

## Modernity and Atheism: The Impact of Western Philosophies on Muslim Youth and Critique from an Islamic Perspective

Sajad Ali

Independent Researcher, 1601 Manazel 1 Mankhool, Bur Dubai, 00000,  
Dubai United Arab Emirates.

Email: [sajjadmallah776@gmail.com](mailto:sajjadmallah776@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1431-8095>

### ABSTRACT:

The topic of the present research paper is the phenomenon of increasing religious scepticism and atheism among Muslim youth, the symptomatic reaction to the hegemonic confrontation with Western modernity. It assumes that this trend is not chiefly a theological renunciation but rather a wider psychosocial restructuring towards a secular world of materialism, radical individualism and constraining conception of scientific rationality. The research adopts a multidisciplinary approach, examining historical, socio-educational, and digital processes that allow transferring and internalizing this worldview. The article provides a systematized critique in an Islamic sense, as modern atheism is a form of contemporary shirk (idolatry), which propels created notions, including the sovereign self or materialist scientism, to supremacy. It also dismantles the epistemological constraints of secular reason that is found outside of revelation. The main argument is that Islam youth atheism is a symptom of the unresolved tension between the holistic paradigm of Tawhid and the disintegrating modernity worldview. Therefore, a good response should not be apologetic but provide a proactive, intellectually sound and holistic alternative that tackles the intellectual, educational and psychological aspects of this crisis thus reasserting the narrative of a self-assured, modern Islamic identity.

Keywords: Modernity, Atheism, Muslim Youth, Islamic Critique, Western Philosophy, Intellectual Crisis

### 1.Introduction: The Contemporary Crisis in Perspective:

#### 1.1. Introduction Situation: The situation of globalized digital age and the phenomenon of the religious doubt in the youth of Muslims:

The 21 st century has brought with it a new wave of a more connected and accessible information, which has essentially transformed the social and intellectual condition of Muslim dominated societies. In this globalized digital era, an apparent yet complicated trend has been witnessed: increasing rates of religious uncertainty and questioning, as well as in some instances, blatant atheism among the Muslim youth. It is not a monolithic movement but a complex experience, which is usually lived in secret or formulated anonymously in the forums in the Internet, and which is highly charged with the battle against worldviews. The online space, specifically the social media, streaming services and online communities is a potent outlet of secular humanist discourses, scientific materialism, and criticism of religious dogma, where traditional belief systems are subjected to a novel and more rigorous form of critique<sup>1</sup>. It is an environment that generates a distinctive crisis of authority where religious principles are pitted against other epistemic claims in an open market of ideas without boundaries.

#### 1.2. Problem Statement: Questioning, skepticism, and atheism as one not as individual tendencies but as a consequence of a larger historical and intellectual experience:

The disposition to consider this increase in skepticism as a side effect of globalization or personal ethical failure is not analytically adequate. Rather, it should be interpreted as a modern sign of a more age-old historical and intellectual collision between the Muslim world and the project of Western

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modernity. Modernity as a period and as a specific mode of worldview (Weltanschauung) is constructed on the pillars of secularism, sovereign rationality, and individualism, and a linear sense of progress that frequently conflicts with the traditional religious cosmologies<sup>2</sup>. The new generation of skepticism among the young people, then, is the most recent installment in a series of identity and belief negotiation that was catalyzed by the imposition of this new modern episteme by the colonialists and which continues to exist today on the basis of contemporary neo-colonial orders in education, media, and culture. It is one important point of departure of what has been described by one scholar Talal Asad as the way of defining the secular and the religious in contemporary life.<sup>3</sup>

## **1.3. Research Question & Thesis:**

How has Western modernity shaped the ascendancy of atheistic thinking among Muslim youth and what is an all-inclusive Islamic critique and answer?

