

**Imam Ali (a.s) & Transcendental Phenomenology:
Letter to Malik al-Ashtar as lifeworld system thinking
Paradigm**

**Assist. Prof .Dr. Ali Tareq
College of Dentistry
University of Kerbala**

**الامام علي (عليه السلام) والفنومولوجية المتعالية:
عهده إلى مالك الاشر نموذجاً ارشادياً (باراداييم)**

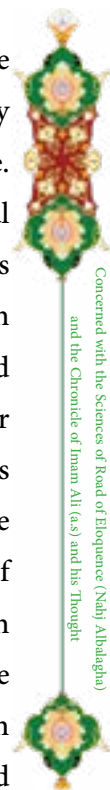
**ا.م.د. علي طارق عبد الحسن
كلية طب الاسنان
جامعة كربلاء**

ملخص البحث

يعتبر عهد الامام علي بن ابي طالب (عليه السلام) لواليه مالك الاشر (رضوان الله عليه) من النصوص الخالدة التي تجاوزت السياق الذي طرحت فيه فهي رسالة تضمنت أجوبة لازال علماء النفس والاجتماع والقيادة يبحثون عنها. لذلك هي سابق لأوانها من حيث تجسيدها لنموذج مابعد الحداثة في القيادة الذي سوف يثبت بحثنا ذلك من خلال قراءة فنومنولوجية (ظاهراتية) لطرح الأسئلة التي تسعى الى اظهار المعاني الماهوية التي جسدها الامام في رسالته.

So give good tidings to My servants: Who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding. Quran 39:19¹

We are embodiment of a paradigm, mental frame that structure our attitude and actions. Paradigms determine our verbal or non- verbal discourse. Any word or discourse is defined relative to a paradigm, a frame of reference. What made Paradigm primary and everything is that it is the Light, a mental structure that shape the way we see the world. These paradigms\ frames determine horizons of expectation that shape the intentionality, the design of our curriculum in any domain of life also what is right & wrong. To lead a social, political, religious or educational reform, we need first to know our old frames\ paradigms and bracketing them aside and going back to things themselves interrogating them to disclose their frames\ paradigms. Hence to lead a transformative change and learning we should act at the level of frames, paradigms in process called bracketing\ phenomenological reduction that lead to reframing, paradigm shift. Phenomenological reduction is the condition that make paradigm shift from linear- reductive thinking to system thinking possible which is the last hope for saving our planet, our society and ourselves. The letter of Imam Ali (a) offered such radical therapy, reframing, which addressed the blind spot that resulted in the crisis in all aspect of our lifeworld (ecological, social, spiritual). Our study revealed that the paradigm- mental frames used in this letter is transcendental phenomenology, can be named also lifeworld system thinking which is transdisciplinary approach to any problem. This therapy is founded on the teaching of the Holy Quran and The prophet Muhammed (s). The letter to Malik Al Ashtar is a very rich text disclosing postmodern frames\ paradigms about our relationship with God, the world, human being, government, governor and ourselves. Unfortunately, this discourse is absent locally and globally. The main task of this research is to



make these paradigms\ frames visible to the people of 21st century.

The aim of this study: The main aim of this study is to discover the paradigm in use, the implicit theory, which determine the source from which Imam Ali practiced his life and produced his sermon and wisdom which is received in Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence). The second aim is to show how Imam Ali used this paradigm in answer essential questions regarding what is like to be Human, to be Muslim, leader, Islam and other concepts which represent the pillar of Islam.

The methodology and method: I used lifeworld system thinking approach which is grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology to expose the underlying paradigm lived by Imam Ali which manifested as such transcendental actions and sermons, letters, sayings, which had been actualized in different context.

Imam Ali & Transcendental Phenomenology Paradigm:

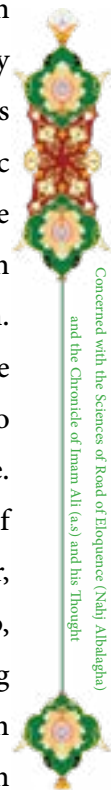
To respect the learner is to respect Allah.”²

Transcendental Phenomenology is a paradigm that condition the possibility of system thinking attitude, which look at events and situation as complex phenomena in which there is dynamic interplay between the visible and invisible, between the parts and whole, between presence and absence. It is defined as a science of structure consciousness, lived experience, lifeworld, approaching them from inside, from first person point of view using reflective intentional analysis to disclose the essential structure (noema) and function (noesis). It aimed at seeing the essences, structure, pattern, mental model, paradigm as they are lived through in every event, experience, discourse which condition its possibility. Hence it is a qualitative scientific paradigm, methodology and method used in all human sciences and natural sciences. Ali bin Abi Talib (601661- AD), is the first Imam & successor to Muhammad (Pbuh). Politically speaking he was the fourth Caliph. He was regarded by the prophet as the gate to the city of knowledge. His tradition in the form of sermons,

letters, sayings came to us through a masterpiece known as Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence). This study will focus on one of this treasure which is the letter of covenant and guidelines to Malik al-Ashtar after appointing him as a Governor of Egypt This paper will disclose the underlying methodology used by Imam Ali which is known as transcendental phenomenology as articulated by Edmund Husserl (1859- 1938). The slogan of this scientific method is to describe things as they are given to us in original experience rather than depending on our prejudgment and presupposition. This explain why the words of Quran and the prophet and Ahl al-Bayt are eternal truth. The process of production is eternal which is known as phenomenology. The condition that make phenomenology possible is to be transcendental\ pure ego which is intentionally correlated with essential dimension of the experience. In The letter to Malik al-Ashtar Imam Ali described the phenomenology of human being, leader that is what is like to be human being, governor, leader, which can be verified by recent theories in leadership like system leadership, ontological leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership. Using system thinking iceberg model show that This letter describes the paradigm through which we can design structure of government (economic, foreign affair, military and security, people wellbeing (education, health, religion) housing condition. The core, source which connect all these threads is the relation with God which is manifested as compassion and empathy and effective communication with people lifeworld.

To prove that whether Imam Ali was embodiment of system thinking, system leadership, transcendental phenomenology & using them as a way for seeing, judgement, action or not, surely we need to know what do mean by these terms. Hence I will start with transcendental phenomenology as it is the root that gave branches to all these nice fruits.

Transcendental phenomenology is originated by the German philosopher



Edmund Husserl (1889- 1938) in the first half of the twentieth century. He was one of the great philosopher who created new beginning after closing old one, he was searching for method of seeing the truth\ the essences, rather than deducing them from the past premises and prejudices. Hence he created deconstructive tool called it bracketing, which put aside any taken for granted the habitual attitude about existence and reality, knowledge, as they acted as barrier to listening, seeing and perception, blocking the emergence of future and original truth^{3,4}.

To achieve this task, he invented His method of epoche, bracketing \suspension of all assumptions about natural attitude and its thesis of certainty in the external causes. The vision of this new philosophy is to go back to the things themselves, this motto facilitate deconstruction of anything not given from the things themselves through lived experience. This bracketing on side of objects correlated intentionally with bracketing on the side of subject to reduced it to the pure, transcendental ego, which make seeing \intuition of the essences possible³.

The journey of phenology is inside the mind, to make its cognitive process visible and showing intersubjectively how the meaning produced collaboratively from subject and object as they are intentionally connected. Husserl put an end to both positivism and Cartesianism in which dualistic ontology resulted into reductive thinking that created a deep .still flourishing crisis in natural and human sciences as if there is two kind of truth, two kind of reality ,to kind of sciences, one is objective and the second is subjective, the first is certain, reliable, generalizable and rational, and the second is embodiment of the opposite .This binary thinking, either\ or thinking is what phenomenology born to fight it through going back to the lifeworld which is complex enough to be impossible to explain it only through mathematics^{4,5}.

Husserl motto to go back to things themselves is the most powerful weapon



that induces demise of the positivism paradigm philosophically and later on scientifically through the quantum physics and general system theory.

In summary phenomenology main goal is to purify the ego, shifting it from caring to temporary, contingent aspect of experience to transcendental, essential aspect which is eternal and iterative in any experience. The path is through bracketing.

This goal is shared by all religion which aimed at seeing God, the ultimate truth, using religious practices as road to purify the ego and shifting her intentionality toward the constant, the eternal.

Quranic Phenomenology as paradigm for leading from future:

Thematic analysis of Quran disclosed the great emphasis on listening, using our mind, system thinking, reasoning, reflection:

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart– about all those [one] will be questioned.¹

This verse is embodiment of the vision of phenomenology which call for going back to things themselves. As this verse started by doing bracketing of the socially constructed knowledge and going back to our own senses and heart to use it to receive data from outside as it emerges, making authentic decision which we are responsible for.

