Science Merely a Tool for Islam
(A Perspective)

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Abstract
Science is seen from different perspectives. Most scientists see it as a necessary tool for the development of human society; a few of them and a high percentage of the populace, including most upholders of religions, perceive it as threat to nature and humanity. From the Islamic perspective, it is a tool for studying nature, so that the knowledge can be used for humanity’s spiritual and material benefit. Several verses of the Qur’an remind human beings to investigate nature in order to attain al-tawhid (knowledge of the unity of Allah). From this perspective, the perception that science and technology should be used mainly to satisfy the materialistic needs and desires of human society is misguided. A Muslim scientist, who is conscious of the message of Islam, must aim to be a trustworthy light bearer who, by studying the natural world with the Qur’an and the sunnah as his guide, can lead humanity towards faith, a peaceful and developed society, and eternal salvation.

Keywords: Science, misconceptions, man’s mind, human society, Muslim scientist, and Tawhid.

Introduction: Conceptions about Science
Today without doubt there are varying conceptions about science. While from the perspective of most scientists, especially from the west, the thinking has been that science, and technology are tools for bringing about advancement/development to the world as a whole, thus making the world a more civilized and comfortable material place to dwell in. Some of the scientists and novices hold slightly different view in that they perceive science as creating more troubles than the derivable benefits therein. Among the religious circles opinions also differ, at times positive while in most cases negative. The reason for this may partly be due to the mischievous use to which science was often been subjected to by those who wish to control the world under their passion using science as a tool for...
their hidden mission and agenda, and partly, it may also be because those religious faithful do not really understand the relationship that exists between Islam as a Din- way of life- and nature (planets, mountains, oceans, plants, animals, sun, moon, stars, etc.), which is an inseparable integral part of Islam itself. A likely similitude between nature and Islam is the relationships that exist between the organs and the system of a single body. Nature is one of the ‘organs’ that exist within a ‘system’ of Islam. Therefore, studying the nature to understand its essence, its composition, its functions, the relationship among every existence, its applicability, its manipulation for possible human benefits; connotes studying Islam in order to appreciate the perfectness, the wonderful designs both macroscopic and microscopic, made by the superior being known to the Muslims as Allah (s.w.t), and thus enhancing submission to Him. The following verses of the Qur’an (13: 2-4) explain:

“Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then, He rose above (Istawa) the (‘Arsh) Throne. He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running (its course) for a term appointed. He manages and regulates all affairs; He explains the ayat in detail that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.”

[The Qur’an, 13:2]

“And it is He Who spread out the earth, and placed therein firm mountains and rivers and of every kind of fruit He made ZAWJAYN ITHNAYN (two in pairs). He brings the night as a cover over the day. Verily, in these things, there are ayat (signs) for people who reflect. And in the earth are neighboring tracts and gardens of vines, and green crops (fields), and date palms, growing into two or three from a single stem root, or otherwise, watered with the same water; yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat. Verily, in these things there are ayat (signs) for the people who understand.”

[The Qur’an, 13: 3-4]

Therefore Islam views researching these natural creatures as a means by which:

a. Man could see them as signs pointing to the existence of THE SUPREME BEING- Allah (s.w.t.);
b. Man could reflect and get closer in worship to the One who creates him and other creatures;
c. Man could interact with nature to utilize what benefits him therefrom.

Definitely there are a lot of scientists who do not see scientific researches as discussed above, their sole aim is to:

b. Enrich their knowledge and understanding about certain things which could be matters, substances, organisms, objects, etc.
c. Derive products that are of benefits for human use, thus bringing about development and advancements in human society.

Islam and science in brief: the philosophy of science

Philosophy is the systematic study of the foundations of human knowledge with an emphasis on the conditions of its validity and finding answers to ultimate questions such as: Which, When, Where, How and so on. Philosophy has also been defined as “thinking about thinking.” At the same time, as expressed by Greek etymology, philosophy is the love of wisdom.

