivism was not a valid scientific theory. Rather, it was a research program, or a hypothesis about the nature of scientific knowledge*" (Zaman, 2013: 6)

> He concludes,

> "*This philosophy is anti-Islamic, and therefore cannot be used to construct Islamic Economics. There are two main points of opposition. Logical Positivism rejects the unseen, while Islam requires faith in the unseen. Logical Positivism rejects morality as unscientific, while morality is a central part of Islamic teachings.*" (Zaman, 2013: 1)

At this stage of the study, the first key objective of the study has been explored. The second concern of the PhD students who participated in the focus group was to better understand the Islamic perspective.

THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

There are some overlaps between the philosophical view and the Islamic perspective (e.g. Fontaine, 2018, Safi, 1996, al-Alwani, 1995). Concerning epistemology, the main source of knowledge is the Qur'an and the Sunnah. With regards to ontology, Muslims believe in the seen and the unseen that can be authentically attributed to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. With regards to ethics, it is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah (e.g. Fontaine, 2018, Safi, 1996, al-Alwani, 1995).

At the theoretical level, many Muslim scholars have written about the Islamic perspective in response to Western philosophers. A complete review of the literature is impossible. But generally, Muslim scholars recognise the limitations of the traditional Islamic approach that rely too much on textual analysis and historical analysis (e.g. Safi, 1996). Muslim scholars recognise the good side of the Western approach which is based on the scientific method. The practical benefits are undeniable. However, science is not as objective as scientists claim. It is often presented as a rejection of the divine. Muslim scholars therefore want to integrate the Islamic approach and the scientific approach (e.g. Fontaine, 2018, Safi, 1996, Al-Alwani, 1995).

The Islamic perspective is sometimes seen as an "anti-Western" intellectual project. In fact, there are multiple approaches to the Islamization of knowledge. It should therefore more properly be seen as debate among Muslim scholars to see how the Islamic sciences can be revitalized (Dzilo, 2012).

At the practical level, Oziev and Fontaine (2013) discussed some issues related to Islamic economics. However, these issues are relevant to Muslim students doing PhDs in management. Oziev and Fontaine (2013) write that there are three groups of scholars writing in Islamic economics. The first group has a strong background economics. They often accept concepts in economics and use "*Islamic-sounding terminology without really exploring the Islamic perspective*" (Oziev & Fontaine, 2013: 28). The second group has a strong background in Islamic law. They sometimes object to important economic concepts "*even though the objections contradict the reality of everyday experience*" (Oziev & Fontaine, 2013: 28). The third group understand economic issues from both the economic and the Islamic perspective with enough depth (Oziev & Fontaine, 2018: 28). By analogy, the principles would be,

> a) Any management concept to be used in Islamic management cannot contradict the Qur'an and the Sunnah
> b) Islamic management concepts must conform to the reality of everyday experience

What is implied in Oziev and Fontaine (2013) is that one scholar alone cannot master economics and Islamic law. Therefore, it is likely that scholars from the social sciences and Islamic studies must collaborate. To add further insights, Dr Gapur Oziev agreed to write a short essay explaining the Islamic worldview. This will be referred to as Oziev (2024).

Perhaps, the best approach to properly understand this issue would be by analysing it from *Maqasid* perspectives (Oziev, 2024). Allah has placed certain objectives in His creation (man) which are reflected in the following *ayah*,

> *"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (51:56).*

The proper understanding of this *ayah* is that the whole life of a man is directly or indirectly about worshipping Allah (Oziev, 2024). In other words, worshipping includes a man's personal, social, economic, and all other aspects of life. Allah used exactly the word "worshiping" not others to illustrate the emphasis on the core concept of the Creator and created (Oziev, 2024).

However, we may raise a concern about the logic behind creating a man just to worship Him. The answer is very simple Allah does not do anything without wisdom. Allah says:
> *"[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving" (67:2.)*

Even though this *ayah* was revealed in a completely different time and chapter, it still should be understood as continuation of the previous *ayah* (Oziev, 2024). It is because "worshiping" Allah does not mean that He is in need of it at all, because He is the Exalted and the Mighty but rather to test us via that "worship" to establish which of us is the best in deed and eventually to reward us accordingly on Judgement Day (Oziev, 2024).