The holy Quran in these verses clearly elucidate the core mission of phenomenology through this verse:

He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples¹. Al Raad \Quran 13:17

This is what Husserl tried to say in his transcendental phenomenology, the

essences are transcendental, intersubjective, their origin is inside lifeworld, which exactly what is expressed by Quran: which benefits the people, it remains on the earth

Maurice Natanson, in his book "Phenomenology and the Social Sciences said about phenomenology: Phenomenology is a science of 'beginnings.' The genuine beginner is an adept, not a novice. To begin, in this sense, is to start from the primordial grounds of evidence, from oneself as the center (not the sum) of philosophical experience. Such self- centeredness is the opposite of philosophic hubris; it is a confession of humility: the admission that, unless the inquirer has turned to himself in full awareness of his life, he cannot claim to have sought, let alone found, the truth.⁶

Imam Ali (a.s) and Quranic Phenomenology

In one of his most famous quote, Imam Ali (a.s.) said: He who knows himself knows Allah.

Edmund Husserl through his phenomenology validate this claim, he said:

The human life was nothing less than a journey towards God' even though the philosophical vocation was, strictly speaking, a 'path to God without God'⁷.

Phenomenology is the unconditional road to truth, to God, after purifying the ego using phenomenological process knowing as epoche, bracketing and phenomenological reduction which are developed Husserl as the threshold tools and concepts on which phenomenology revolved⁸.

As we mentioned before that Phenomenology emerged at the end of the 19th century to solve a crisis in philosophy, a crisis in the sciences and in European civilization when positivism was unable to answer the questions aroused from the modernism. Hence phenomenology led a paradigm shift from reductive thinking– the outcome of positivism– to system thinking which is the outcome of doing phenomenology and also manifested in other movements like Gestalt psychology and general system theory which developed by Ludwig von

Bertalanffy. This made us enter new era known as system age which replaces the machine age which is the cause of the ecological, the social, the spiritual crisis^{9,10}.

In this research we will unearth and examines the deep theoretical links between Husserl's phenomenology and system thinking and wisdom expressed by Imam Ali throughout his lifetime which arrived to us through Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence), taking his letter to Malik as paradigm. We need to explain first what we mean by Paradigm, which will facilitate understanding the argument of this paper.

What is Paradigm?

Etymologically speaking, here are two definitions of paradigm, from two different dictionaries: Paradigm^{11,12}.

1. One that serves as a pattern or model.
 2. A set or list of all the inflectional forms of a word or of one of its grammatical
- Scientifically and philosophically speaking, Thomas Kuhn in 1962 in his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* defined paradigm as: 13 A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline.

He argued that the change in a scientific field does not occur as a step- by- step, cumulative process, instead, new paradigms emerge as the result of tradition-shattering revolutions in the thinking of a particular professional community. These shifts involve the adoption of a new outlook on the part of researchers and others in that community. Well- known examples of paradigm shift in the physical sciences include from Ptolemeian to Copernican astronomy and from Newtonian to quantum physics¹³.

Phenomenology provided us with new outlook, system thinking attitude in which reduction of objectivity and science to the material aspect of experience



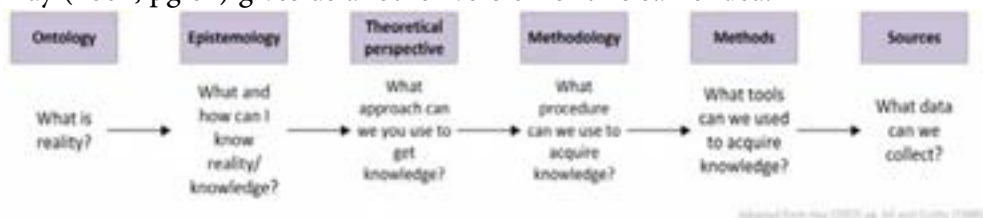
is rejected. It welcomes everything given from the lived experience, it ordered us to be open mind, open heart to the meanings given from things themselves irrespective of their ontological status whether physical or mental. Phenomenology rejected any reductive attitude which determine ahead what is real and what is true and meaningful.

According to Guba, paradigms can be defined as a belief system (or theory) that guides the way we do things, or more formally establishes a set of practices. This can range from thought patterns to action¹⁴.

Scientific research paradigms can be characterized through their:

- **Ontology – What is reality?**
- **Epistemology – How do you know something?**
- **Methodology – How do you go about finding it out?**

Hay (2002, pg 64) gives us another version of this same idea:



To do any scientific research you need a paradigm and a question which will be answered using this paradigm. Hence to do science you are either choosing Disciplines tend to be governed by particular paradigms, such as¹⁴:

- **Positivism (e.g. experimental testing),**
- **Phenomenology (hermeneutic/interpretivism and critical)**

Table 1 provides a summary of the main features of both positivism and phenomenology:

| Area | Positivism | Phenomenology |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Perception of the World | The social world is separated from human beings. Social reality can be investigated by the use of objective measures. | Humans are part of the social world, which exists due to the interaction and actions of human beings. |
| Objectives | Empirical testing of theories by process of verification or falsification for reaching a general principle. | The understanding of how members of a social group by actions enact meanings, beliefs and realities of the social world. |
| Research Methods | Hypothetical deductive approach. | Process of understanding how practices and meanings are formed by humans as they work towards common goals. |
| Methods of Data Collection | Sample surveys and questionnaires. | Interviews, documents and observations. |
| Methods of Analysis | Statistical models. | Interpretation, description and analysis of the social world from the viewpoints of the participants. |
| Role of Respondents | Information based on frameworks prepared by researcher through questionnaires. | Allow respondents to use their own ways of explaining their experiences and concepts of the social world. |

Table 1: Comparison of Positivism and Phenomenology (Adapted from Silverman, 1993)

What is the paradigm adopted by Imam Ali (a) in his letter?

Reading the whole letter against the background of the whole book of Nahj al-Balagha and the biography of Imam Ali (a)

We can surely assign the phenomenological paradigm to him. This is evident in his approach which gave primacy to the whole of everything, give primacy to God, to others, to the system. Hence he declared this his ontological stance from the beginning:

This is what Allah's servant `Ali, Amir al-mu'minin, has ordered Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar in his instrument (of appointment) for him when he made



him Governor of Egypt for the collection of its revenues, fighting against its enemies, seeking the good of its people and making its cities prosperous.

In this paragraph, Imam Ali (a) make it explicit how he saw himself and what is expected from the governor which applicable to anyone.

Knowing the phenomenology of being human as described by Abraham Maslow (1908– 1970) made us understand why Imam Ali determine the goals of governing state in such order:

- The collection of its revenues,
- Fighting against its enemies,
- Seeking the good of its people and
- Making its cities prosperous.

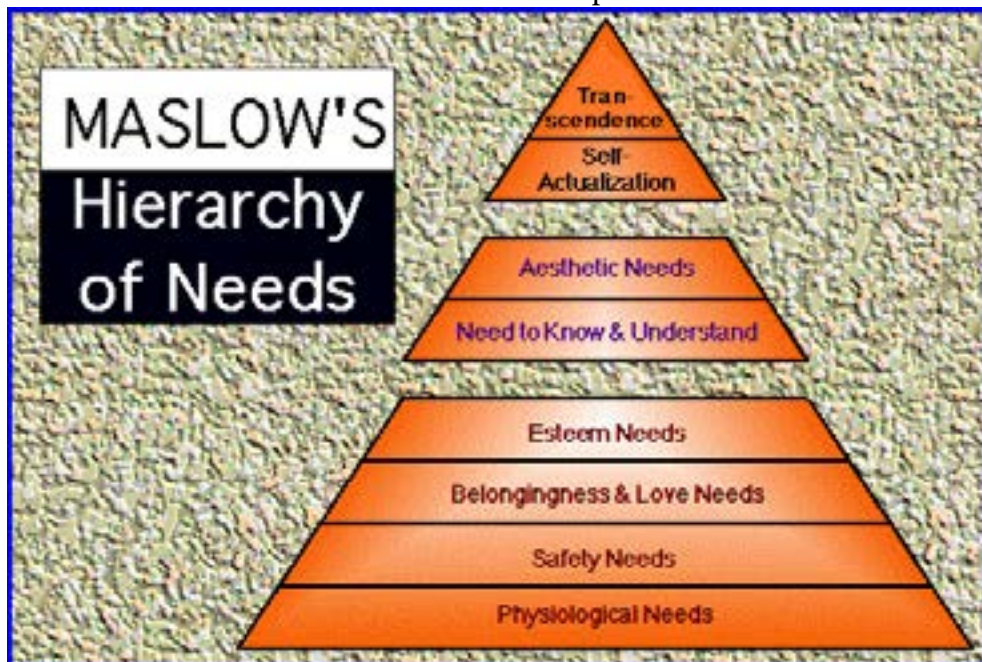
These four outcomes represent transcendental condition for any state to be a living system, to achieve welfare of people and success in both worlds.