The two research questions that steer this article are two inter-locking questions: First, how have the worldview of Western modernity, by what particular historical, socio-educational, and digital mechanisms, enabled the conditions of atheistic thought to become entrenched in the minds of Muslim youths? Second, to go beyond the refutation of the theologians, what is an all-inclusive, intellectually sound, and constructive Islamic critique of the philosophical foundation of the modern atheists, and what successful replies can be presented? The main argument of the paper is that the phenomenon of atheism among modern Muslim young people is most appropriately seen as a psychosocial manifestation of the collision between the holistic and God-driven paradigm of Tawhid (Islamic monotheism) and the deconstructing and anthropocentric worldview of the Western modernity. Therefore, an Islamic response has to be holistic in that it does not merely focus on the intellectual (aqli) aspect but also educational (tarbawi), psychological (nafsi) and communal (ijtima'i) causes of this crisis.

## **1.4. Scope and Methodology: Provide an outline of the framework of the article historical analysis, modern mechanisms, philosophical critique and future solutions:**

To answer these questions, this article uses a multidisciplinary approach by integrating historical analysis, conceptual philosophy and sociological observation. It is analytical as opposed to ethnographic in its scope and attempts to follow the family lineage of ideas and what they are currently doing. The analysis is carried out in four logical sections. It starts by examining the historical development of the colonial epistemic rupture that set the Islamic and modern Western worldviews as opposing to each other. It subsequently analyzes the modern processes, specifically digital media and secular education, that dispense modern secular assumptions. The substance of the argument is a systematic philosophical and theological reproach on the part of an Islamic point of view, dismantling the assumptions of contemporary atheism and scientism. Last but not least, the article ends with future-looking solutions and suggests strategic responses on the planes of intellectual discussion, reform of education, and community building.

## **1.5. Research Importance: Overcoming an important void in the present-day Islamic discourse by going beyond the denunciation to organized dialog:**

This research is important because, it is an effort to fill an acute gap in the modern Islamic discourse on atheism. Much of the response, as it is currently expressed, be it in popular preaching, or in polemical literature, stops short of the more fundamental philosophical and psychological attraction of atheist stories, at the point of theological denunciation (takfir) or apologia. The current paper seeks to take the debate a notch higher through a methodological encounter with modernity as a philosophical opponent. It aims to offer scholars, teachers and community leaders a unified paradigm on how to comprehend the challenge as not an outside corruption but an interior intellectual and spiritual crisis of such magnitude that requires a renewal (tajdid) of Islamic ideas and teaching that could be confident, compassionate and able to address the realities of the contemporary Muslim condition.

## **2.Literature Review and Conceptual Framework:**

### 2.1. Defining Key Concepts:

There are three main concepts that are connected and are the base of this study. First, Modernity is not only seen as a time frame but as a dominant worldview or as a social imaginary that has certain pillars: secularism, where religion is relegated to the private sphere; rationalism where empirical reason is taken as the main arbiter of truth; individualism where the autonomous self is considered the main unit of society; and a teleological vision of progress with its material, technological dimensions<sup>4</sup> (1). This set of conceptualization creates the philosophical background in which the religious doubt of the present day is represented.

Second, "Atheism" here is specifically used to refer to its contemporary Western-inspired versions, commonly known as New Atheism or scientific materialism. It is not merely the lack of faith in God but an active commitment to a naturalistic worldview that rejects the supernatural a priori and tends to believe that religion is the irrational and destructive power. This is unlike historical or philosophical skepticism found in other traditions.

Third, the Islamic Perspective that the critique is based on is based on the doctrine of Tawhid (the Oneness of God). This is not monotheism but an all-encompassing metaphysical doctrine, which states that unity, sovereignty, and transcendence of God (Allah) is the source of all being, value, and knowledge. Tawhid means a unified reality in which revelation, intellect and nature are in harmony, which makes a direct epistemological and ontological challenge against the worldview of the divided, secular-humanist modernity<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.2. Review of 2010-2012 Scholarship:

The scholarly discourse cuts across a number of disciplines. Anthropologist Talal Asad in his article of the same title, **Formations of the Secular (2003)**, provides a basis on which religious and secular category can be critically examined which is applicable in contemporary Muslim societies<sup>6</sup>. This is supplemented by sociological literature such as those of Riaz Hassan (**Inside Muslim minds, 2008**)<sup>7</sup>, who is able to give empirical data of religious belief and practice.