Secondly, Allah has revealed His Shariah with specific objectives, the main of which is to guide a man to achieve the utmost level of servitude to Allah. In fact, this objective is not limited to our Shariah, but rather it was placed by Allah in all previous Shariahs too (Oziev, 2024). The economic matters or even prospering the earth is undoubtedly important and God pleasing act. However, this is not the objective per se, as it's only a means to achieve the higher objective which is the servitude to Allah (Oziev, 2024). For example, Allah says in the Quran:

> *"And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive" (11:61).*

In this *ayah*, one will find that Prophet Salih did not say to his people: O my people, prosper the earth, instead he started preaching them with the most important objective that is worshiping Allah alone. Only after that, he continued with reminding them about the blessings and power of Allah who produced them from the earth and settled them in it (Oziev, 2024). Therefore, one should understand the difference between the real objective of Allah and the means to achieve that specific objective. In this case, it is also possible to draw comparison between a Muslim who does not comprehend the difference between the objective and the means with a bad CEO of a business company who does not know how to prioritize the tasks and set the goals. And it is obvious that sooner or later the company under this type of CEO will fail. Similarly, every Muslim is the "CEO" to his life which has to be managed with perfectly set forth objectives via specific means. Otherwise, his end result before Allah will be similar to the failure of that CEO (Oziev, 2024).

For this reason, Fontaine and Oziev (2013: 38) concluded their article by noting,

> "*The discussion between Muslims and non-Muslims economists will not lead to a common conclusion, as Muslim scholars rely on the Qur'an and the Sunnah (while) others do not consider them sources of knowledge. Furthermore, Islamic economics is not simply about how we allocate resources to maximize our utility, but how do we allocate resources to maximize Allah's Pleasure in preparation for the Day of Judgment.*"

In regards to making sure that Muslim scholars of management make sure that their work conform both to Islamic principles and the reality of everyday life, the authors would like to draw attention to the comments of Karl Popper. An analysis of what happens every day will confirm that our actions have intended and unintended consequences. The study of unintended consequences is found specifically in a school of management known as systems thinking. We suggest therefore that Muslim students doing a PhD in management pay close attention to the work done in the area of systems thinking, systems dynamics, and feedback economics (Fontaine, 2024).

ADVICE TO MUSLIM PHD STUDENTS

It seems clear from the above that Muslim students doing a PhD in management should stay clear of positivism as a research paradigm. Although not a perfect fit, critical realism seems to be the best option.

It is important to remember that the Islamic perspective is not anti-Western. Some Western thinkers have interesting insights that may require further exploration. In this brief overview, two thinkers have stood out.

One such thinker is Karl Marx. Often misunderstood, Karl Marx did highlight several important problems with capitalism. This suggest that PhD students in management can do one of two things. They can celebrate current capitalism and seek to perpetuate it. Or they can research the flaws with current capitalism and seek to improve it by helping a more humane and sustainable form of capitalism to emerge in the future.

Another important thinker is Karl Popper. So much of management assumes a naive relationship between cause and effect. Relationships like "if A then B" seem to dominate management thinking. Popper highlights the centrality of unintended consequences. For some reason, this idea does not seem to have caught on, even though people experience unintended consequences every day. If students in management want to do research that reflects the real world, it seems important that unintended consequences become central to their thinking.

CONCLUSION

This study presented an overview of the history of Western philosophy. The rational school and the empirical school have dominated Western thought. Certain thinkers, like Karl Marx and Karl Popper, merit closer study on the part of Muslim researchers. This historical overview allows researchers to better understand the three possible research paradigms that underpin management research: positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism.

Interpretivism becomes relativism. Positivism, although popular in management, reflects a secular worldview that denies religion and morality. Critical realism, on the other hand, makes room for unobservable facts.

The Islamic perspective seeks to combine the best of the Islamic methodology - values rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah - with the best of the Western approach - the scientific approach. Nonetheless, the Islamic perspective insists that there is a spiritual purpose to our creation. As Oziev and Fontaine (2013) put it so elegantly, the aim is to maximize Allah's Pleasure as a preparation for the Day of Judgment.

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