Imam Ali (a) made them explicit to build shared vision that make the work of governor systematic and meaningful meeting the needs of human being as such. These needs described by Abraham Maslow (1954):

Maslow posited a hierarchy of human needs based on two groupings: deficiency needs and growth needs. Within the deficiency needs, each lower need must be met before moving to the next higher level. Once each of these needs has been satisfied, if at some future time a deficiency is detected, the individual will act to remove the deficiency. The first four levels are¹⁵:

- (1) Physiological: hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc.;
- (2) Safety/security: out of danger;
- 3) Belongingness and Love: affiliate with others, be accepted; and
- (4) Esteem: to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition.
- (5) Cognitive: to know, to understand, and explore;
- (6) Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty;
- (7) Self-actualization: to find self- fulfillment and realize one's potential; and

(8) Self-transcendence: to connect to something beyond the ego or to help others find self-fulfillment and realize their potential.



According to Maslow, an individual is ready to act upon the growth needs if and only if the deficiency needs are met. Maslow's initial conceptualization included only one growth need- self- actualization. Self-actualized people are characterized by: 1) being problem-focused; 2) incorporating an ongoing freshness of appreciation of life; 3) a concern about personal growth; and 4) the ability to have peak experiences¹⁵.

These hierarchy of needs explained the call of the Quran and Prophet (s) and Imam Ali (a) for actualizing the economics security needs giving the opportunity and space for emergence for Being and growth needs

Also Imam Ali and the phenomenology (paradigm) of governor:

He has ordered him to fear Allah, to prefer obedience to Him, and to follow what He has commanded in His Book (Qur'an) out of His obligatory and elective commands, without following which one cannot achieve virtue, nor

(can one) be evil save by opposing them and ignoring them, and to help Allah the Glorified, with his heart, hand and tongue, because Allah whose name is Sublime takes the responsibility for helping him who helps Him, and for protecting him who gives Him support. He also orders him to break his heart off from passions, and to restrain it at the time of their increase, because the heart leads towards evil unless Allah has mercy. Here Imam Ali, making it clear from the beginning is that his relation with God is primary as this make him immune to corruption and injustice and oppressing the people.

Phenomenology is a triple loop learning and paradigm shift

In a text entitled *The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy*, written in 1935 Husserl says that the crisis of the European sciences is the result of the mathematization of nature in the natural sciences. He means the positivistic paradigm which manifested as reductive thinking and value free approach to human and nature dividing it into fragments and pieces forgetting the lifeworld which is the source from which every discourse should be originated. The effect of positivism on social system is converted it into machine system in which relationship become of the kind of I- it, as Martin Buber defined it and the ultimate goal of people is having rather than Being as Eric Fromm diagnosed¹⁶.

Epoche and bracketing as path to transcendental ego

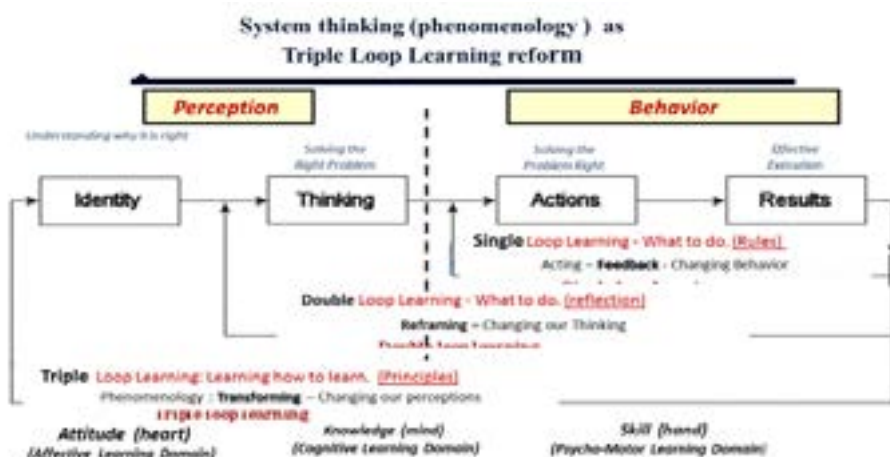
Husserl introduced the concept of consciously setting aside current thoughts, beliefs, and judgments which lend themselves to bias with use of the Greek word epoche, “meaning to stay away from or abstain”¹⁷.

Moustakas noted that epoche is a conscious process of identification and subsequent quarantine of naturally occurring thought patterns. that “we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” and “suspend everything that interferes with fresh vision” It is through epoche that one becomes able to perceive and receive that which is communicated without

tainting its purity with preconceived beliefs, thoughts, or judgments¹⁸.

Practicing epoché and bracketing make phenomenology the best appropriate too to lead system change at the level of paradigm\ mental as will be shown later in the system thinking iceberg model. Phenomenology led the great paradigm shift from machine age to lifeworld system age in which the primacy is for the heart, perception, for communicative mind rather than instrumental mind in the words of Habermas. The relationship shifts from I- It to I- you as evidenced by adopting the framework of leadership, person centred medicine and education¹⁹.

This paradigm shift can lead to ontological sift which is known as triple loop learning which happed at the level of being (heart, mind, hand) which is manifested as system leader ship and organizational learning seeking sustainable reform and change. while double loop learning limited to the mine and hand (instrumental mind) and single loop learning is working at the level of reaction and behavior. Triple loop learning is a form transformative learning which is best described through phenomenology as outcome successful bracketing and paradigm shift.^{21, 22, 23, 24, 25}



Modified from this original slide done by AbramsLearning-ALIS

How this related to Imam Ali letter to Malik al-Ashtar?

Understanding triple loop learning explained the reason behind the emphasis on identity and being of leaders and governor. which is responsible for the outcome of his rule.

The most important theme in this letter is the primacy of people, which mean in Martin Buber language I- You relationship, Carl Roger person- centred attitude and in Husserl language lifeworld based leadership, and in the words of Imam Ali (a.s)²⁶:

“Develop in your heart the feeling of love for your people and let it be the source of kindness and blessing to them. Do not behave with them like a barbarian, and do not appropriate to yourself that which belongs to them. Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are either your brethren in religion or your brethren in kind. They are subject to infirmities and liable to commit mistakes.”

Imam Ali asked Malik to be empathic and compassionate, Empathy in Husserlian phenomenology is natural outcome of being in transcendental attitude. God in relationship, this is what Imam Ali tried to make it clear for Malik, so behaving towards people as should be unconditional, transcendental, they are brother irrespective of their religion and avoiding decreasing their self- esteem for any reason.

In this paragraph from this transformative letter, we can find system thinking analysis of poverty which can a paradigm for leading change in this issue which still unresolved and represent global crisis:

The poverty of the people is the actual cause of the devastation and ruination of a country and the main cause of the poverty of the people is the desire of its ruler and officers to amass wealth and possessions whether by fair or foul means. They are afraid of losing their posts or positions and sway or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal. They never

learn any lesson from the history of nations and never pay any attention to the commands of Allah.

We found clear system thinking approach if we use the iceberg model I which the structure that make poverty continued as pattern is the ruler and their officer who created systemic structure of corruption motivated by mental model of fear and greed “They are afraid of losing their posts or positions and sway or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal.

This system thinking model will be discussed in detail in the next paragraphs.

Transcendental Phenomenology as System thinking attitude:

Ausubel understood Paradigm as another word for pattern. Pattern forming is part of the way we attempt to make meaning from our experiences. We use these patterns to understand situations, raise questions, build links and generate predictions²¹.

This is what is called essences by Edmund Husserl, which are the aim behind doing phenomenology. Hence we will system thinking Iceberg model to show the pivotal role of paradigm which called mental model as deep leverage pint in leading change and in understanding any event or discourse.

Knowing what is your paradigm we can expect your behavior, this expressed by Imam Ali (a. s.): “A man’s behavior is the index of his mind.”

Without changing the paradigm there is no change in attitude and behavior as it is declared by Quran:

Allah does not change what is in a nation unless they change what is in themselves. 11.13

System thinking approaching using iceberg model will explain this verse clearly and also showing why Imam Ali (a.s.) mentioned his paradigm about himself, the state and governor as foundation on which the administration and leadership established.



What is system thinking?