Regarding the psychology of doubt in particular, such scholars as Amarnath Amarasingam<sup>8</sup> have edited books, including **Religion and the New Atheism (2010)**<sup>9</sup>, which analyzes the socio-psychological appeal of doubt, and scholars of Islamic studies like Marta W. Dabrowska have also examined the ideas of faith crisis in the context of Muslim converts and born-Muslims living in the West.

Within the context of the modern Islamic thinking, there are mixed answers. Epistemology and hermeneutics have been critically addressed by reformist minds such as Abdolkarim Soroush, whereas the traditionalist minds tend to consider the theological defense. There is a vast gap in the literature that would systematically fill a powerful philosophical critique of the principles of modern atheism with proactive, tradition-based approaches to intellectual and spiritual revitalization to which this article will give a reply.

## 3. Historical and Intellectual Preconditions: The Imposition of Colonists:

### 3.1. The Colonial Encounter as Epistemic Disruption:

The contemporary experience of the Muslim world and the West, which was hastened during European colonialism since the 18th century, was not just a military and political conquest. It was a radical epistemic shift--a radical break in the manner in which the very generation, validation, and interpretation of knowledge was done. Western philosophy and science were not presented as impartial and universally useful instruments by colonial powers, but they were used as an instrument of hegemony. This is what has been termed as the coloniality of knowledge whereby the European epistemology was put forth as the only, superior way of rationality and progress and the devaluation and marginalization of indigenous Islamic knowledge systems through systematic means.

This was a deliberate plan of control. Colonialism was supposed to bring total chaos in colonized societies, alienating people to their histories, language and their thinking to the world.<sup>10</sup> The establishment of the western modes of education, law codes, and administration did not only aim at controlling, but also changing the mind of the colonized. It introduced a flow of superiority in which anything that relates to the culture of the colonizer, its secular, post-Enlightenment worldview, was considered progressive and modern and the local tradition, such as Islamic intellectual tradition, was seen

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as backward and superstitious.<sup>11</sup> This brought about an intellectual and psychological malaise that had to be resolved through the root of civilized society, which was to resist a foreign paradigm, which purported to be universal, and at the same time weakened their civilizational plants.

### 3.2. The Artificial Faith vs. Reason Binary:

One of the least significant postulates of this enforced paradigm was the creation of an intrinsic and antagonistic opposition of faith and reason. Western thought of the post-Enlightenment period which was conditioned by particular historical conflicts with ecclesiastical authority tended to promote empirical, secular reason as the sole legitimate way to obtain truth, and religious conviction to the inner world of individual sentiment or irrational dogma.<sup>12</sup>

This radical contrast was much alien to the Islamic tradition of the classical intellectual. According to Islamic philosophy and theology, there was no contradiction between Aql (intellect or reason) and Naql (divine revelation expressed in the Quran and Sunnah). They rather were seen as complementary, both being offspring of One God (Allah). Classical thinkers, such as al-Ghazali to Ibn Taymiyyah, worked on the idea that there can never exist a real, irreconcilable contradiction between the sound reason and the authentic revelation. Observable differences were sorted out by a prudent intellectualism--by placing scripture in context, by understanding the hopelessness of human reason, or by admitting that some things of the unseen (ghayb) are beyond the reach of the empirical prospectus.<sup>13</sup>

This alien discourse was imposed on the discussions of Muslims by the colonial importation of the faith vs. reason dichotomy. It pitted the great, internal Islamic discussions of the connection and proportion between Aql and Naql (that between the rationalist, Mu'tazila among others, and the other theological schools) into a civilizational opposition between modernity (synonymous with Western reason) and tradition (synonymous with blind faith).<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3. The Rainbow of Early Muslim Reactions.

Faced with this civilizational crisis and the sense of overt powerlessness of Muslim political authority, thinkers throughout the Muslim world devised differing answers that are still present in the modern discourse.

**Traditionalist/Rejectionist Response:** This school of thought saw the inflow of Western knowledge and values as a poison and a direct challenge to the Islamic identity and religion. Promoting cultural and intellectual seclusion, the adherents of this school focused on slavish obedience to tradition (taqlid), reconstruction of practice against alleged novelties (bid'ah), and in many cases, political opposition. They maintained their approach of preservation by making boundaries, and absenting the epistemological assumptions of modernity as being inconsistent with Islam.

