Report on the Academic Seminar: Introduction and Review of the Book *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview* in Vienna, Austria

The academic seminar titled “Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview” was held on August 14, 2025 (23 Mordad 1404) at the **Iranian Wisdom House, Vienna**. The event, which included a book presentation and scholarly discussions, commenced with a keynote speech by Professor Dr. Mehdi Golshani, Professor Emeritus at Sharif University of Technology, a member of the Academy of Sciences of Iran, and a pioneer in the field of science and religion in Iran.

Dr. Golshani introduced the perspectives outlined in his book, which had been translated into German through the efforts of the **Cultural representative of Iran** in Austria and published by Uni-Dialogue Publishing in Vienna. The program, moderated by Dr. Viktor Sabo, featured presentations by distinguished speakers, including Professor Manfred Hauser, a lecturer and researcher in philosophy; Professor Mohammad Waldman, a scholar and translator of Islamic studies; and Dr. Reza Gholami, a senior professor of political philosophy, cultural, and civilizational studies, and the **Cultural representative of Iran** in Austria. Each speaker presented their views and analyses on the topic of science and religion within the framework of a monotheistic worldview, engaging in fruitful discussions with the audience. Several attendees also shared their questions with the speakers.

The event was warmly received by those interested in interdisciplinary discussions in Vienna.

Full Text of the Speech by Professor Dr. Mehdi Golshani, Member of the Academy of Sciences of Iran and Author of *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview*

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Greetings to the audience.

I would like to explain why I wrote the book *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheism*, what topics it covers, and the reasons behind its creation. Let me begin with a brief historical overview. During the Islamic civilization, science developed within a theistic framework. Muslim scientists believed that scientific activity was a form of worship, a mindset shared universally among them. This perspective continued in the Christian world during the Middle Ages, leading to the dawn of modern science with figures like Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, who also viewed their religious beliefs and scientific endeavors as forms of worship.

However, this mindset peaked in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, gaining significant traction in the 19th century. In the first half of the 19th century, Auguste Comte introduced positivism, asserting that only knowledge derived from sensory experience was valuable, dismissing religion and philosophy as irrelevant. This approach was reinforced in the 19th century by Darwinism and Freudianism and persisted into the first half of the 20th century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, logical positivism emerged, claiming that only propositions verifiable through sensory experience were meaningful, rendering philosophical and religious matters insignificant. The rise of quantum theory by Bohr, Born, and Heisenberg further contributed to abandoning causality and relying solely on sensory data. Einstein and Planck attempted to critique this view but were unsuccessful, as they themselves partially accepted these premises.

However, in the second half of the 20th century, the landscape changed dramatically. Karl Popper argued that ethical values could not be derived from empirical sciences. Peter Medawar, a Nobel Prize winner in medicine, stated that science cannot answer ethical questions, which must be addressed by religion or philosophy. Furthermore, ultimate human questions such as “Where did I come from?”, “What is my purpose in this world?”, and fundamental questions unanswerable by science, like “Why does this universe exist?” or “Why are these laws governing our world?”, can only be addressed through religion or philosophy.

In the second half of the 20th century, the philosophy of science emerged, with philosophers asserting that every scientific theory is grounded in metaphysical principles derived not from science itself but from philosophy or religion, which guide science. For example, Euclidean geometry rests on five axioms, and Newtonian theory on three laws and the law of gravitation. In quantum theory, one perspective denies causality, asserting that chance governs the universe, while another (Bohm’s theory) accepts causality. Both theories explain all experimental data, and neither has been disproven. From an Islamic perspective, Islam supports the concept of causality.

These developments led to the integration of philosophy into science, with prestigious Western universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton, and Columbia incorporating philosophy into their curricula. Einstein urged his opponents to engage with philosophers to resolve issues, but physicists were reluctant. Today, philosophy is prominently featured in leading Western universities.