Islamic philosophy of science

The Muslims’ inspiration for the study of nature comes straight from the Qur’an. The Qur’an specifically and repeatedly asks Muslims to investigate systematically, the natural phenomena, not simply as a vehicle for understanding nature but also as a means for getting close to God.

In chapter 10 of the Qur’an, verses 5-6, for example, the Qur’an states:

“It is He Who made the sun a shining thing and the moon as a light and measured out for it stages that you might know the number of years and the reckoning. Allah did not create this but in truth. He explains the ayat in detail for people who have knowledge. Verily, in the alternation of the night and the day and in all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth are ayat for those who have taqwa.”

[The Qur’an, 10:5 - ]

The Qur’an also devotes about one-third of its verses to describing the virtues of reason. Scientific inquiry, based on reason, is thus seen in Islam as a form of
worship. Reason and revelation are complementary and integrated methods for the pursuit of truth.

**What Islam expects about Man and his environment**

Al Islam is a natural din (civilization) whose knowledge encompasses everything in the present world and without being ignorant of the affairs of the next world. And Allah says in suratul Al-An’am (6: 37-39):

“And they said: Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord’ Say: Allah is certainly able to send down a sign, but most of them know not. There is not a moving creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are Umam like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, and then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered. Those that reject Our ayat are deaf and dumb in darkness. Allah sends astray whom He wills, and He guides on the straight path whom He wills.”

[The Qur’an, 6: 37 - 39]

The above verses, among several others, give Muslims the confidence to dabble into any field of academic endeavour or research without any sense of inferiority, though he must seek for knowledge faithfully and master it to the ultimate level of conviction.

Allah Has indeed created Man and all he will need to sustain existence on earth, such as plants animal of various classes, mountains, shelters, ocean etc., so He said to Adam (a.s.) in surat Al Baqarah (2: 35):

“And We said: "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight, of things therein wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the Zalimin (wrongdoers)”. 

[The Qur’an, 2:35]

Yet He has not prevented him from interacting with other creatures, though with caution. In the above verse, Prophet Adam (a.s) was permitted by Allah to enjoy all the fruits and pleasures of the garden, but he was cautioned not to dare a particular tree, otherwise he will be a wrong doer.

The possible inferences deducible from the verse are that:

a. A lot of things were made halal (permissible) for Man and little had been made haram (forbidden);

b. Man has been permitted to interact with his environment to a large extent, but certainly there are some restrictions placed on him, and

c. If man dabbles into the restricted; he will certainly become a mischief doer.

The summary is simply that man can research into all available in his environment, living or non-living, and make use of whatever benefits him thereof, but he must not dabble into any research that will bring harm unto him and all other members of the community, such as all the above mentioned creatures. If he does so, then, he is a mischief doer on earth.

Any individual, or nation or civilization, therefore, that is inclined towards researching into, and utilizing thereof, the products, of what brings harm unto humanity and his environment is simply to be seen as being mischievous.

**Scientific procedures**

Scientists invent most of what man utilizes by making deep thoughts, then build up their thoughts gradually over period of time, through experiments, until their hypotheses became theory, and their thoughts became materials. Some few examples are given below to illustrate the application of science as a tool to unravel hidden treasures in nature.

**a. Pharmacy**

In the collections of Imam Bukhari, ‘The book of medicine’, chapter 79, Abu Huraira (r.a.) narrated that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “Allah has not sent down an illness without sending down a cure for it.” Therefore, in nature, there are cures for diseases. The pharmacists make extractions from plants (figures 1a-f) and isolate the active compounds responsible for curing certain ailment in people. Then they proceed to synthesize the active compound in the laboratory, considering the chemical structure of the isolated compound. Behold, so long as the correct structure of the isolated compound is synthesized into drug; the drug will Insha’Allah function for curing the same ailment in people.
Now, from the above it is clear that:

i. The scientists only studied the natural compound embedded in the plant, and replicated its prototype, and it worked for curing the ailment.