**Modernist/Accommodationist Response:** Contrary to expectations, modernist reformists attempted to appease and absorb the virtues of the west to restore Muslim cultures. Heroic figures such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) of South Asia and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh of the Arab world put in a case to show that Islam and modern science, reason and progress were not irreconcilable. They promoted ijihad (independent legal reasoning) and refuted blind taqlid, organized new schools that taught religious and modern sciences, and attempted to redefine Islamic teachings to conform to the modern western ideals such as rationalism and democracy.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless in their sincere effort to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam certain modernists were tempted to internalise the very secular presumptions of the colonial view of the world at times subordinating Islamic texts to either modern scientific theories or rationalist principles in the same way that they were accusing of primacy of Aql.

**The Search for a Third Way:** The polarization between complete rejection and uncritical accommodation emphasized the fact that a more subtle way needs to be found. The new third way aims to

have a critical interaction with modernity which is neither a backlash to isolation nor a loss of intellectual sovereignty. It involves asserting the Islamic authenticity- through an appeal to the integrative classical model of 'Aql and Naql'- and at the same time, an assertive and critical intellectual approach towards modern thinking. This strategy does not take as face value Western epistemological hegemony but exposes it to challenge within the context of an Islamic frame, in an attempt to reappropriate agency of determining what is meant by progress, knowledge, and a thriving life.

#### **4.Modern Channels of Influence: The Process of Ideas Transmission:**

##### **4.1. The Social Media and Digital Ecosystem:**

The new digital age has formed the strongest and most extensive platform of propagating secular and atheist worldviews to Muslim youth. This power is achieved not by the imposition of the colonial era in the top-down manner but through individualized engagement that is based on algorithms. Social networks and content apps such as YouTube, Instagram, Reddit and Tik Tok use algorithms that are intended to encourage the highest user engagement, which frequently encourages provocative, skeptical, or counter-narrative information that questions conventional wisdom.<sup>16</sup> This is an echo chamber or filter bubble effect, in which a young person expressing interest in philosophical questions might have their first query added to an automated content filtering system, which then filters out human-curated content and systematically promotes secularism, scientific materialism and skepticism towards religion.

The internet promotes high involvement in online community beyond passive consumption. On platforms like Reddit such as r/exmuslim or YouTube channels focused on so-called skepticism, there are forums where they can recognize their doubts without the fear of social punishment. These spaces are not only providing an argument but also emotional support and a second identity, in place of traditional community ties, a new identity of belonging to an international, digitally-native community, one where skeptic thought is not only tolerated but also encouraged- frequently in the form of a challenge to accepted power.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the unceasing flow of influencer contents, advertising materials and entertainment media on these platforms naturalizes lifestyles based on hyper-individualism, consumerism, and the prioritization of personal desire, which is an obvious, desirable alternative to religiously-infused ways of life.

##### **4.2. Supremacy of Non-religious Educational Paradigms:**

Formal learning has been often ignored but it is a very important channel of secular assumptions. The education systems in most of the Muslim dominated countries are a remnant of the colonial era, which is based on imported European systems that entrench a basic distinction between secular and religious knowledge. The curriculum is conventionally segregated with science, mathematics, and social studies classes dedicated to teaching the facts, and the separate, often peripheral, Islamic studies classes dedicated to teaching the values or the morals. This framework segregation informs students implicitly that empirical science has a monopoly on objective truth, whereas religion is subjective, personal, and does not pertain to the material world in any way.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, prestige is highly connected with western educational qualifications. European or North American university degrees are not just academic accomplishments, but potent indicators of social standing, business skills, and being a citizen of the world. To receive such education, one has to be exposed to an intellectual atmosphere in which the secular-humanist culture of the world is the default position and is not being challenged. It is possible to inject into the process the belief that intellectualized sophistication and professional achievement are inevitably associated with the need to move towards -or at least find comfort in-an intellectualized viewpoint. And it is enhanced because mainstream education has a lack of critical Islamic epistemology. Students are also seldom instructed on the way classical Islamic thought interacted with philosophy, science, and reason, which means that they are given little intellectual preparation to be able to critically analyze or synthesize contemporary secular knowledge in an Islamic context.