Religion also experienced a revival and strengthening. The European Society for the Study of Science and Theology holds conferences every two years in major European cities, which I have attended on several occasions. These conferences have been highly beneficial, with participants from various religions and philosophers in attendance. Institutions such as the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge and the Ian Ramsey Centre at Oxford have further bolstered the role of religion.

The John Templeton Foundation organized a competition to encourage universities to offer science and religion courses. I participated in this competition, and out of 2,000 proposals from universities worldwide, my proposed course was among the 150 selected and awarded.

The course I proposed covered several topics, and the Foundation requested that I write a book addressing these themes. In 1995, this proposal was made, and in 2007, I offered the “Science and Religion” course at Sharif University of Technology, adding new topics. When I later prepared to publish *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheism*, I included topics such

as “consciousness is not material,” a significant development in the West. While many Western scientists once believed the human spirit was material, some prominent ones now argue it is non-material, and several Western philosophers have written books on this subject.

In the opening chapters of the book, I discuss the historical relationship between science and religion in the Islamic world, then in the West, and global perspectives on this period. I then highlight that science cannot answer many of humanity’s critical questions. I address issues often raised by atheist scientists against religion, which have been responded to by religious philosophers and scientists. This section includes perspectives from Muslim and Christian philosophers and scientists on topics such as the existence of God, the creation of the universe, miracles, the problem of evil, the purposefulness of the universe, resurrection, the relationship between science and values, and the possibility of religious science. I have also developed a theory on religious science, which I have explored in another book.

This book was sent to Christian and Jewish philosophers in the United States and Europe, many of whom warmly received it, and their endorsements are included on the book’s cover. One of the book’s key features is that it demonstrates the shared perspectives of Muslim and Christian philosophers (adherents of Abrahamic faiths). Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari expresses ideas similar to those of British or American philosophers and scientists, a point of significant importance in prestigious Western universities.

Unfortunately, these discussions have not fully penetrated Iran, largely due to the influence of certain Western factors. However, I believe this is one of the book’s most significant contributions. It has been well-received by some Western philosophers and scientists.

Peace be upon you, and may God’s mercy and blessings be with you. May God protect you all.

Full Text of the Speech by Professor Manfred Hauser, Lecturer and Researcher in Philosophy in Austria, on *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview*

Dear Professor Golshani, Professor Waldman, Dr. Gholami, ladies and gentlemen,

This is my first time speaking to this audience, so I would like to briefly introduce myself. In my youth, I aspired to pursue a career in science and began studying physics at the Graz University of Technology. After a little over a year, through a classmate, I was introduced to the Unification Movement, and from that moment, God became the center of my life. Despite my parents’ disapproval, I paused my studies and joined a small group of movement members to learn more about God and experience His presence. A year later, Austrian leaders of the movement asked me to assist in organizing the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), held in London at the time. These conferences, initiated two years earlier by Reverend Moon, founder of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), aimed to bridge the divide between the worlds of science and religion. Supporting this annual conference, alongside other responsibilities, became a significant part of my commitments in the years that followed. This background helps you understand the importance of today’s topic to me. Although I did not

become a university professor, I have delivered lectures at events organized by the Unification Movement, including the UPF. Later, I gained professional experience as a software developer, married, and became the father of four children. While I have a relatively good understanding of Christian culture and theology, my knowledge of Islamic worldview, culture, and the Persian language is limited. Therefore, I ask for your forgiveness in advance if I misstate details, draw incorrect conclusions, or mispronounce names or terms, and I welcome any corrections.

About the Book and Its Author

The author of the book, Professor Dr. Mehdi Golshani, earned his PhD in particle physics from the University of California, Berkeley (USA). In addition to physics, he has studied religion and science and founded the Philosophy of Science Group at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran. He is a permanent member of the Academy of Sciences of Iran and has received numerous awards for his contributions. Fluent in Persian, Arabic, and English, he has authored books on science, philosophy, and theology. The content of this book stems from lectures delivered since 1995, and his science and religion course received an award from the Templeton Foundation. The book was first published in Persian in 2019, translated into English in 2021, and its German translation was published in 2025. An Arabic translation is also in progress.

