
TAWHID IS THE TRUE BASIS FOR EPISTEMOLOGY

Keith Morrison

University of the South Pacific, New Zealand

Abstract

There is a common sense of urgency among Islamic and Eastern Orthodox Christian scholars to reestablish a proper ground for intellectual work. This paper argues that tawhid provides the proper ground, because it describes the universe as a hypostatic unity. Humans are made in the image of God as a microcosm of the universe, called to fulfill the unifying movement of tawhid, by bringing the universe into awareness of the Creator. Tawhid therefore provides a universal basis for appreciating all cultural streams and disciplines, as expressing rainbow-like, unique colours of universal genius. The unifying of the rainbow of genius is itself part of tawhid. The rise of modern Western epistemology is one particular genius. Unfortunately modern Western epistemology appears to have confused universal with global, and forgotten that it is only part of the rainbow. It has lost sight of the context of tawhid. In particular it has lost sight of the priority of quality over quantity. It limits itself to secondary or extrinsic social constructed essences for abstraction of utility. The reifying of socially constructed and technologically enhanced secondary qualities as amounts of substance, which can be controlled through abstract causality within a force field, is used to justify attempted global dominance through a misplaced ontology

of subliminal violence. The true cause, which hypostatically, graciously and compassionate gifts unique qualities, known through illumination mediated by angels, as beings moving in divine harmony and divine beauty toward tawhid, has been lost sight of. A recovery of the context of tawhid is the unifying movement of: gaining virtues through overcoming injustice; overcoming unsustainable interactions with other creatures; contemplating illumination from angels whilst rejecting temptations from demons; all to become into the likeness of God through doing God's will to fulfill creation as a unifying mediator for tawhid.

Keywords: *Tawhid, Epistemology, Divine, Truth, Illumination, Awareness. Unifying Movement.*

INTRODUCTION

There is currently a dominant paradigm for epistemology within the world's universities, covering, or better inhabiting, the social sciences and humanities as well as the natural sciences. For all of its comprehensive coverage of disciplines and the world's university faculties, it is less than comprehensive in the actual content it covers. What is starkly missing is wisdom, even though it is still rendered centrally in the language, for example in philosophy, as the love of wisdom. To say "missing" is however to submit to the current dominant paradigm, because it implies that the current dominant paradigm is a brave new construction of a paradigm of epistemology from nothing. Rather, the current modern Western epistemology grew, or better collapsed, out of traditions that did, and continue to, explicitly hold wisdom central. So it is better to see the current dominant paradigm for epistemology as actively rejecting wisdom, rather than merely passively "missing" it. A central question of this paper addresses the reasons for the active rejection. Insights into the reasons point to how to improve the current paradigm, so the central role of wisdom is once again recovered. This paper uses these insights to argue for an improved epistemology.

The paper is in three parts. The first part outlines the history of the current dominant paradigm, from the perspective mainly of current Eastern Orthodox Christianity scholars. The analysis is according to a history of ideas, but does not wish to imply that ideas have efficacy in and of themselves in a Platonic sense. Rather it is assumed that ideas are emergent features of a complex context, for which some features are outlined as indicative of why the situation emerged as it did (Carrol 2000). Behind the whole analysis is an assumption however that it could have been otherwise if people chose otherwise in our obedience or otherwise to divine purpose, and this responsibility remains with us. It is also the basis of hope, because it means that it remains possible now to work towards recovering from the current situation to help usher in an improved paradigm for epistemology.

The second part outlines the features of epistemology focused on by the tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, drawing parallels to the sufi tradition of Islam, especially the work of Ibn Arabi. Paradoxical as it may sound, an argument is made for the need to recover a deepened understanding of dualism, to provide the basis for a dynamic unifying movement toward unity. It is argued that dualism is intrinsic to an eternal infinite horizon of absolute hope emphasized in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which this paper proposes can also be rendered as tawhid, so central to Islam. This is how this paper seeks to strengthen a bridge between Islam and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, for an 'Abrahamic' solidarity in response to the divine call to obedience to divine purpose. Co-extensive with a profound dualism of creator and creation, as well as material and immaterial, are the need for spiritual discernment and emotional intelligence, and a deepened understanding and appreciation of hierarchy, not only within traditions passing on guidance, but also with and under the angelic realm directly mediating divine guidance to humanity.