##### **4.3. Globalization of Culture and Psychological Motives:**

The cultural globalization soft power provides the secular worldview in the most attractive version: entertainment and aspirational identity. The mass media of pop culture Hollywood movies, streaming shows, music, influencers of celebrities are a potent infiltrator of humanistic secularism. Stories that exalt

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individual freedom, romantic love as the supreme good and success in terms of wealth and fame are always aired as common-sense standards. In these narratives, there are seldom any positive, religious figures with good lives, and the writing of the culture has led to a script, where faith is equated with being irrelevant or offensive.

In this, proclaiming atheism or agnosticism may be embraced as an apparent sign of intellectual refinement and a cosmopolitan status. To certain young people, it can be a cultural badge; that one is an educated, rational and member of a global modern elite, not of a parochial or traditional local community. This relates to a strong psychological motivation, the appeal of a worldview that will guarantee ultimate personal freedom. The secular discourse of non-conformity to external moral imperative is strongly forceful in the society where the religious law and communal authority can be felt stifling, oppressive, or hypocritical. It also provides the model of self-construction and release of perceived archaic entrapment, and specifically responds to a longing to have personal autonomy and authority over life and body.<sup>19</sup> The combination of cultural appeal and mental promise is what makes secular-atheistic story a strong force behind forming the current identity of Muslim youth.

### **5. An Islamic Philosophical Critique: Deconstruction of contemporary Atheism:**

#### **5.1. Reframing Theology: Atheism as a Shirk:**

The classical Islamic criticism transcends considering modern atheism as a disbelief (kufr) to the diagnosis of being a modern form of shirk the association of partners with God, the prime sin in Islam. This redefinition states that there is no passive lack of belief but an active false worship of atheism. The refusal of the ultimate reality of God is not that the human need of an object of ultimate concern is withdrawn, but it is projected onto created, contingent phenomena.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, the contemporary atheist is perceived to be practicing some kind of idolatry with the idols being abstract ideas. Materialism or scientism turns into a form of worship and the physical cosmos and the scientific method are made the ultimate judge of truth and existence. Radical individualism alters the sovereign self, desires, and autonomy to the utmost authority a situation the Quran many times condemns as living according to its hawa (whim or vain desire).<sup>21</sup> More so, the contemporary nation-state, political ideologies or even consumer brands can require allegiance and sacrifice to the point of the antique worshipping of a human created identity in the tribal cults. In this sense, atheism is not liberation of worship but is a change in the object of worship making the person a slave of the things created (makhluqat) instead of the Creator (al-Khaliq).

#### **5.2. Epistemological Critique: The Secular Reason and its Limits:**

The Enlightenment of human reason as an adequate guide also poses a basic challenge to Islam. The criticism focuses on the instability of secular reason per se as dislodged by revelation. Strong at the explanation of how the physical world works, reason alone finds it hard to explain why we are here, what there is such as objective good and evil, and what is the ultimate meaning and purpose. It is able to say how something happens but not what ought to happen. This results in moral and existential relativism in which meaning is self-contrived, and therefore is unstable.<sup>22</sup>

The classical Islamic paradigm, on the contrary, provides an integrative model of knowledge. It assumes the existence of three truth sources that are harmonious and not contradicting, and they are all the results of the Divine:

1. **Wahy (Revelation):** The divine revelation contained in the Quran and the true Sunnah, which contains transcendent truth on what cannot be seen, morality and end purpose.
2. **Aql (Intellect):** It is the aspect of the god-given reason, logic, and reflection, and it is bound to reason about the creation and comprehend revelation.
3. **Fitra / Empirical Observation of the Universe:** This primordial human inclination to the knowledge of truth and the scientific investigation of the natural world (afaq) as the indication (ayat) of the Creator.