About the Book's Content

In this book, Professor Golshani offers a comprehensive and profound exploration of fundamental questions related to the domains of religion and science and their numerous interconnections. The book is divided into 16 chapters, each addressing precise and sometimes challenging questions. Various perspectives and responses are presented and discussed, supported by extensive references from Christian, Islamic, philosophical, scientific, Western, and Eastern sources. Each chapter concludes with a summary and a list of references. Compiling, studying, and processing this volume of sources in a single book is, in my opinion, a remarkable achievement.

Translation Challenges

Translating such a work is a monumental task, not only due to the need for proficiency in multiple languages but also because it requires building a bridge between diverse cultures and domains like religion and science to avoid misunderstandings and prejudices. From my experience with the UPF, which translates extensively from Korean to English and other languages, I am familiar with this challenge. Therefore, I sincerely congratulate Professor Waldman for translating this book into German.

Overview of the Topic

Professor Golshani explains in the book's introduction how the relationship between science and religion has evolved throughout history. Science initially emerged in a religious context, but with the rise of Darwinism in the 19th century, Freudianism, and positivism in the early 20th century, scientists became confident that they could progress without religion. This trend shifted

in the second half of the 20th century when the negative impacts of secular science on humanity and the environment became evident. Since the 1960s, there has been a growing interest in dialogue between religion and science, though full coexistence has not yet been achieved.

Science in Islam and Christianity

Dr. Golshani briefly outlines the history of science and religion in Islam and Christianity. In the early Islamic centuries (750–1100 CE), the Qur'an and the Prophet's encouragement of acquiring knowledge, including from other cultures, led to a flourishing of science. Muslim scholars translated and interpreted works by Greek, Egyptian, and Indian philosophers, contributing to the golden age of Islamic civilization over the next 250 years. In Islam, the primary criterion for science is its utility; there is no distinction between religious and natural science, and science is regarded as an act of worship to draw closer to God and benefit humanity. Unfortunately, this foundational approach later waned in Islamic countries, with a shift toward prioritizing Western technology. The author identifies the Ash'arite theological school, which deemed only knowledge transmitted by prophets as valid, as a primary cause of the decline of science in Islamic lands. These schools restricted open discussion among scholars and even punished those with differing views, labeling them heretics. Some Western scholars have claimed that Muslim scientists lacked the intellectual capacity for innovation, but the author refutes this, citing achievements in medicine, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy by figures like Ibn al-Haytham and Al-Khwārizmī.

In medieval Europe, science, then called natural philosophy, was entirely dominated by Christian theology and the Church. Early attempts to explain the order of nature through reason, which conflicted with Christian worldview, were suppressed or even met with death penalties, despite the religious lives of scientists like Copernicus and Bruno. Newton's successes bolstered confidence in human reason, increasing scientists' and philosophers' self-awareness. In my view, the Church's misconduct and narrow-mindedness were significant factors in the rise of atheistic and materialistic哲学s, such as Marxism and communism, in 19th-century Europe. This shift toward secularism and rebellion against misuse of power not only transformed Europe's political landscape but also paved the way for scientific theories like Darwinism and Freud's psychoanalysis, deepening the divide between science and religion. Rapid scientific progress and declining religious belief led to two world wars and a Cold War in Europe. I doubt humanity has learned that a human-centered, highly technological world without God cannot achieve peaceful coexistence. Interfaith dialogue since the 1960s is a small step in the right direction, but it remains a faint sign of hope for a peaceful future.

Perspectives on the Relationship Between Science and Religion

Professor Golshani examines four perspectives on the relationship between religion and science:

1. Religion and science are in conflict.

2. Religion and science are independent of each other.

3. Religion and science are in dialogue.

4. Religion and science move toward unity.

The most intriguing perspective is the fourth: how these two domains can converge. In the West, three approaches have been proposed:

1. Natural (rational) theology, primarily based on the anthropic principle.

2. Theology of nature, which seeks to understand God's essence through nature's characteristics, as seen in the works of Teilhard de Chardin.