Systems Thinking has its foundation in General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy) and has been applied to a wide range of fields and disciplines. It has great power in solving complex problems that are not solvable using conventional reductionist thinking¹⁰.

Systems thinking is a rebellion against the objectionable habit of reductionist sciences to suppose that there are independent things which interact in a linear causal relationship within only the physical dimension. System thinking is going to the lifeworld in which things are given to us within web of meanings and interrelationship rather than isolated things, fragmented pieces. system thinking is shift from part to the whole, the invisible, from ego- system to eco- system, from I- It to I- You relationship, from value free attitude to compassionate \empathic attitude^{10,23,26,27}.

In the Fifth Discipline, Senge 's 1990 book provides some excellent examples of compensating feedback, application of systems thinking to terrorism, and systems archetypes. He also provides a generic definition:- Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than- snapshots²⁷.

Can we determine which one of these two paradigms embodied by Imam Ali (a,s), Positivism\linear thinking paradigm or Transcendental Phenomenology\ system thinking one?

Return back to the letter, or revisit any chapter of Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence), or his biography we found clear evident that Imam Ali is the perfect example (paradigm) of system thinking and phenomenology, as he was living transcendental ego rather than just attitude and this saying disclosed clearly his practice of bracketing and reduction which are the heart of being phenomenologist:

To separate oneself from things of time and to connect oneself with things of



total mass above the water while 90 percent is underwater. But that 90 percent is what the ocean currents act on, and what creates the iceberg's behavior at its tip. Global issues can be viewed in this same way²⁸.

Imam Ali letter is about this 90% of the iceberg which represent the blind spot of any person, community, organization and state. There is repeated theme and pattern about relationship, with God, with himself, with others, the purpose is to enhance self-awareness, awareness of the others viewpoint, awareness of the inside\outside environment. Imam Ali emphasis on the issue of awareness as condition that make communication possible. effective communication is essential for empathy, justice, equity and successful leadership and governance. The outcome of reading this letter is development of system, social, emotional intelligence, it is letter of system leadership^{22, 27, 28}.

Take care of the affairs of those of them who do not approach you among those who are looked at with contempt and whom people regard as low. Appoint for them some trusted people who are God- fearing and humble. They should inform you of these people's conditions. Then deal with them with a sense of responsibility to Allah on the day you will meet Him, because of all the subjects these people are the most deserving of equitable treatment, while for others also you should fulfil their rights so as to render account to Allah.

eternity is highest wisdom

Other evidences of the practice of system thinking and system leadership: The shift from isolated view to interdependent\ holistic view of community

Remember that the people are composed of different classes. The progress of one is dependent on the progress of every other; and none can afford to be independent of the other. We have the Army formed of the soldiers of God, we have our civil officers and their establishments, our judiciary, our revenue collectors and our public relation officers.

Avoiding temporal blindness, being aware of the right context for action:

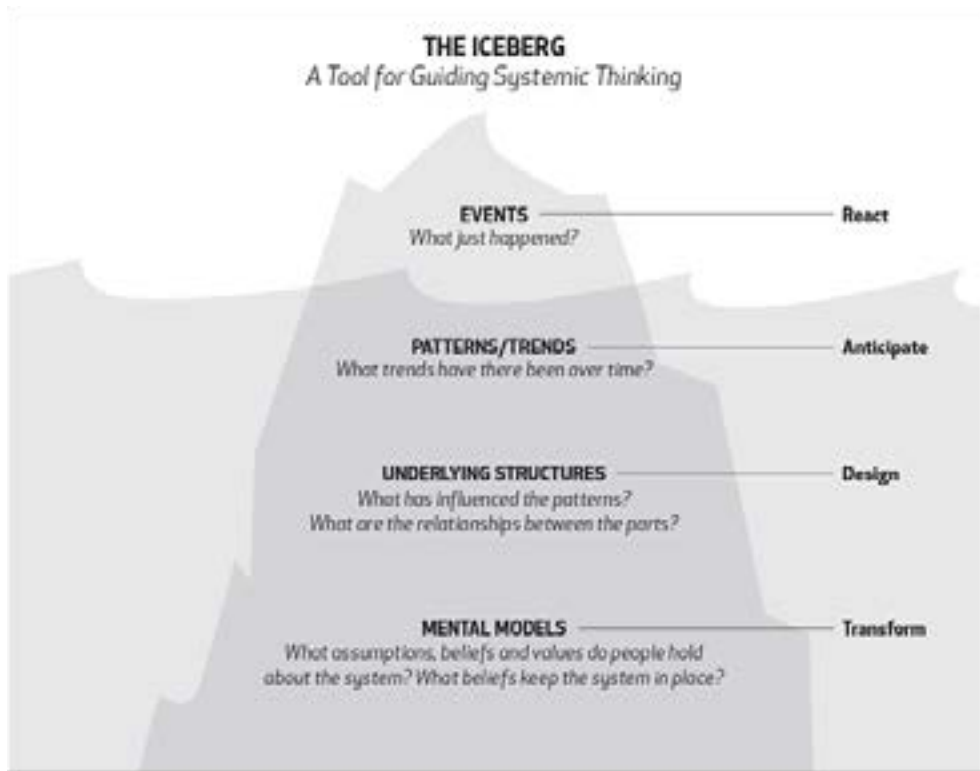
Do not make haste to do a thing before its time, nor put it off when the right moment arrives. Do not insist on doing a wrong thing, nor show slackness in rectifying a wrong thing. Perform everything in its proper time, and let everything occupy its proper place. When the people as a whole agree upon a thing, do not impose your own view on them and do not neglect to discharge the responsibility that rests on you in consequence. For, the eyes of the people will be on you and you are answerable for whatever you do to them. The slightest dereliction of duty will bring its own retribution. Keep your anger under control and keep your hands and tongue in check whenever you fall into anger, try to restrain yourself or else you will simply increase your worries.

System thinking iceberg model & the Letter to Malik al-Ashtar

Systems thinking is a way of seeing from the whole perspective, approaching problems searching for how various elements within a system- which could be an ecosystem, an organization,- influence one another. Rather than reacting to individual problems that arise, a systems thinker will ask about relationships to other activities within the system, look for patterns over time, and seek root causes²⁸.

One systems thinking model that is helpful for understanding any complex issues is the iceberg model. We know that an iceberg has only 10 percent of its





Adapted from: Escalated Thinking. See:

http://escalatedthinking.com/tools_systems_thinking_iceberg.html

LEVELS OF THINKING²⁸

1. The Event Level

The event level is the level at which we typically perceive the world. While problems observed at the event level can often be addressed with a simple readjustment, the iceberg model pushes us not to assume that every issue can be solved by simply treating the symptom or adjusting at the event level.

2. The Pattern Level

If we look just below the event level, we often notice patterns. Similar events have been taking place over time. Observing patterns allows us to forecast and forestall events.

3. The Structure Level

Below the pattern level lies the structure level. When we ask, “What is causing the pattern we are observing?” the answer is usually some kind of structure.

According to Professor John Gerber, structures can include the following:

1. Physical things- like vending machines, roads, traffic lights or terrain.
2. Organizations- like corporations, governments, and schools.
3. Policies- like laws, regulations, and tax structures.
4. Ritual- habitual behaviors so ingrained that they are not conscious.

4. The Mental Model Level

Mental models are the Paradigm, the attitudes, beliefs, morals, expectations, and values that allow structures to continue functioning as they are. These are the beliefs that we often learn subconsciously from our society or family and are likely unaware of.

Imam Ali (a.s) summarized Iceberg model in this saying:

Sayings from Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence).

- The intellect is what arrives at what is correct through reasoning, and recognizes what has not yet happened through what has already taken place. (pattern recognition).
- The first opinion of the person of intellect is the last opinion of an ignorant person. (seeing the event as embodiment of mental model).
- A wise man first thinks (seeing the paradigm\ mental model) and then speaks and a fool speaks first and then thinks.
- Success is the result of foresight (system thinking) and resolution, foresight depends upon deep thinking and planning and the most important factor of planning is to keep your secrets to yourself.
- People in this world are like travelers whose journey is going on though they are asleep (seeing the world as Iceberg (visible and invisible)).
- Every breath you take is a step towards death (awareness of being finite, temporal).

Imam Ali and Phenomenology of system leadership:

In his magnum opus, *On Leadership*, John Gardner observes that when we ask a question countless times and arrive at no answer, we may be asking the wrong question or have misconceived the terms of the query (Gardner, 1990). Rather than wondering why the world is lacking in good leadership, we might begin by asking what it means to be a leader²⁹.