ii. This scientific activity only confirms that there are medicines occurring in natures, which were not made by any Man but, which ordinarily pre-exist.

iii. The undeniable fact that these medicines pre-exist connotes that there must have been somebody responsible for their make.

iv. The result of the scientific research in the example at hand, only confirms the truth about what ‘certain being’ (Allah) has embedded in nature (this time around, the plant).

v. Science and technology, therefore, was utilized as a tool to discover and confirm the truth and benefits about nature, and thus the maker of nature (nature being an integral part of Islam).

vi. If the above listed points are correct, then the questions that should agitate minds may include: Who?, What?, When? Where? etc. about this pre-existing BEIGN.

These kinds of mind agitating questions are supposed to serve as guides that would lead man to his sole creator, ALLAH (s.w.t). And He says in the holy Qur’an, suratul Al- Baqarat (2:186):

“And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad concerning Me, then answer them), I am indeed near (to them by My knowledge). I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright.”

[The Qur’an, 6:186]

This may not be so for scientists who are contented with the positive results obtained from their research findings, as they have been able to obtain their “Eureka” (Greek word meaning “I have found it”). Whereas their “eurekas” are supposed to be signs for them signaling to the existence of the unique
BEING – ALLAH (s.w.t.), who had perfectly made all what they are “Eurekalizing.” Thus, the holy Qur’an speaks again in suratul Fussilat (Q.41:53);

“We will show them Our signs in the universes, and within themselves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord, that He is a Witness over all things.”

[The Qur’an, 41:53]

b. Fabrics
In order for human being to cover their nakedness and appear beautiful and handsome, plants that produce cotton wool were among the natural creatures. In the holy Qur’an Allah (s.w.t.) called the attention of the children of Adam (a.s.) to cover their nakedness and adorn themselves. Let us read the verse below in suratul Al-A’raf (7: 26):

“O Children of Adam! We have bestowed Libas (raiment) upon you to cover yourselves with, and as Rish (adornment); and the Libas (raiment) of Taqwa that is better. Such are among the ayat of Allah, that they may remember.”

[The Qur’an, 7: 26]

Observing the above verse carefully revealed that, Allah (s.w.t.) did mention raiment (clothes) but not cotton, whereas there are no plants that produce clothes directly, but cotton. Being that as it may, it is expected that man carry out some efforts to render the cotton wool to cloths and then to clothes through necessary processes. This process is nothing other than a scientific and technological process, thus using science as a tool to further establish the Islamic facts and also to benefit human.

For example, stevia, also known as sweet leaf, or sugar leaf is a genus of about 150 species of herbs and shrubs, a member of the family compositae and a native to Paraguay.

Scientific findings on stevia
Strauss reported that stevia is a non-caloric sweetener and that the sweet compounds pass through the digestive process of the body without chemically breaking down, therefore, making it a safe food substance for consumption by people who need to regulate their blood glucose level.

From most of the previous work, stevia has been reported to have no adverse effect on humans. The leaves could be eaten fresh or when dried and it could be boiled in tea to release the sweetener. It has been used for centuries by the Guarani Indians of Paraguay, where the Plant originated from, as sweeteners for tea.

Sweetener content of the leaves
A zero-calorie sweetener which contains high percentage of stevioside than other glycosides is extracted from stevia leaves. The steviol glycosides are responsible for the sweet taste of the leaves of the stevia plant. Earlier reports revealed that an extract of one or more of the glycosides may be up to 300 times sweeter than sugar. They are heat-stable, pH-stable, and do not ferment. It would be observed from the three examples given above that science was utilized as a tool to unravel the natural products embedded in plants.

c. Food: sweetener from stevia
Major source of human foods comprises both plants and animals, one of the reasons why these were created was to serve, along with other factors, as human sustenance on earth; it is therefore, the responsibility of man to search and utilize what benefits him therefrom. And Allah (SWT) says in the holy Qur’an suratul Ar-Rad (13: 4).