3. Systematic synthesis through comprehensive metaphysics, such as Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy, where religion and science are seen as complementary responses to the same questions.

The author proposes a fourth approach: considering monotheistic religion as the foundation of all sciences. He argues that this perspective was prevalent in Islamic civilization and followed by religious Christian scientists at the dawn of modern science. He also asserts that scientific work requires meta-scientific assumptions that researchers must accept as guiding beliefs.

Metaphysics and Ethics in Science

Dr. Golshani repeatedly emphasizes that science does not reach its conclusions solely through empirical methods but requires a metaphysical framework to interpret its findings. Questions like "What is truth?", "What is reality?", or, as Nobel laureate Eugene Wigner asked, "Why is mathematics so effective in the natural sciences?" demonstrate that science and metaphysics are not in conflict but complementary. However, metaphysical principles must also be questioned and understood. While some scientists claim science is independent of values, it is evident that scientists must confront ethical questions. This led Austrian philosopher of science Karl Popper to state: "The notion that science cannot comment on ethics has led to the misunderstanding that such principles do not exist, whereas the pursuit of truth presupposes ethics." The separation of science from ethics is a root cause of many harmful effects resulting from the misuse of knowledge. The author proposes a new philosophy of science that considers all of humanity's fundamental concerns as a solution.

Other Topics in the Book

I have not even covered half of the multifaceted issues addressed in this book. For instance, topics such as "cosmology and creation," inspired anew by Einstein's theory of relativity, the role of order in creation in relation to the anthropic principle, the purposefulness of nature, the

relationship between causality and teleology, miracles and their relation to natural laws, the problem of evil, the nature of the soul and consciousness from Islamic and Western perspectives, the meaning of resurrection and the reality of life after death, the role of metaphysics in integrating religion and science, and ethics and values in science and technology are discussed in detail, supported by extensive references from Islamic and Western literature.

Closing Remarks

I am deeply impressed by the volume of information compiled by the author and his precision in examining various arguments. I agree with the author that scientists must engage with God and religious questions. But would the tension between religion and science truly be resolved if no atheists existed? We see that even religious individuals struggle to coexist peacefully.

I appreciate the idea of viewing nature as a form of general revelation from God, such that studying nature teaches us not only about nature itself but also about God on a deeper level. This could offer a new perspective for science. Additionally, there are specific revelations that God grants to chosen individuals at particular times and places to teach humanity something unique. When these messages were documented, we gained access to this special knowledge, primarily managed and transmitted through religions. Throughout history, diverse cultures with unique worldviews have emerged from this special knowledge.

To ensure peaceful coexistence in the future, we need a broader worldview that considers all human needs, not just material ones. In the book's final chapter, Dr. Golshani emphasizes the need for such a shared vision but directs his call primarily to science to open itself to the religious and ethical domains. What I believe is still missing to complete this vision is for religions to open up to one another and draw on the immense potential of the knowledge and traditions God has bestowed upon all of humanity. I believe this is the challenge and expectation God has for our generation to take the next step toward a joyful and peaceful future for all people.

Thank you for your attention!

Full Text of the Speech by Professor Mohammad Waldman, Austrian Islamic Scholar and Translator of *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview* by Professor Mehdi Golshani

Key Questions in *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview*

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

I am delighted that the **Cultural representative of Iran** in Austria entrusted me with translating this valuable book. The translation required particular care for several reasons. First, parts of the book address theoretical physics, necessitating precise and scientifically accurate rendering

of terminology into German. Second, Professor Golshani extensively draws on Islamic content, including Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and Persian poetry, such as that of Hafez and other poets. Thus, it was essential to translate these poems in a way that preserved their meaning and depth in German.