In this model, there is no real contradiction a genuinely understood revelation with a conclusively proven empirical fact. It is a framework that enables complete acceptance of legitimate science the methodical study of creation, but denies the ideology of scientism, which portrays the scientific method as the sole valid means to reach all truth, a metaphysical assertion that science itself cannot substantiate.<sup>23</sup>

### **5.3. Critique Sociological and Psychological:**

There is internal criticism that can be made by looking at the children of secular worldview back home. The major promise of modernity was the freedom of reason and individualism. Nevertheless, a lot of Western philosophy, literature, and psychology of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries document the unintended results of this undertaking: deep alienation, existential anxiety, nihilism, and a crisis of meaning.<sup>24</sup> It is the same philosophers of secular thought who are venerated today, Nietzsche, Sartre, and even the postmodernists of today, who graphically explain a world that lacks transcendent meaning, with the individual being overloaded with a sense of freedom which can be absurd and isolating. This implies that the psychological dissatisfaction that comes with the present-day atheism might not be a byproduct but a rational consequence of its metaphysical assumptions.

This diagnosis has its foundation in Islamic analysis, which views the primordial, instinctive nature of Fitrah of each human being as created by God. The Fitrah is retained as naturally predisposed to the knowledge of its Creator (tawhid), as a sort of spiritual magnetic compass.<sup>25</sup> Although this disposition may be covered by socializing, or personal decision, it can never be eliminated. Thus, the deep feeling of emptiness, impatient searching, or even spiritual homelessness in the secular world per se are not taken as the signs of the falsity of religion, but rather as the signs of the disturbance in the Fitrah. The human being in this perception is by nature connected to be affixal with the Divine and a worldview which excludes the ultimate connection is bound to produce an innate, and usually unexpressed, spiritual dissatisfaction. In search of meaning in materialism, fame, or pleasure without end, is considered a wrong step in order to fill up a hunger that is only fulfilled by transcending.

## **6. Towards a Constructive Response: Engagement Strategies:**

### **6.1. Intellectual (Ilmi) Strategy:**

Only a strong reaction can be made by shifting out of an attitude of defense to one of affirmative, active renewal of the Islamic intellectual tradition. This includes the rediscovery and updating of the fields of Kalam (theology) and Falsafa (philosophy) to bring them to directly address the problems of epistemology, ethics and cosmology on the same academic level.<sup>26</sup> It is not simply to refute atheistic arguments but to show the explanatory power, coherence and intellectual satisfaction of the Islamic worldview. This has required a resurgence of Ijtihad (independent juristic reasoning) in order to solve new problems.

The key to this is the construction of an assertive Islamic anthropology- coherent theological concept of the human being (insan). This framework should be able to positively interrelate with new ideas such as the human rights, individual freedom and personal purpose within the premises of Tawhid. It would explain the derivation of human dignity by the Quranic idea of humans as Khalifah (vicegerents) upon earth and as the recipients of the divine trust (Amanah), providing an inspiration of rights transcendent to the blowing of political wind.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of this intellectual project is to present a strong secular humanism alternative based on scripture.

### **6.2. Educational (Tarbabi) Strategy:**

The most important long term plan is, perhaps, the reform of educational systems. The strategy should be to instill critical thinking in a healthy Islamic epistemological system, as opposed to giving the students a clear choice between blind faith and ungodly skepticism. This will necessitate revisiting of curricula to incorporate the history of Islamic science, philosophy and civilization as subjects.<sup>28</sup>

Learners must not only be taught the findings of Islamic faith but the intellectual heritage of the deepest intellectual history of the activities of Muslim thinkers to explore the boundaries of Greek philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and astronomy through the strict empirical observation (mushahadah) under the control of theological precepts. This gives intellectual confidence back, by revealing that rational inquiry, empirical study, is part of the Islamic tradition. In addition, philosophy and comparative religion are to be instructed in order to provide students with the skills to critically

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examine not only the Islamic but also the secular worldviews to turn them into not just passive receivers of information but thoughtful and skillful thinkers capable of making sense of the modern world.