The third part outlines the current dominant paradigm, characterized as modern and Western, but which also includes

the 'postmodern'. The key features analyzed of the modern and postmodern Western epistemology are its naturalistic monism and consequent view of 'knowledge as power' (Hart 2003). It is argued how naturalistic monism assumes a horizon of mortality, which inevitably results in denial of reality and consequent compulsive reactions, destructive emotions, and social conflict. The paper sketches out how Western philosophy has become aware of this and attempted ironically to communicate it with limited success, and often counter-productive consequences.

The paper concludes with a strategy of utilizing the self-critical insights of both modern and postmodern Western philosophy, yet extending and compiling them into a comprehensive new paradigm, by recovering aspects of the traditions that modern Western epistemology rejected. It is argued that the concept of *tawhid* provides a common basis for both Eastern Orthodox Christian and Islamic traditions, and provides a basis for incorporating once again wisdom into epistemology, along with mutual respect and dialogue between Christianity and Islam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Divergent Paths of Eastern and Western Epistemology

Eastern Orthodox Christian scholars analyze the emergence of modern Western epistemology as a consequence of the loss of the influence of Orthodox Christianity (Nesteruk 2003). There are several threads used to describe the process. They are certainly all oversimplifications and generalizations, but nevertheless also refer to significant influences. What is clear is that the influences operate at the level of cultural guidance, or lack of it. The actual causes are however the choices made by the persons involved in face of influences, notwithstanding divine providence (Chodkiewicz 1993).

A feature that has to be explained is how and why Eastern and Western epistemologies, even though both have been in Christian contexts, developed differently. Central to understanding this is

recognition that ideas as influences do not exist in a vacuum but rather in political and ecological contexts, where a complex set of influences result in certain ideas resonating as dominant influences (Carrol 2000). There is no attempt to understand these processes in this paper, but rather only to highlight what some of the emergent dominant influences appear to be. A change in the political context is one: the collapse of Christianized Western reaches of the Roman Empire. This appears to have resulted in loss of continuity and development, or in other words truncation, of Christian traditions in the West. At the cusp of the collapse of the Western reaches of the Roman empire, Augustine was writing. His writing therefore became dominant in the West to an extent they never did in the East. This was because in the West after the collapse of the Roman empire in the West, access to Eastern theology was minimal, while in the East theology continued to develop other threads as well as the thread exemplified by Augustine. It is a mistake to condemn Augustine's work. It is however like all perspectives, to be understood contextually as addressing particular challenges, which it did very well. But it did not address all challenges. A problem appears to have arisen because complementary perspectives became lost sight of in the West, due to the untimely disconnection from the Eastern Christian churches and need for retrenchment.

Augustine had a view of philosophy as a 'handmaiden' to theology (Nesteruk 2003). Philosophy and hence science were interpreted as primarily utilitarian, and therefore considered to operate only within the historical material processes. It is important to recognize that this was a positive evaluation by Augustine of philosophy and science, which can be accepted as valid. An error only arises when it is assumed to be a complete view and exhaustive description of the role of philosophy and science.

Within the threads of Eastern Christian theology, philosophy and science were valued for their utilitarian role, in agreement with Augustine, but they were also sought to be integrated in a critical

synthesis of Hellenist philosophy with Christian knowledge of the Creator, whereby the uncreated, in other words divine energies, were known to constitute the material created world (Nesteruk 2003; 2008; Staniloae 2003). This critical synthesis rejected the naturalistic monism of Hellenistic philosophy and science (Hart 2003). For Augustine however, the limited role delimited for philosophy and science meant that there was no need to reconstitute the ontology of philosophy and science to include the Creator, because philosophy and science were only considered to have a subsidiary ‘handmaiden’ role for theology. For Augustine, only theology required to recognize the Creator, which was left to be outlined in purely Semitic terms from biblical sources, without reference to philosophy or science. This early difference in focus resulting in a relatively more limited role ascribed to philosophy and science in the West compared to the East, has continued through nearly two millennia until the present to characterize the substantive primary difference between Western and Eastern Christian theology—whether or not divine uncreated energies constitute material reality (Nesteruk 2003; 2008; Staniloae 2003).