Today, I would like to briefly review some of the key questions this book raises. Written by Dr. Mehdi Golshani, the book approaches the relationship between science and religion from a unique perspective: one that neither assumes science is independent of religion nor religion independent of science.

These questions can be categorized into several main themes:

First Theme: Epistemological and Philosophical Foundations of Science

Can modern science function without metaphysical assumptions? Given that the founders of modern science were often people of faith, is this merely a historical coincidence, or does it indicate an inherent need for science to rely on belief in the order and rationality of the universe? If there is harmony between the structure of the human mind and the structure of the universe, what is the source of this harmony? Should it be considered coincidental, or is it evidence of purposeful creation?

Second Theme: Ethics and Scientific Responsibility

Can science alone provide criteria for ethics and responsibility? If science is a neutral tool, what should guide it to serve human progress rather than cause harm? Can religion provide this direction?

Third Theme: Inherent Limitations of Science

Can science answer humanity's ultimate questions, such as "Where did we come from?", "Why are we here?", "Where are we going?", or "What is the meaning of life?" Additionally, questions about the origin of free will, the existence of evil and suffering, or the nature of human consciousness—are these solvable within the framework of empirical sciences, or do they require a religious and philosophical perspective?

Fourth Theme: The Future of Science in Light of a Monotheistic Worldview

If science continues to operate within a purely materialistic worldview, will a safe future for humanity remain possible? The author believes that only a comprehensive worldview that integrates science, religion, and philosophy into a cohesive framework can provide the necessary metaphysical foundations for science and ensure ethical and human meaning.

Conclusion

The book's central perspective is clear: the Islamic worldview, rooted in monotheism, stems from Islamic revelation, adopts a holistic view of nature, recognizes reality as having multiple

levels, and considers both the material and spiritual interests of humanity. In this view, humanity is part of a cosmic order, and all activities, including scientific and technological endeavors, must align with this order. If this shift in mindset does not occur among today's scientists, future science may lead to destructive outcomes rather than serving humanity.

These questions are raised not to limit science but to open a new horizon for it—a horizon in which science and religion are not in conflict but engage in constructive dialogue within the framework of a monotheistic worldview.

Thank you for your attention.

Full Text of the Speech by Dr. Reza Gholami, Faculty Member of the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies and Cultural representative of Iran in Austria

From Duality to Convergence: Examining the Boundaries of Science and Religion
(A Deeper Look at Dr. Mehdi Golshani's Perspective)

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Dear audience, esteemed professors, respected researchers, and especially Professor Dr. Mehdi Golshani,

It is an honor to speak today about the book *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview*, a work that can be regarded as a "guiding light" in Iranian and global studies on science and religion. This field, developed as an interdisciplinary discipline since the 1960s by scholars like Ian Barbour, has gained a solid foothold in universities worldwide. Dr. Golshani's book, published and translated by Uni-Dialogue Publishing and Al-Mustafa International University, has the potential to become a reference work in this global literature.

Allow me to examine seven key themes of this book in greater detail:

1. Dual Expertise: A Bridge Between Two Worlds

Professor Golshani, with his mastery of modern physics and Qur'anic teachings, offers a "unique" perspective. As a distinguished physicist, he is well-versed in the complexities of quantum mechanics and relativity, and as a religious scholar, he understands the spiritual wisdom of revelation. This "dual expertise" enables him to explore the relationship between science and religion in a distinctive way. This combination addresses a common issue: religious scholars often lack deep scientific knowledge, while scientists may not fully understand religion, leading to profound misunderstandings.

2. God and Scientists: A Historical Perspective

Many assume that science leads to a “godless worldview,” but Professor Golshani provides evidence that history suggests otherwise. The book notes that scientists like Newton and Maxwell were believers. However, the distinction between the “common belief” that views God anthropomorphically and the “profound understanding” of elites who perceive God philosophically and abstractly is significant. This distinction matters because ordinary people, influenced by sensory experiences, imagine God simplistically, whereas scientists, through complex reasoning, develop a deeper understanding of God that may seem unfamiliar to non-specialists. The book invites us to appreciate this nuanced perspective.