### **6.3. Communal and Psychological (Nafsi) Strategy:**

The success of the intellectual and educational reforms depends on the parallel change in the communal and religious setting. The first and the most current action is that families, mosques, and student groups should establish non-judgmental, safe areas where young people can express their doubts and ask challenging questions and investigate their faith without fear of stigma, judgment, and social exclusion. Doubts should not be treated as a punitive act as it will simply push it into the ground and into the open arms of atheist communities on the net.

Societies should also be able to deal with justifiable concerns over hypocrisy, social injustice, strict authoritarianism, and the culture that is falsely equated with religion. Secular independence frequently appeals most where religious power is perceived to be repressive or evidently unsupportive. It is important to stress the Quranic concept of justice (adl), mercy (rahmah), and spiritual liberation. Lastly the answer should also focus on the spiritual (ruhaniyyah) and moral (akhlaq) aspects of Islam as the foundation of true human welfare and fulfillment. By teaching and example showing that Islam is a deep road to inner peace, ethical life and a sense of meaning to the transcendent the very existential fears which modernity has left naked can make the empty promises of materialism and radical individualism much less attractive.

### **Conclusion: conclusion and future directions:**

#### **7.1. Summary of Arguments:**

This paper has followed the status of atheism in modern Muslim youth back to its historical roots to the current trends of this phenomenon. It maintained that this tendency was not simply a theological drift, but a symptomatic by product of the long and unresolved experience of Western modernity of the Muslim world. The analysis has started with the historical epistemic break of colonialism that enforced a secular worldview and artificial faith versus reason dichotomy that led to a continuum of intellectual reactionary responses of rejection to accommodation. Digital ecosystems, secular educational patterns and cultural globalization are the potent mediums in this age, which carry and internalize the materialist and individualist presumptions of modernity, and which are especially appealing to a generation that has to operate in globalized identities. In the Islamic perspective, the criticism re-packaged modern atheism as a type of Shirk, identified the epistemological weakness of secular reason divorced of revelation, and attributed the resulting spiritual dissatisfaction in terms of Fitrah.

#### **7.2. The Core Conflict:**

The challenge that is encountered at its core is not just a collision of ideas but a confrontation between two wholesome and antithetical worldviews. On the one hand, there is the worldview of Tawhid, the unquestionable belief in Divine Oneness. This paradigm unites in a single whole all the dimensions of reality, spirit and matter, reason and revelation, individual and community, science and ethics, in divine sovereignty, and provides a single metaphysics of existence, knowledge, and value.<sup>1</sup> In opposition to it is the secular materialism of the present-day intellectual establishment, the intellectual face of contemporary atheism. This paradigm splits life into incoherent postulates, drains the reality to material elements and, finally, divinizes the human will and desire as the last judges of the truth and good. This conflict is the fight over the soul of Muslim youth, in other words, the clash between these two ideas of what it is to be human and to live a meaningful life.

#### **7.3. Final Assertion:**

Thus, the response of condemnation or the apologetic level of response is not enough. The optimal and most required action is a proactive, caring and intellectually demanding re-presentation of Islam that is directly addressing the realities of modernity. This necessitates the simultaneous striving toward the following strategies; restoration of the Islamic philosophical discourse to confront modernity on the same



level, radical restructuring of education to produce critical thinking within an Islam epistemology and restructuring communal spaces to meet psychological and ethical complaint. The final aim is to show that Islam, as an intellectual and spiritual tradition, as it is, does not offer an escapist solution to modernity, but a rational and purposeful and existentially fulfilling alternative. It should be demonstrated as a way leading to the realization of the true human purpose, belonging and moral clarity of the world-view the world of secular materialism claims to present but actually is not substantially able to, and thus regain its appeal to the modern Muslim youth.



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- <sup>17</sup> Richard Seymour, *The Twittering Machine* (London: The Indigo Press, 2019), 55-65.
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- <sup>19</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 27-30, 305-310.
- <sup>20</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 280-285.
- <sup>21</sup> Quran 45:23.
- <sup>22</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 6-11, 51-61.
- <sup>23</sup> Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95-105.
- <sup>24</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1-12.
- <sup>25</sup> Quran 30:30.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5-10.
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