Ironically, the relatively more limited role ascribed to philosophy and science in the West resulted eventually in naturalistic philosophy and science becoming dominant and eclipsing theology in the West. The reason is because in the West an intrinsic divide was made between theology on the one hand and philosophy and science on the other. Therefore once theology ceased to have political authority, philosophy and science came to prominence because of their independent from any link to theology. By contrast, in the East, even when theology ceased to have political authority, because philosophy and science had become synthesized with Christian knowledge of the Creator’s work constituting material reality, a theological orientation for philosophy and science was not lost.

The difference between the East and West can be summed up in terms of differing horizons. In the West, due to still holding

pre-Christian naturalistic monism, both philosophy and science assumed a tragic horizon of mortality and finitude. By contrast, in the East, where philosophy and science were integrated and developed into a synthesis with theology, there remained an assumption of an eternal infinite horizon of absolute hope guiding the development of philosophy and science.

Whereas in the East all human activity was seen in the context of its divine purpose, provided by discerning the divine energies constituting it, in the West the material world was seen rather as merely as a resource to assist spiritual purpose, as well as a source of temptation. This dichotomy is of course an over simplification and generalization of both Eastern and Western Christendom. Neither the East nor the West have ever been, nor currently are, homogenous. But in terms of overall orientation it explains in part why in the West a limited epistemology emerged and became dominant. The limited epistemology dwelt and became dominant of course also however within a whole political complex of influences. It cannot be argued that differences in epistemology were the cause of the differences in political and technological development of the Western and Eastern Christendom. Rather, all that can be said is that the choices made by the dominant majority differed between the East and West, which can be understood statistically in terms of dominant influences.

The tragic sense of life in this world held by the West within a horizon of mortality and finitude appears, not surprisingly, to have ironically resulted in denial of both the finitude and mortality of the material world. With the loss of the limited role ascribed to philosophy and science as 'handmaiden' to theology, philosophy and science presumed to replace theology in proffering eternal truth (Nesteruk 2008). Moreover, it was assumed to be truth that other cultures and persons did not possess, ironically because the West had rejected the wisdom other cultures knew. There was intrinsic to the denial of mortality and finitude, a loss of sense of the reality of common human nature—cultural and even natural

(racial) superiority became commonly assumed in the West. What was and remains starkly absent, and is indeed necessarily so in the denial of the reality of material finitude and mortality, is an attitude of participating in a divinely guided and inspired unifying movement. Once the theology of Augustine, which emphasized unifying passionate striving for concerted moral purpose with the help of philosophy and science, lost its guiding dominance, what was left was an empty shell of amorally directed self-serving and self-exalting passions, which was actually a return to pre-Abrahamic polytheism (Hart 2003).

Even though the central need for unifying passionate striving was also maintained in the East, philosophy and science was never limited to being a 'handmaiden' to it. Rather, the dispassionate and timeless unity and end of unifying passionate striving in time was also known, and indeed what was held to be central to philosophy and science, by Islam as well as Eastern Orthodox Christianity (Carrol 2000; Thurnberg 1995). Unifying passionate striving utilizing science was always seen in the context of the divine energies constituting the essence of material reality. This ensured that passionate striving was never left to become amoral, self-serving and self-exalting. Rather it remained always directed toward the reality of the intrinsic unity of all material reality in the divine energies constituting its diversity, movement and beauty, including the relative and reciprocally expressed utility between creatures for each other (Hart 2003; Twinch 1997).

Tawhid and the Unifying Movement: An Exploration of Epistemology and Ontology

Tawhid is defined here as unifying movement (Rauf 1984). Just as within Eastern Orthodox Christian theology, philosophy, and science, movement is known within the context of its end in unity, which also constitutes all that is in unifying movement (Carrol 2000; Thurnberg 1995). Within Eastern Orthodox Christian theology,