3. Islam and Christianity: Different Approaches to Science

The book demonstrates that Islam views science as a “sacred duty” to be pursued freely, while historical Christianity sometimes saw it as a threat, unable to tolerate discrepancies between Church teachings and scientific discoveries. The notion that science and religion are always in conflict often stems from generalizing the Christian experience, such as the Galileo affair, to all religions. In truth, Islam’s approach is rooted in its structure. The book lists five reasons for the harmony between science and religion in Islam:

1. Science has intrinsic value, not merely instrumental.
2. Islamic history lacks systematic persecution of scientists.
3. Islamic teachings are grounded in reason and rationality.
4. Science and religion occupy “distinct but complementary domains.”
5. Islam encourages worldly prosperity, which stems from the free development of science.

These principles create a “fertile ground” for the coexistence of science and religion, unlike societies lacking such foundations.

4. Limitations of Science and the Power of Revelation

It is crucial to emphasize that the conflict between science and religion often arises from misunderstandings about their respective domains. Science discovers natural laws and explains the material world, while religion addresses existential, ethical, and metaphysical questions. When science ventures into metaphysical claims or religion attempts to propose scientific theories, unintended overlap leads to misunderstandings. The Qur’an, in verses like “And He teaches you what you did not know” (2:151), emphasizes that it offers unique knowledge unattainable by science alone—comprehensive knowledge for guiding humanity toward true happiness. This perspective challenges the notion that “science knows everything” and cautions science against entering domains it cannot observe. This promotes a “diverse knowledge” approach where revelation and science each have their strengths. Science excels in explaining

the material world but must remain humble before metaphysical questions like the purpose of life or the nature of the soul.

5. Islam's Balanced Path

The Qur'an, in verse 11:61 ("It is He who produced you from the earth and settled you in it"), presents a "middle way" that neither rejects the world and its ethical benefits nor glorifies it like secular materialism. Unlike the Renaissance, which embraced a human-centered view and saw nature as a resource for exploitation, Islam balances progress with ethical responsibility. This balance supports "sustainable science" that advances technology while adhering to ethical values, avoiding extremes of ignoring material progress or pursuing it without regard for consequences.

6. Philosophy as a Bridge

Professor Golshani deepens his analysis using the philosophy of science, exploring questions like the nature of knowledge or scientific truth, making the book appealing to religious scholars, scientists, and philosophers. This philosophical approach transforms the book into a "common ground" for dialogue. It is valuable not only for religious scholars but also for those studying the foundations of science, fostering richer conversations.

7. A New Vision for Science

The book calls for a "transformative" approach to science that includes:

- Moving beyond observation-centric science.
- Incorporating ethical values into science.
- Embracing complex realities beyond mechanical materialism.
- Employing diverse methods to uncover truth.
- Addressing "big questions" about meaning and purpose.

This "holistic" approach views science as integrated, not a collection of isolated disciplines. It humanizes science with transcendent values, offering hope in a world where technology often feels cold and impersonal. In a world facing existential crises like AI ethics or environmental destruction, this perspective serves as a "compass" for science to navigate challenges while upholding human values.

Conclusion

Professor Dr. Mehdi Golshani's *Science and Religion in the Horizon of Monotheistic Worldview* is more than a book; it is a "roadmap" for harmoniously integrating science and religion. It

neither merges them nor revives outdated ideas but creates a “creative synthesis” that preserves the strengths of both. This book is a gift to the academic communities of Iran and the world, offering a new path for uniting science and religion. In an era where technology seems like an “unbridled train,” this book shows how science, rooted in transcendent values, can become more humane. I congratulate the academic community on the publication of this valuable work in German by Uni-Dialogue Publishing and hope it guides curious minds toward integrated wisdom. I would also like to specifically thank Professor Mohammad Waldman for his expertise and skillful translation of this book.

Thank you for your attention.