Leadership, however, is not computational, linear, or formulaic. In contrast to the natural sciences, leadership is best studied using a first-person “as-lived” phenomenological inquiry, which uses discourse, deliberation, and reflection to investigate how people experience what they experience and the meaning of that experience, be it a solar eclipse or a leadership challenge. A phenomenological inquiry into leadership does not study the properties and attributes of leaders, but rather the fundamental structures of human “being” that make it possible to be a leader in the first place³⁰.

Leadership education today is largely either single loop learning or second loop (third- person approach) focusing on teaching the learner someone else’s knowledge. While problem that leaders suffered from is triple loop problem, the blind spot, the origin from which the and the solution offered are almost always reduced to the single or double loop.

This blind spot concerns not the what and how- not what leaders do and how they do it- but the who: who we are and the inner place or source from which we operate, both individually and collectively.”.

Triple loop leaders working from the center, the heart, the hub, which give access for followers to be connected as whole, a team representing co- presencing.

M.F. Peschl in one great article about triple loop learning said: Ideally, this would mean a return of the value of the person and his/her “individual cultivation.” Individual cultivation concerns the formation of personality, values, habitus, the “core,” of a person. In many cases these issues are closely



related to the domain of wisdom³¹.

What is done in the letter to Malik al-Ashtar is making visible the invisible mental models\ paradigm and which has systematic structure that make leaders, governor work in this or that way.

Rather than enumerate the what and how of leaders, Imam Ali focused on developing personal mastery and cultivation of being, sharing with us the essential meaning of being governor & what is like to be a leader:

Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation. They will commit slips and encounter mistakes. They may act wrongly, wilfully or by neglect. So, extend to them your forgiveness and pardon, in the same way as you would like Allah to extend His forgiveness and pardon to you, because you are over them and your responsible Commander (Imam) is over you while Allah is over him who has appointed you. He (Allah) has sought you to manage their affairs and has tried you through them.

In this paragraph, Imam Ali (a.s) determined- from the beginning- the source from which he worked and talked, the heart, and this will be manifested in all his later on orders as embodiment of pure heart, which can be opened to see through the eyes of others , through the eyes of God, which make him one whole on the individual level and creating collective intentionality and action on the level of people. This is why Imam Ali (a) is the sign of system thinking, system leadership, triple loop learning, presencing (Theory U) and transcendental phenomenology^{32,33,34,35}.

Then he ordered him in the name of God, not through his name to be:

He has ordered him to fear Allah, to prefer obedience to Him, and to follow what He has commanded in His Book (Qur'an) out of His obligatory and elective commands, without following which one cannot achieve virtue, nor

(can one) be evil save by opposing them and ignoring them, and to help Allah the Glorified, with his hand, heart and tongue, because Allah whose name is Sublime takes the responsibility for helping him who helps Him, and for protecting him who gives Him support. He also orders him to break his heart off from passions, and to restrain it at the time of their increase, because the heart leads towards evil unless Allah has mercy.

In this last statement, Imam Ali asked him to bracket his selfish desire and whims as they are blinding him from seeing the truth, from seeing God, hence he should transcend this level of being and move to higher one to be connected to the source and the possibility of presencing.

Leading from future:

“Then, know, O Malik, that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticize you as you criticized them (rulers). Surely, the virtuous are known by the reputation that Allah circulates for them through the tongues of His creatures. Therefore, the best collection with you should be the collection of good deeds. So, control your passions and check your heart from doing what is not lawful for you, because checking the heart means detaining it just half way between what it likes and dislikes.

In this paragraph, Imam Ali (a.s) illustrate the danger of downloading past prejudgment and seeing people from his perspective forgetting that he was citizen like them, and surely know what is expected from him as governor. This paragraph represents a very important theory in leadership known as theory U, which is founded on phenomenology of both Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau- Ponty.& Varela^{33,34,35}.

This Theory is embodied clearly in Quran and Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence).

Imam Ali and Theory U:

To understand theory U, we need to know the pathology which this theory tried to cure which is summarized by Otto Scharmer, the father of this theory: "Why do our attempts to deal with the challenges of our time so often fail? Why are we stuck in so many quagmires today? The cause of our collective failure is that we are blind to the deeper dimension of leadership and transformational change. This "blind spot" exists not only in our collective leadership but also in our everyday social interactions. We are blind to the source dimension from which effective leadership and social action come into being"³⁶.

There are two therapies for this blind spot:

the first one offered by God through religion in its last version, updated version which is downloaded to His prophet Mohammed which is known as Islam which can be gained through Holy Quran and the practice the Prophet (s) and Ahl al bait (a). God give the authority and license to a special people who actualized the self- transcendence and become a transcendental\ pure ego, enabled them to see things as they are, as they did complete bracketing to their whims, personal affair and desires, they fully submitted to God that they are ready to sacrifice their self ,their money and their family as evidenced through Imam Hussein in the battel of Kerbala .

For this reason, the prophet ordered us to be with them, not walking in front of them to give them the opportunity to lead us to phenomenology of God, religion, Islam.

Hence The prophet and Ahl Al bait(a) are chosen as paradigm, mental model for practicing Islam, this the meaning of being Imam, Leaders, they guided people to the phenomenological hermeneutic of Islam in every aspect of lifeworld.

The second therapy is lifeworld system thinking which is transdisciplinary approach to human and nature issue, aimed at shifting the attitude from ego –

system (I- it attitude) to eco- system (I- You attitude).

This second answer is the outcome of practicing Islam in Quranic way guided by Ahul Bait as paradigm.

Lifeworld system thinking approach adopted by both religious and secular persons which is underpinned by transcendental phenomenology and theory U and fifth discipline.

Theory U proposes that the quality of the results that we create in any kind of social system is a function of the quality of awareness, attention, or consciousness that the participants in the system operate from. Since it emerged around 2006, Theory U has come to be understood in three primary ways: first as a framework; second, as a method for leading profound change; and third, as a way of being-connecting to the more authentic of higher aspects of our self^{32,36}.

Shifting the Inner Place from Which We Operate:

God in Quran revealed that without changing the inner place from which you operate, He will not change the psychological, spiritual social, economic structure.

The reason is shown before in the Iceberg system thinking model in which the transformation should be happened at the level of paradigm\ mental model which represent the source from which our being\ identity and overlying structure emerge.

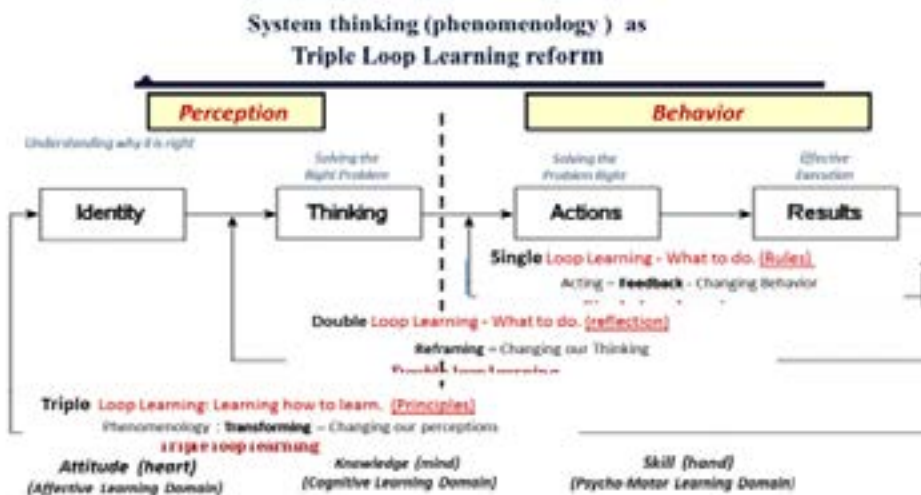
Otto Scharmer, the father of the theory U and founder of U- lab said³⁶:

The essence of that view is that we cannot transform the behavior of systems unless we transform the quality of awareness and attention that people apply to their actions within these systems, both individually and collectively.