“And in the earth are neighboring tracts, and gardens of vines, and green crops (fields), and date palms, growing into two or three from a single stem root, or otherwise, watered with the same water; yet some of them; We make moreexcellent than others to eat. Verily, in these things, there are ayat (signs) for the people who understand.”

[The Qur’an, 13:14]

Islam, being the complete way of life, was prescribed by Allah (s.w.t.) for humanity; Allah, His messengers and the holy Qur’an constitute the source of guidance for mankind. Science is only an entity and a means by which Islam appeals to human reasoning and emotion, through the Qur’an so that man can find guidance and submit to the sole creator Allah (swt) in worship. This is simply because the essence of creation is to worship Allah (s.w.t.), as stated in the holy Qur’an suratul Adhdhariyat (51: 56) thus;

“And I created not the Jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me.”
All scientific discoveries, therefore, are revelations from God to further convince man about his Lord, just in a similar way the people of the past requested the messengers to produce signs/proofs before their message (Lailaha illa Allah) could be accepted. Upon the manifestation of Allah’s signs, some accepted the faith, while some still rejected it. The Qur’an constitutes the ultimate sign. In it are clear signs and statements of conviction, for people who are ready to receive guidance: Suratul Al-Baqara (2:2):

“That is the Book in which there is no Rayb, guidance for the Muttaqin.”

A Muslim scientist is successful, because he is well guided by the divine revelation, thus, his researches are within the limits of the almighty Allah. With him, the people are at rest for the reason that, his scientific inventions are for a constructive rather than for a destructive purpose. The scientist who lacks faith, on the other hand, poses threats to the life of the people because he is not being guided by the divine book, al Qur’an. The ‘code of ethics in scientific research’ often being employed in research work has its limitations, since it depends on the relative definitions of what is perceived as good or bad in certain communities and among certain people. What is seen as been correct man may not be good by the perspective of the divine guidance and vice versa. So, at times he dabbled into researches that later can result into destruction of the human community. Few examples include the genetic manipulations between incompatible classes of organisms, human cloning, and so on. Moreover, history will not forget the role played by the American scientists under the U.S. Public Health Services (PHS) as they subjected human beings, the African-Americans, referred to as the Tuskegee, to research tests by deceits. The research was a follow-up study on Syphilis; it was injected into these Negroes in Macon County, Alabama in 1932. This research lasted for forty years between 1932 to 1972. The people were deceived by promising them the aim was to carry out free test for ‘bad blood’. They were left untreated for several years, even after these scientists discovered Penicillin as a cure medicine for Syphilis. As a result, the people died one after the other, while the disease kept on transmitting from one generation to the other, being a sexually transmitted type. This inhuman act was not only committed in Macon County; it was also carried out in Guatemala. This second crime against humanity came up again, just last week (Last week of October, 2010) and the news read thus, with the head line:

From Tuskegee to Guatemala via Nuremberg

News broke last week that the U.S. government purposefully exposed hundreds of men in Guatemala to syphilis in ghoulish medical experiments conducted during the late 1940s. As soon as the story got out, President Barack Obama phoned President Alvaro Colom of Guatemala to apologize. Colom called the experiments “an incredible violation of human rights.” Colom also says his government is studying whether it can bring the case to an international court. Had these scientists professed Islam as their way of life and adhere to the teachings and ethics therein, they would not have ventured into such inhuman and unethical research, more so that similar research materials, of the same class Mammalia, e.g. Ratus ratus (Rat); Oryctolagus cuniculus (Rabbit), etc., could be easily sought and utilized instead. Therefore, when people possess knowledge but lack divine guidance, we should expect misapplications, social disorder, oppressions, mischievous acts, etc.

Conclusion

Although, the positive efforts and achievements of these scientists are in some cases appreciable, yet, how excellent would it have been had these research activities been divinely guided, and lead them to the path of Al Islam.

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REFERENCES


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