philosophy, and science, what constitutes material reality are the logoi or words spoken by the Creator, the divine Logos (Staniloae 2003; Thurnberg 1995). To see, hear, intuit, and contemplate logoi is to know essential reality. Moreover it is the essential reality not only of the material realm but also of the immaterial realm, namely the human intellect and angelic hierarchy (Thunberg 1995). The two realms, material and immaterial, have the one source and cohere perfectly due to this (Nesteruk 2003; 2008). This is therefore the sure grounding and certain basis of epistemology. Because logoi are also of divine origin, they open up contemplation to the eternal infinite horizon of absolute hope (Hart 2003; Morrison 2012; Twinch 1997). Contemplation of logoi reveal divine goodness. The movement of all creatures attuned to the vision of the eternal infinite horizon of absolute hope fulfills their own logos or divine purpose constituting their nature and personal, individual or hypostatic existence. This movement is passionate, but at core also dispassionate, as the true end is known. Imbalance is avoided. This requires however the choice to attune to the vision of logoi. This presupposes that a person can be made aware of logoi and able to discern them. This is where tawhid needs to be made explicit as the true basis for epistemology and where Ibn Arabi's work is very helpful and is at one with Eastern Orthodox Christian theology (Chodkiewicz 1993). This is wisdom, which has been lost sight of by both modern and postmodern Western epistemology.

To recover knowledge of tawhid as the true basis of epistemology, dualism has to be recovered, or better, fully embraced (Nesteruk 2003, 2008). Dualism needs to be ontological and epistemological. It has to be ontological dualism in two ways: in terms of creation (created) and creator (uncreated) as well as material creation and immaterial creation. Epistemological dualism is required because both empiricism and rationalism are required, along with both metaphysics and phenomenology. Overall a thoroughly dualistic orientation is required for tawhid of

unifying movement. Otherwise there is ironically a monistic bending over backwards to try to rationalize the nonexistence of the Creator, the nonexistence of the immaterial, and the relativity of rationality, through a myriad of relatively more or less clever attempts at self-justification. Once again, Augustine knew this perfectly in his clear statement that faith precedes knowledge, which was during the same period also stated equally clearly by Eastern Christian theologians (Nesteruk 2003). Faith in the Creator requires ontological dualism. Faith in the existence of the angelic realm requires ontological dualism. Faith in the intelligibility gifted to the immaterial intellect requires epistemological dualism. Augustine's mistake, if it is proper to call it a mistake, was to not see the danger in allowing and using philosophy and science to be merely a tag on utilitarian and hence monistic 'handmaiden' of creation and empiricism, rather than thoroughly reconstituting philosophy and science in the light of faith to become dualistic and an intrinsic part of theology, which was by contrast what was done in the Christian East.

One way in which the West has begun recently to overturn the amoral approach to passion, is through the notion of emotional intelligence (Morrison 2012; Morrison and Singh 2009). Empirically, based on social science reporting of personal well-being, understanding how to construct rational emotions from a complex of feelings is now recognized to be of highest importance. It is often linked to 'mindfulness', which can be interpreted as awareness of the dispassionate unity of the constructive ends to which emotions can potentially be directed. In other words, emotional intelligence requires mindfulness to recognize the timeless end, and how constructive emotions are part of a unifying movement in time toward the eternal infinite horizon of absolute hope or tawhid (Carrol 2000).

What has not yet been adequately dwelt upon are the epistemological and ontological consequences of the central and highest importance now given to emotional intelligence. One

consequence is that constructive emotions are co-created by active human intentionality to direct passive feelings and divine energies or logoi constituting the purpose for human nature and individual hypostases, and how all logoi have an intrinsic unifying movement to enable constructive emotions to always potentially bring peace and well-being in fulfillment of obedience to divine purpose (Chodkiewicz 1993). Purpose is of divine origin and able to be known, attuned to and cooperated and co-creatively engaged with. For Orthodox Christianity this process is from the metaphysical perspective of the angelic realm, the incarnation of the Creator; and from the phenomenological perspective of human experience, deification of human nature or personal development to grow into the likeness of God (Staniloae 2003; Thurnberg 1995). The end of unity, the eternal infinite horizon of absolute hope, is personal communion within open-ended eternal and infinite love. For Eastern Orthodox Christianity, this is what is meant by participation in the Trinity of God—the interpersonal communion humans are called to participate in through grace as they grow into the likeness of God.