Adapted from:

<https://www.presencing.com/theoryu>



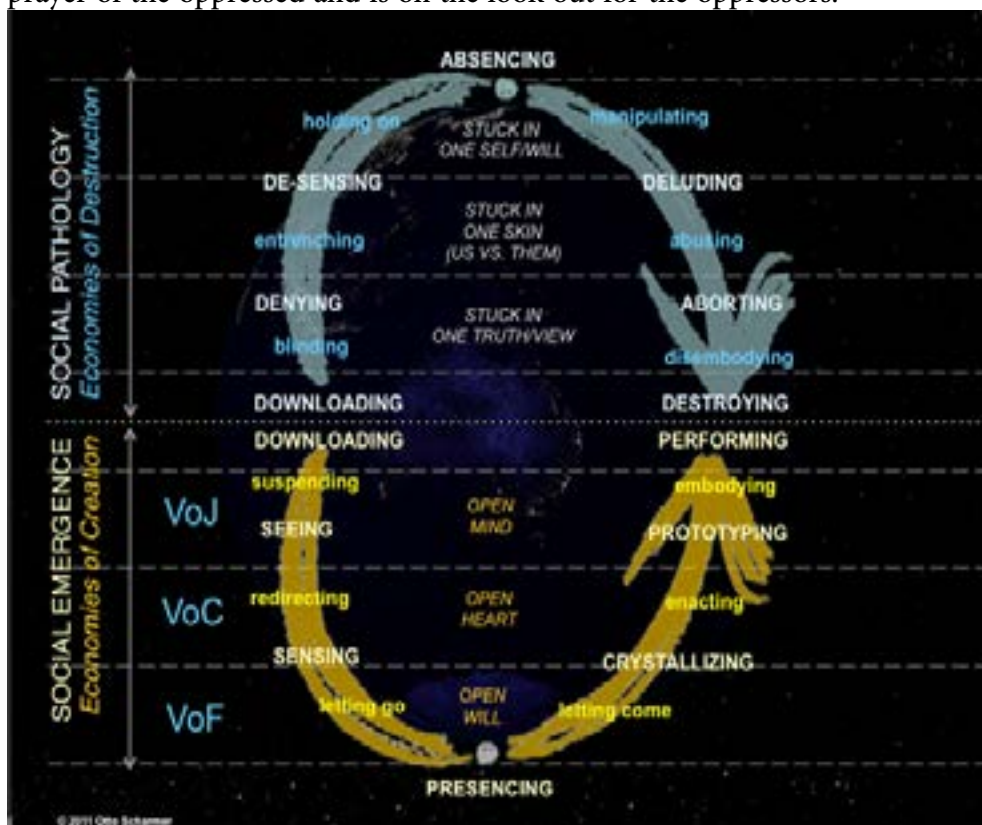
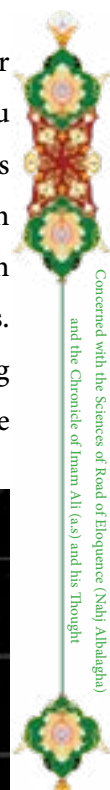
Modified from this original slide done by AbramsLearning-ALIS

Now let us see what God revealed in Quran about this issue of blind spot:

Allah does not change what is in a nation unless they change what is in themselves. 11.13

Let us see what Imam Ali (a.s) said in this treasure of wisdom:

Do justice for Allah and do justice towards the people, as against yourself, your near ones and those of your subjects for whom you have a liking because if you do not do so you will be oppressive, and when a person oppresses the creatures of Allah then, instead of His creatures, Allah becomes his opponent, and when Allah is the opponent of a person He tramples his plea; and he will remain in the position of being at war with Allah until he gives it up and repents. Nothing is more inducive of the reversal of Allah's bounty or for the hastening of His retribution than continuance in oppression, because Allah hears the prayer of the oppressed and is on the look out for the oppressors.



U-lab is an embodiment of Quranic phenomenology

What happened inside the U-lab that make it road to Quranic phenomenology?

It is exactly what happened inside prayer in which presencing of God become possible after stopping working within downloading attitude. In prayer we shift our consciousness, our attention from this world and people and our self to God. Connecting with God through prayer is conditioned by disconnecting from any relative issue. Hence in Islam there five daily exercise in U process, in which we shift from ego- system to compassionate- system.

To understand the interpretation of prayer as U-lab, U-process, we need to know the outcome of being completing this U- process^{32,36}.

U- lab as shift from Natural (Downloading) attitude:

U- lab is to shift from natural attitude, downloading attitude in which we impose our prejudgment and presumption, expectation which are originated from our blind spot (the unexamined paradigm) making us closed heart represented by the blue U (Absencing) which is the most commonly adopted and which is responsible for the crisis in all dimensions of lifeworld. The shifting from this downloading attitude to Yellow U- attitude (presencing) is exactly the same as done by Husserl using bracketing and reduction to the phenomenological attitude Hence we can choose the Quranic Phenomenology as trigger to this process. knowing that Husserl project of transcendental phenomenology is based on this simple premise is helpful in understanding the interrelationship between Theory U, phenomenology and Quran:

The condition that make the essences, the whole revealed\ disclosed in our lived experience, is to be transcendental ego, pure\ free of presuppositions, which is reached through epoche, bracketing and phenomenological reduction. Imam Ali (a) confirmed this conclusion by this saying:

To separate oneself from things of time and to connect oneself with things of eternity is highest wisdom.

What make this correlation between being pure, transcendental and seeing the truth\ essences is our being intentional, there is One being, having different modes of appearance according to this intentionality, which is the heart of Phenomenology and Quran.

Bracketing as condition for lived experience:

The first step to enter U-lab is to bracket the habitual\ natural\ downloading attitude in which our action is originated from our ego- system, so we see only what we know .in this attitude we are embodiment of reductive thinking, either\ or thinking, which made us blind to other truth which is not confirming our own truth. Hence we remain inside the past, reaching the dot of absencing as shown in the above figure¹⁷.

If we suspended\ bracket this attitude, we give the opportunity to be opened, entering listening attitude which is called by Husserl phenomenological attitude, in which shifting happened from the visible (10%) to the invisible (90%) using Iceberg system thinking model²⁷.

This redirecting, shifting in paradigm, in attitude made our being opened at the level of mind, heart and will experienced as letting go of the socially constructed ego to letting come of transcendental\ compassionate intersubjective ego experienced as The We.

In summary U- lab is shift from the primacy of I (ego- system) to the primacy of the We (eco- syststm) experienced religiously as God\ Allah, the ultimate source of meaning.

Let us return to Imam Ali (a.s.) who said:

All holy books are present inside Quran, All Quran is present inside Fateha (Opening) and all Fateha is present inside the Basmala (by the name of God, most compassionate, most merciful)., & all Basmala is present in the letter Ba,a (ب) and I am the dot under this letter.

If we assume that the Dot is like hub, and what we need now to save the world



is to be hub, Dot, which unify all actions and performance from the whole.

One of the secret of meaning of seeing Imam Ali as hub, as Dot, as unifying source of reference which make us working as a system.

The prophet said to Muslims Describing Ali (a.s):

Ali is with the truth and the truth is with Ali, it circles around him and he circle around her

This is what U- lab hub in kerbala university working on, & if you need more information you can contact us.

Imam Ali (a.s) and fifth discipline

What is the fifth discipline?

“breakthroughs come when people learn how to take the time to stop and examine their assumptions”.

- Peter M. Senge,

The fifth discipline is the system thinking which is organized all parts which are presencing of the whole which make them interdependent, meaningful and organized autopoietic entity that can produce effective change, learning and innovation.

The core of this work is based upon Peter Senge five learning disciplines. These five disciplines come together to form a system (a whole).

The outcome of this system is learning organizing on the level of individual, the team, and the organization^{22,23}.

Peter Senge defined learning organization as: continually expand the capacity to create desired results, nurture new and expansive patterns of thinking, set free collective aspiration through enabling people to continually learn how to learn together. Learning organizations are fundamentally different from traditional authoritarian "controlling organizations." Rather, they excel by tapping people's commitment and through capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.

Learning organization is embodiment of autopoiesis and phenomenology²³.

What are these five discipline?

1. **Personal Mastery:** is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision to create the results most desired²².
2. **Mental Models:** are deeply ingrained generalizations and visions influencing how we see and understand the world and how we take action.
3. **Building Shared Visions:** builds a sense of commitment in a group.
4. **Team Learning:** is the transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual member's talents.
5. **Systems Thinking:** integrates all five disciplines, fusing them into a coherent body of methods, tools, and principles, all oriented to looking at the interrelatedness of forces, and seeing them as part of a common process. systems thinking is attitude, way of seeing that determine our action, making individuals perceive themselves as part of a whole. At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind– from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to be connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something 'out there' to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience”



How Imam Ali (a.s) addressed these five discipline in his letter:

I will choose paragraphs from the letter which instantiate each discipline:

1. First discipline: **Personal Mastery**



There is a main central idea running all through this letter, like one single thread out of which the cloth is woven, it is that of Awareness. Awareness that God is the the only paradigm that should guide his action and decision, he should that real governor is God, we are just servant to him and his creatures. Hence the primary attitude is to be compassionate and merciful and this can't be achieved unless he is mindful, self- aware through prayer and worship of God which is the best path to be One whole and feeling wellbeing and integrity because the relation with God make us become like the Dot, which make remove multiple meaning (interpretation) from the words, so in being with God, the single truth ,the clear meanings become visible in every experience. This is what phenomenology try to achieve also using bracketing and reduction which make us reaching zero state, pure ego.

Knowing ourselves is the original way to know God and others, as this self-awareness make us open mind, open heart, open will, in summary make us like a dot.

Imam Ali (a) ordered Malik to be aware of the people and environment using faithful, pious people who are afraid from God. They make the hidden part of the iceberg visible through continuous feedback making the blind window enlightened which represent the image the people had about him.

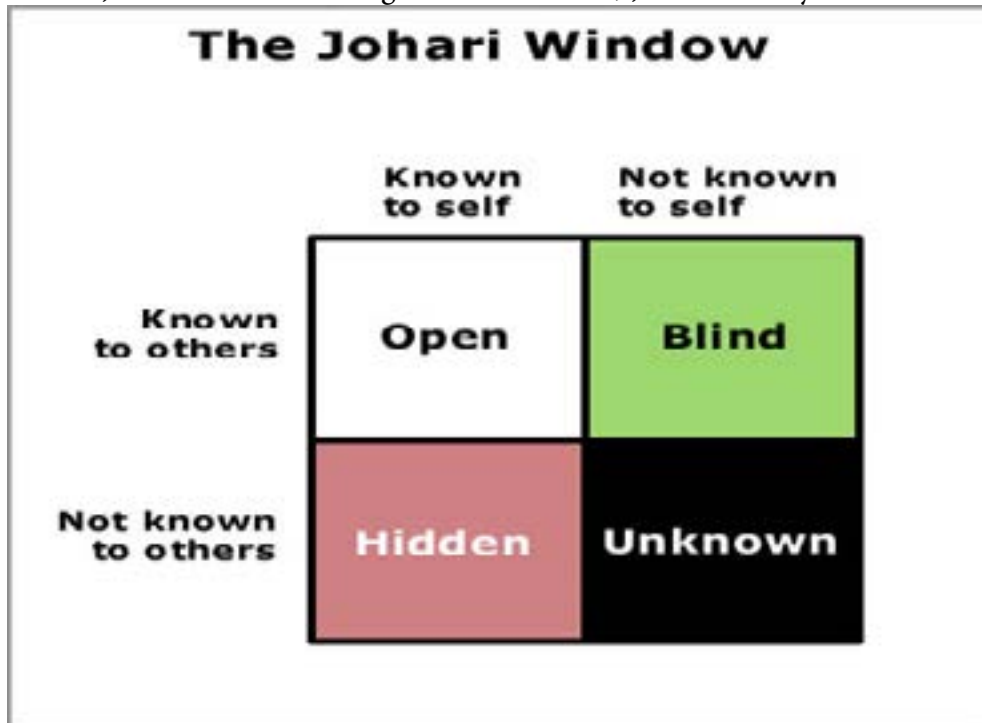
For this reason, the outcome of enacting this letter is a triple loop\ ontological personal mastery in a way that he will be embodiment of paradigm espoused. The personal mastery to be achieved, Imam Ali (a) instructed Malik to practice self-awareness, open communication with people, being accessible to all classes of the community, building team of counsellors who are the scientist and philosopher. These instructions can become clear if we read them using Johari window.

What is Johari window

aspect of the letter led us to The Johari window is a technique used to help



people better understand their relationship with themselves and others, which was created by psychologists Joseph Luft (1916– 2014) and Harrington Ingham (1916– 1995) in 1955. It is used primarily in self- help groups and corporate settings as a heuristic exercise. Luft and Ingham called their Johari Window model 'Johari' after combining their first names, Joe and Harry³⁷.



Adapted from this site: <http://www.stonewritten.com/?p=3902>

Reading the letter now bringing with us these paradigms can make understand the underlying science, philosophy of each instruction. Imam Ali (a) is evidenced based person, speaking only after seeing the essence, the core of experience. We introduce now these paragraph which reflect the depth of insight represented in this letter which summarized the

Let us read what Imam Ali said:

“You should avoid self-admiration, having reliance in what appears good in

yourself and love of exaggerated praise because this is one of the most reliable opportunities for Satan to obliterate the good deeds of the virtuous”.

“If the subjects suspect you of high-handedness, explain to them your position openly and remove their suspicion with your explanation, because this would mean exercise for your soul and consideration to the subjects while this explanation will secure your aim of keeping them firm in truth.

“Do not enter into an agreement which may admit of different interpretations and do not change the interpretation of vague words after the conclusion and confirmation (of the agreement). If an agreement of Allah involves you in hardship do not seek its repudiation without justification, because the bearing of hardships through which you expect relief and a handsome result is better than a violation whose consequence you fear, and that you fear that you will be called upon by Allah to account for it and you will not be able to seek forgiveness for it in this world or the next”.

“Then, do not keep yourself secluded from the people for a long time, because the seclusion of those in authority from the subjects is a kind of narrow-sightedness and causes ignorance about their affairs. Seclusion from them also prevents them from the knowledge of those things which they do not know and as a result they begin to regard big matters as small and small matters as big, good matters as bad and bad matters as good, while the truth becomes confused with falsehood. After all, a governor is a human being and cannot have knowledge of things which people keep hidden from him”.

2- Second discipline: Mental model

Adopting divine Paradigm\ mental model is embodied in different way in this letter it is the foundation on which the structure and action of the government and governor is established.

Here Imam Ali disclose this paradigm clearly:

“He has ordered him to fear Allah, to prefer obedience to Him, and to follow



what He has commanded in His Book (Qur'an) out of His obligatory and elective commands, without following which one cannot achieve virtue, nor (can one) be evil save by opposing them and ignoring them, and to help Allah the Glorified, with his heart, hand and tongue, because Allah whose name is Sublime takes the responsibility for helping him who helps Him, and for protecting him who gives Him support.

“He also orders him to break his heart off from passions, and to restrain it at the time of their increase, because the heart leads towards evil unless Allah has mercy”.

Love should become Habitus:

“Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them.

Greed make heart closed:

“Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation.

Acceptance of weakness of being human, being fallible:

They will commit slips and encounter mistakes. They may act wrongly, willfully or by neglect. So, extend to them your forgiveness and pardon, in the same way as you would like Allah to extend His forgiveness and pardon to you, because you are over them and your responsible Commander (Imam) is over you while Allah is over him who has appointed you. He (Allah) has sought you to manage their affairs and has tried you through them.

3- Third Discipline: Shared vision

The first thing done by Imam Ali is to make his vision about Governor, government, about himself visible to be shared:

“This is what Allah's servant `Ali, Amir al-mu'minin, has ordered Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar in his instrument (of appointment) for him when he made

him Governor of Egypt for the collection of its revenues, fighting against its enemies, seeking the good of its people and making its cities prosperous”.

4-Forth discipline: Team learning

One of the important which governor in need is to make honest, wise consultant who can share their mind with them and learn together.

What help him in this issue is the religious practices in Islam are a form of these five discipline which are manifest as collective intentionality and action. For example, the prayer, is opportunity for U- process, U- lab as we explained it before, making co- seeing co- sensing, co- enaction possible. Islam in essence is co- learning\ cooperative paradigm

Here Imam Ali put the criteria to choose our teamwork:

“Do not include among those you consult a miser who would keep you back from being generous and caution you against destitution, nor a coward who would make you feel too weak for your affairs, nor a greedy person who would make beautiful to you the collection of wealth by evil ways. This is because miserliness, cowardice and greed are different qualities that an unfavorable opinion of Allah brings together”.

“Then, more preferable among them for you should be those who openly speak better truths before you and who support you least in those of your actions which Allah does not approve in His friends, even though they may be according to your wishes. Associate yourself with God-fearing and truthful people; then educate them, so that they should not praise you or please you by reason of an action you did not perform, because an excess of praise produces pride and drives you near haughtiness”.

“The worst minister for you is he who has been a minister for mischievous persons before you, and who joined them in sins. Therefore, he should not be your chief man, because they are abettors of sinners and brothers of the oppressors. You can find good substitutes for them who will be like them in

their views and influence, while not being like them in sins and vices. They have never assisted an oppressor in his oppression or a sinner in his sin. They will give you the least trouble and the best support. They will be most considerate towards you and the least inclined towards others. Therefore, make them your chief companions in privacy as well as in public.

5-The fifth discipline: System thinking

We don't need to explain here what we mean by system thinking, as it is done before.