The unifying movement utilizing emotional intelligence and mindfulness is not however an individual activity. Intrinsic to unifying movement is that it is a responsibility carried out with others, and increasingly came to be known to be with all others, all creation including the angelic realm, and then also with the Creator (Knysh 2002). Eastern Orthodox Christianity defines five stages to the unifying process: (1) overcoming the division between people, symbolized by division between men and women; (2) overcoming division between wilderness or paradise and the inhabited or the civilized world, or in other words, sustainable environmental management to dwell within ecosystems with other creatures; (3) overcoming the divisions between earth and heaven, which means to recognize the intrinsic link to generations that have passed and yet to come through dwelling with present communities in the eternal infinite horizon of hope, knowing the unifying divine gift of life;

(4) overcoming the division between the material and immaterial, which means to be aware of and illuminated by guidance from the angelic hierarchy, and so to become aware of and to participate in the coming of the 'new creation'; and (5) the unity of creation with the Creator, which means to be deified through living the likeness of God, sharing divinely imparted wisdom and goodness, especially mercy, towards other creatures (Thunberg 1995).

Unifying movement is known through praxis: intellectually, emotionally, and bodily attuning to revealed purpose. Purpose is however revealed by guidance, given within a hierarchy. There is order in the unifying movement of tawhid. The order is however complex. All created hypostases, individuals or persons, and most fully the hypostases of composite human nature, are all relative microcosms of the universe of creation, or in other words images of the Creator who created the universe (Morrison 2012; Morrison dan Singh 2009). Therefore all individual creatures are relative centres for communion, and accordingly also mediators between God and creation, revealing and providing guidance about divine purpose (Thunberg 1995). Natural contemplation of creation provides guidance about purpose of things (Staniloae 2003; Twinch 1997). The use of symbolic language by the human composite hypostasis, with both a material bodily nature and immaterial intellect, provides guidance, though discernment is required to know what is truth and what is deceit (Knysh 2002). But to the extent human symbolic expression is part of a tradition that has proven itself to nurture mindfulness and emotional intelligence, there is a hierarchy of those in the tradition who are able to provide the guidance to others, by nurturing their growth to reach the same likeness of God. The hierarchy can be both formal and informal, and usually both. In Eastern Orthodox Christianity it is both formal in the institutional hierarchy, and informal in the potential universal prophetic priesthood of all, between which there is a dialectical mutually supportive movement. Beyond the guidance able to be provided

by any particular cultural tradition and the hierarchy of elders, both formal and informal, there is also the angelic hierarchy who provide guidance directly by illuminating the intellect. Once again, discernment is however required to ensure inspiration is known to be from angels rather than demons. To the extent there is however authentic illumination from the angelic hierarchy, cultural tradition and the human hierarchy, formal and informal, grows. Becoming aware of illumination from the angelic hierarchy is an advanced part of the unifying process (stage four).

The final stage (stage five) of the unifying process is deification or participation by grace in the divine energies of personal communion within the Creator, to fulfill the union with all the created realms (material and immaterial). This is to prefigure life in what will be the 'new creation'. It is to begin to live, to the extent it is possible in this world, the resurrected life that is the fulfillment of this world—tawhid. This provides the ultimate context from which to discern all truth and meaning, and hence epistemology.

Redefining Epistemology: A Tawhid-Based Paradigm and Its Critique of Modern Western Epistemology

The current dominant epistemology can be considered to have been given definitive form by Kant (Hart 2003; Nesteruk 2003). To outline how to establish a new epistemology based on tawhid therefore needs to critically engage with Kantian epistemology. But from a Kantian perspective of naturalistic monism, and also from a Augustinian perspective of philosophy and science as a 'handmaiden' for theology, it does not make sense to consider that philosophy can engage with the theological understanding intrinsic to tawhid. Nevertheless, from the perspective of tawhid as developed here in this paper, the presumption that philosophy and science cannot engage with tawhid is precisely the root cause of the problem. Philosophy and science need to be able to incorporate faith to add real dimensions of reality that only faith can open up. Within the current

dominant epistemological paradigm, faith is relegated to merely subjective belief systems. As long as this is accepted, then the current dominant paradigm is not able to be critiqued to the depth required. In critique of this assumption of the current dominant paradigm, it is pointed out that ever since the beginning of the Christian era, which has been maintained and many ways strengthened by the Islamic era, faith has been known to objectively add new dimensions to increase the rational coherence as well as the degree of comprehensive coverage of human experience of reality. Moreover, the ontological completeness brought by faith also results in completeness of the scope of epistemology to include: the role of emotions; pure reason; direct divine illumination, as well as empirical perception and conceptual construction based on it.

There are several characteristics of modern Western epistemology that a basis in tawhid changes. One is how quantification is understood. Associated with this is how essence is understood. Another is how evolution and development or progress are understood, which are associated with how sublimes or horizons are understood.

Creation in its diversity is constituted by multiple logoi or 'words of God'. The unity of creation is that all logoi are all words from the One God, and that the unifying movement is for creation—preeminently by the human creature—to reflect God back to Creation to serve Creation in the likeness of God, and by doing so to fulfill creation by deifying it and hence to make God incarnate in Creation—tawhid. Logoi are then the true essence of the universe. Number applies to numerating the diversity of logoi, which are intrinsically each unique and equally divine in the same source; each is of equal but different quality. Number then indexes the diversity of essential qualities. To perceive these qualities is beyond the senses and also discursive rationality, however the senses symbolically intuit it in the experience of the numinous in the material creation, and the discursive rationality can focus

attention of the mind to glimpse them through juxtaposing multiple perspectives using a variety of concepts (Morrison 2012). However the actual perception of them comes only from illumination directly from divine energies of grace to the intellectual centre of heart, mediated by angels (Staniloae 2003; Thurnberg 1995). Ibn Arabi also recognizes that this is the only adequate means of knowing essential truth (Chodkiewicz 1993). Such insight does not contradict the bodily intuition of the numinous, nor the rational understanding juxtaposing multiple concepts, but rather fulfills them and unifies and transcends them. This is the presence of tawhid. The current dominant paradigm of modern Western epistemology however does not recognize these essential qualities or logoi. Rather essences or qualities are considered to be derived abstractions socially constructed through use of symbolic language to enable bodily use of the defined qualities of material creation. In itself this is also true, but only partial and only derivative secondary essences, which most importantly, if focused upon, obstruct connection to the actual essences which are the link to the creative Will of God—logoi.

The inadequacy of the partiality of modern Western epistemology becomes very apparent when ontology is deduced as a ground for the use of the material reality. This is reified as force fields, where cause becomes abstracted and dissipated as an impersonal field, rather than as the creative Will of God as particular logoi. The impersonal force field defines causality however only to the degree it gives human power to control creation. This includes power over other humans to manipulate them, for example in the discipline of modern Western economics which models persons as self-interested maximizers of utility and then proceeds to manipulate or manage people accordingly due to the leverage the model provides over the actions of other people. The socially constructed abstract force fields provide an abstract ground for manipulation of creation for personal ends. This creates therefore conflict as there are competing

personal ends between people seeking to manipulate others and the rest of nature. Force fields assume that there is actually only one quality—the force field—with the variation in it given purely by the concentration and amounts of the energy or substance of the force field. Hence quantity is given priority over quality. Quality is seen merely as a secondary feature arising from the quantity of the energy or substance of the force field, for example income, producing the quality of rich or poor humans. The intrinsic harmony and beauty of true causality, due to all beings created by the One Creator, as intrinsically different yet of equal unquantifiable quality, for example the absolute uniqueness of each person, is not seen. Rather a bland force field allowing manipulation of resources is all that is seen.

The power of an explanation is considered to be given to the extent that force fields enable manipulation through understanding of causality. The energy or substance of the force field becomes a resource to be controlled. This is a utilitarian version of the ‘handmaiden’ role of philosophy and science Augustine envisaged, just as long as theology informs about the purpose for things, to ensure their appropriate moral use. But there is however a dark side to assuming knowledge brings power to control force fields for the use of things, even if for theologically determined true moral purpose. The dark side is the inevitable denial that arises due to the inherent uncertainty of knowledge. If the uncertainty is honestly admitted, the inability to control, especially for responsible moral ends, reveals clearly the inadequacy of such an epistemology (Hart 2003).

Therefore usually denial is chosen instead, so as to maintain a delusion of control and responsibility, for example how many cost benefit evaluations are often made. Moreover, when theologically defined purpose is not even sought to provide guide appropriate use of things, ontology often becomes even further falsified and abstracted through assuming that there is no moral purpose or responsibility other than a negotiated social contract to minimize what is assumed to be a tragic sublime of violence and

inevitable failure or 'eternal recurrence', where power over others is correctly seen to eventually fail as some more powerful being other than oneself eventually wins (Hart 2003). It is to the credit of postmodern ontology and epistemology to have made the implicit nihilism and violence explicit. This makes it possible to address it. Sadly however, many postmodernists appear to actually believe the tragedy they have logically and correctly deduced is at the heart of modern Western society. What is required once inherent nihilism and uncertainty is recognized, is to relook at the assumptions of how essence and quality are defined. This requires recovering and developing the theological vision of unifying movement or tawhid (Morrison 2012; Morrison and Singh 2009; Nesteruk 2008).

Instead of addressing the uncertainty and nihilism inherent in modern Western ontology, there is commonly an attempt to use the amoral sublime of violence to rationalize evolutionary processes and their manipulation. This ideology started with Hegel who tried to include theology into amoral naturalistic monism outlined by Kant. Development and progress was mythologized to occur due to the passionate participation of the Creator within creation. Instead of ensuring creation became understood theologically as an intrinsic unity, as developed by the East, Hegel assumed that development and evolution occur due to an intrinsic violence, resulting in the view that manipulation through violence brings the possibility of promoting development and evolution. Sadly this policy brought multiple genocides during the 20th century, and continues to prompt strategic wars till this day.

The answer is to create the cultural conditions for the idea of tawhid to resonate to guide human choice. This surely requires a simplification of lifestyle and decrease in resource use so that all creatures are respected for their intrinsic divinely constituted qualities. It requires establishing communities dwelling in peace and contentment with emotional intelligence, through guidance produced by cultural traditions that nurture understanding of

mindfulness. For this to develop to regenerate culture and nurture a milieu for true development of unifying movement to heal societies and ecosystems, recognition of the angelic hierarchy illuminating people is necessary, or else cultural traditions are not able to develop. There is therefore a crucial need to recognize this aspect in any adequate new paradigm for epistemology. The urgency of this can be seen in how youth are desperate in their search for wisdom and meaning to get out of the nihilism of modern Western culture. Unless there is a hierarchy for them to be guided by, disordered and unguided radicalism is the inevitable continued consequence.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual discernment transcends cultures and traditions, as does emotional intelligence. They are the capability to attune to and participate with the unifying movement of tawhid. Participation by people in the unifying movement of tawhid is however guided by cultural traditions, and the insight gained by people who are participating in the unifying movement with spiritual discernment and emotional intelligence guides the development of cultural traditions and their adaptation to changing environments. The paradigms of epistemology within cultural traditions are therefore necessary to provide foundations for the guidance provided by cultural traditions. As always, this is not imposed by the One God calling and providing all means for all to participate in tawhid, but rather is an invitation requiring free choice and hence personal development. Therefore history is not a linear progression of unifying movement, and especially not the Hegelian myth of a violent path strewn with the wreckage of increasingly improved-upon cultural traditions. Inspired traditions in both Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Islam tell of rather continual mercifully given opportunities for all people to personally answer the call given to all through guidance provided by their cultural traditions,

and directly through illumination from the angelic hierarchy. But equally, there is also the responsibility to guide others within the hierarchy of cultural traditions, and to work to ever develop further cultural traditions, as necessary.

For several centuries, there has been a focus on developing the technological efficacy of cultural traditions, which is admirable and surely a divine blessing. However it has been done in an unbalanced way, resulting in losing sight of the central purpose of tawhid. The imbalance was unfortunately made into a tradition through modern Western epistemology. The error of this has been become increasingly clear, from both with Western philosophical traditions, and also from extant cultural traditions that have successfully resisted the imbalance and adoption of the modern Western epistemology. Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Islam are two traditions which have maintained intact a balanced epistemology, to continue to see the divine purpose of tawhid. There is now the historical opportunity for both of these traditions to point to the universal truth of tawhid as the true basis for all authentic cultural traditions, and also the basis for dialogue between all cultural traditions. This potentially opens up the opportunity to not only correct modern and postmodern Western epistemology, but also vitalize the unifying movement of all cultural traditions, in obedience to divine purpose. Even though it cannot be expected that there will be a complete revolution of cultural traditions and there versal of the maladaptation wrought by application of the modern and postmodern Western epistemology, it can be realistically hoped for that a seed for a furtherance and deepened unity of humanity canbe planted, as a another step in the unifying movement of tawhid.

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