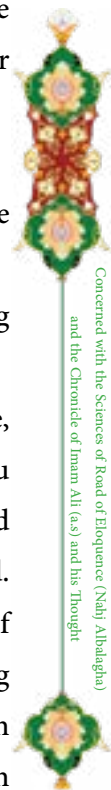
We share here paragraphs showing how Imam Ali (a) is a system thinking paradigm:

Do not appropriate to yourself that in which the people have an equal share, nor be regardless of matters which have come to light with the excuse that you are accountable for others. Shortly, the curtains of all matters will be raised from your view and you will be required to render redress to the oppressed. Have control over (your) sense of prestige, any outburst of anger, the might of your arm and the sharpness of your tongue. Guard against all this by avoiding haste and by delaying severe action till your anger subsides and you regain your self-control. You cannot withhold yourself from this unless you bear in mind that you have to return to Allah.

System thinker should not be blind to past

It is necessary for you to recall how matters went with those who preceded you, be it a government or a great tradition or a precedent of our Prophet (may Allah bless him and his descendants) or the obligatory commands contained in the Book of Allah. Then you should follow them as you have seen us acting upon them and should exert yourself in following that I have enjoined upon you in this document in which I have exhausted my pleas on you, so that if your heart advances towards its passions you may have no plea in its support.

Poverty: system thinking approach:



“The poverty of the people is the actual cause of the devastation and ruination of a country and the main cause of the poverty of the people is the desire of its ruler and officers to amass wealth and possessions whether by fair or foul means. They are afraid of losing their posts or positions and sway or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal. They never learn any lesson from the history of nations and never pay any attention to the commands of Allah.

Conclusion:

The finding of this study grouped into three outcomes:

1- This study main task is to make the tacit paradigm used by Imam Ali (a) visible. The paradigm used by Imam Ali that enabled him produced such letter is Divine paradigm which made him like Dot, pure of mundane ego, giving the space for transcendental ego to emerge.

Imam Ali (a) road to Transcendental ego through submissions to only God, the truth, the Being, which liberate him from any personal inters and concern. This liberation made him seeing the things as they are, seeing the essences in any experience as long as he overlooked the contingent, the relative aspect of this experience.

What is practiced by Imam Ali (a) is known now as System thinking paradigm which is grounded in transcendental phenomenology. This explain the secret behind the timeless presence of the words of Quran, Nahaj Alabalagha and Ahl bait traditions, they are describing things as they, if we shift from mundane ego to Dot-ego (transcendental) we can share the truth of them.

2- The second outcome is that importance of using different frames of reference like: phenomenology, Theory U, system thinking iceberg model, triple loop learning, made us seeing the letter in new eyes, disclosing the phenomenological\ ontological answers that address 21 century problems. Like the phenomenology of being governor, leader, human being, Muslim.

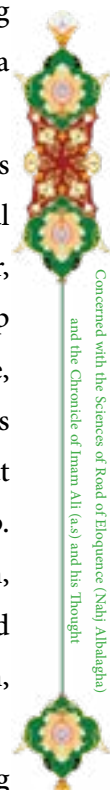
This letter is a hypertext which is able to be read from different perspective, frames. These frames of reference made us expose the paradigms used by Imam Ali which can be transferred to our postmodern context after liberating them from their historical revelation integrating them in our lifeworld as a paradigm for education, medicine, leadership, politics and religion.

3-the third outcome is adopting system leadership which can solve the crisis globally and locally. System leadership is phenomenological\ ontological leadership which answer this ontological question, what is like to be a leader, the answer is: awareness, commitment, integrity, and authenticity. Leadership is mode of being before being mode of understanding, it is about who we are, our being and identity, which is the blind spot of most theories and courses about leadership. Imam Ali through his letter enlighten this area in way that induced a paradigm shift in the discourse of management and leadership. Imam Ali described leadership as servant, ontological, transformation, quantum, relational mode of being which is best summarized in one word as lifeworld system leadership which is the condition that make any person, group of persons, organization an autopoiesis.

My conclusion is that Imam Ali can be seen as a paradigm of system thinking and lifeworld (transcendental) phenomenology which can be summarized in one phrase: embodiment of Quranic Phenomenology.

Recommendation:

- Establishing Center for Quranic Phenomenology as it is presented by Quran, the prophet, Imam Ali and Ahl bait to breathe new life into our religious discourse, reviving and rejuvenate it making it globally and locally integrated into people lifeworld using new frames of reference, new language that address the new generation of the 21 century.
- I recommend establishing Translation centers which make such treasures applicable in our everyday practice. This is what we need in the age of



information to create centers for wisdom.

References

*Holy Quran.

1-Nahj al-Balagha (The path to Eloquence). Letter 53: An order to Malik al-Ashtar

2- Husserl, E., 2001, Logical Investigations. Vols. One and Two, Trans. J. N. Findlay. Ed.

3- Husserl Edmund, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book, translated by F. Kersten, (Dordrecht: Kulwer Academic Publishers, 1982), pp. 214- 215.

4- Husserl, Edmund. Cartesian Meditations. Trans. D. Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.

5- M. Natanson (Ed.), Phenomenology and the Social Sciences, Volume 1, p. 6- 8.

6- Richard Kearney. Hermeneutics of the Possible God. Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia, T. 60, Fasc. 4, Filosofia & Cristianismo: II- Efeitos Pós- Modernos (Oct.- Dec., 2004), pp. 929- 952.

7- Sokolowski, R., 2000, Introduction to Phenomenology. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

8- Moran, Dermot. Introduction to Phenomenology. London: Routledge, 2000

9- Bertalanffy, L. von, (1969). General System Theory. New York: George Braziller,

10-The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. 4th edn, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

11- Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary. Micra Inc., 1998.

12- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

13- Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1994), "Competing paradigms in qualitative

research". In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105117-). California: Sage

14- Huitt, W. (2007). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved [date] from, <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html>

15- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of the European sciences and transcendental phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

16- Hut, P. (2001) The Role of Husserl's Epoche for Science: A View From a Physicist. Invited paper presented at the 31st Husserl Circle Conference, Bloomington, IN.

17- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Public

18- Gearing, R. E. (2004). Bracketing in research: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14,1429- 1452.

19- Pylkkanen P., The quantum epoche, *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pbiomolbio.2015.08.014>

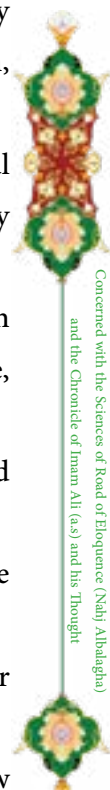
20- Ausubel, D. P. (1968). *Educational psychology: A cognitive view*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

21-Capra, F. (1983). *The turning point: Science, society, and the rising culture*. Toronto: Bantam Books,.

22-Hummelbrunner, R. and Reynolds, M. (2013). Systems thinking, learning and values in evaluation. *Evaluation Connections: The European Evaluation Society Newsletter*, June 2013, pp.9- 10.

23- Mezirow JE. 1995. Transformative learning: Theory to practice. In: Welton MR, editor. *In defense of the lifeworld*. New York: Suny Press. pp 36– 70.

24- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978) *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*, Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.



- 25- Buber M: I and Thou.2nd edition. New York,: Scribner; 1958:137.
- 26-Senge, P. M. (1990). The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization. New York:
- 27- <https://nwei.org/resources/iceberg/>-. Retrieved November 2016
- 28- Gardner, J. (1990). On Leadership. New York: The Free Press.
- 29- Souba, W. W. (2014). The Phenomenology of Leadership. Open Journal of Leadership, 3, 77- 105. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2014.34008>
- 30- M.F. Peschl. Triple-loop learning as foundation for profound change, individual cultivation, and radical innovation. Construction processes beyond scientific and rational knowledge. Journal of Constructivist Foundations ,2, 2- 3- page :136- 145. 2007.
- 31- Senge, P., Scharmer, C. O., Jaworski, J. & Flow-ers, B. S. (2004) Presence. Human purpose and the field of the future. Society for Organizational Learning: Cambridge MA.
- 32- Heidegger, M., 1962, Being and Time, Trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row. From the German original of 1927.
- 33- Merleau- Ponty, M., 2012, Phenomenology of Perception, Trans. Donald A. Landes. London and New York: Routledge. Prior translation, 1996, Phenomenology of Perception, Trans. Colin Smith. London and New York: Routledge. From the French original of 1945.
- 34- Varela, F. J., Thompson, E. & Rosch, E. (1991) The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience. MIT Press: Cam-bridge MA.
- 35- <https://www.presencing.com/theoryu>.Retrieved November 2016.
- 36- Luft, J.; Ingham, H. (1955). "The Johari window, a graphic model of interpersonal awareness". Proceedings of the western training laboratory in group development. Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles.