

THE BEHAVIOUR OF ECONOMIC AGENT IN ISLĀM

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Abstract; *some notable economists believe that Economics is of normative science, which always focuses on the 'what should be' statement. Therefore, it is included in the science of ethics, considering that it discusses an attitude of an individual in economic activity. Unfortunately, modern economics born from the womb of Western Civilization was influenced by Utilitarianism, which is undoubtedly contradictory to Islam. This certainly will create problems in the future for Muslims, especially in economic activities both on an individual and social scale. This article will discuss how Islam should view the behavior of an economic agent. This research is qualitative in nature, using the methos of literature survey. The results of the study show that the correct understanding of Islam, the worldview of Islam, and the true nature of human beings and their actions will keep Muslim behavior as an economic agent from being trapped into un-Islamic behavior in economic activities.*

المخلص: اعتقد بعض الاقتصاديين البارزين أن الاقتصاد هو نوع من العلوم المعيارية، والذي يركز دائماً على عبارة "ما يجب أن يكون". فمن ثم هو من علم الأخلاق، معتبراً أنه يناقش كيف يتصرف الشخص في النشاط الاقتصادي. لكن لسوء الحظ، تأثرت الاقتصاد الحديث المولود من رحم الحضارة الغربية بالنفعية التي تناقضت الإسلام بلا شك. سيؤدي هذا خلق مشاكل للمسلمين في المستقبل خاصة في الأنشطة الاقتصادية سواء على المستوى الفردي أو الاجتماعي. يناقش هذا المقال كيف يكون موقف الوكيل الاقتصادي وفقاً للإسلام. هذا البحث هو نوعي في الطبيعة، وذلك باستخدام منهجية مسح الأدب ومراجعته. تظهر نتائج الدراسة أن الفهم الصحيح للإسلام، ورؤية الإسلام للوجود، والطبيعة الحقيقية للبشر وأفعالهم سوف تبقى سلوك المسلمين كعوامل اقتصادية من الوقوع في سلوك غير إسلامي في الأنشطة الاقتصادية.

Abstrak; Beberapa ekonom terkemuka menyakini bahwa Ilmu Ekonomi merupakan jenis ilmu normatif, yang selalu fokus kepada pernyataan ‘apa yang seharusnya’. Oleh karena itu ia termasuk ilmu etika, mengingat ia membahas bagaimana sikap seorang dalam beraktifitas ekonomi. Namun sayangnya, Ilmu Ekonomi modern yang lahir dari rahim Peradaban Barat ini dipengaruhi paham Utilitarisme yang tidak diragukan lagi bertentangan dengan Islam. Hal ini tentu akan melahirkan masalah dikemudian hari bagi umat Islam khususnya dalam aktivitas ekonomi baik dalam skala individu maupun sosial. Artikel ini akan membahas bagaimana seharusnya perilaku seorang agen ekonomi dipandang oleh agama Islam. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif, dengan menggunakan metodologi survei literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kesimpulan bahwa pemahaman yang benar tentang Agama Islam, pandangan dunia Islam, dan sifat asli manusia dan perbuatannya akan menjaga perilaku Muslim sebagai agen ekonomi dari terjebak kedalam perilaku yang tidak Islami dalam beraktifitas ekonomi.

Keywords: *Agen Ekonomi, Pandangan Hidup Islam, Utilitarianism*

INTRODUCTION

The science of economics that was initiated by Adam Smith in the late of 18th century has been methodologically controversial. The trigger was the question whether the economics is of positive or normative science. By positive, it means that it is independent of any particular ethical position or normative judgment, as Keynes says *it deals with ‘what is’ not with ‘what ought to be’*.¹ That statement at a glance gives impression that those people inclined to construe the economics equal to the exact sciences in approach.

¹ Milton Friedman. *The Methodology of Positive Economics* in *The Philosophy of Economics*, ed. Daniel M. Hausman, 147.

The bulk of economists that considered the economics as positive science is absolutely wrong, for it is not natural science whose objects are typically non-living beings that neither possesses will nor ability to think of, such as mineral, plants and animals. Therefore no wonder, although the convincing assumptions and premises had been established, many economists in recent decades rarely succeeds in predicting much less avoiding the economic crisis. By virtue of that, an Austrian economist, Ludwig von Mises argued that the economics is not only science that is busy with subtle mathematical functions and models, but also encompasses human action.²

On the other hand, some groups of people believe that the economics falls within the realm of normative sciences. Being one of the normative, it in turn may say how people *should* behave, not what people actually do.³ Consequently, as such the discussion on how people *should* behave is totally a discourse of ethics. Considering the predominance of Utilitarianism in the period in which the science of economics came into existence, it is plausible, when the ethical issues in economic arises, to limit its scope strictly to the individual rather than to any specific society or community, for in the Utilitarian's view the social entities are of no intrinsic moral importance.⁴

Utilitarianism's principle hereby influenced the simplistic premise in the economics, that is, human being acts rationally out of

² In 1949 Mises's magnum opus 'Human Action' was published.

³ Daniel M. Hausman and Michael S. McPherson. *The Philosophical Foundations of Mainstream Normative Economics* in *The Philosophy of Economics*, ed. Daniel M. Hausman, 236.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 237.

his self-interest, the proposition that needs to be examined further; and hence as such what matters morally is only the welfare of sentient beings.⁵ Therefore, the individual can do whatever he likes as long as he could not harm others. Consequently, social policies, processes, practices and institutions should be appraised by their consequences for individual well-being.⁶

However, Utilitarianism as a main ideology of normative economics absolutely has shortcomings in some points. The most telling one is that it has no clear-cut concept of harm and well-being set up for all human beings with diverse characteristics and backgrounds. As a result, the question on how people *should* behave, which is intrinsically ethical matter, is can never really be solved due to Utilitarianism's weakness to measure the good or bad of all human beings' actions.

In light of the brief explanation above, one can spot a hole of defect in the body of current economics that needs solution that results in justice for all creatures, even though it deals primarily with economics, and hence its object, that is, human actions. Evaluating and comparing various system of law scattered in the history of humankind, it is no exaggerate to nominate the Islamic law in order for us to tackle this ethical issues. Throughout this essay, therefore, all the behaviour of human beings, especially the economic-driven activity, are evaluated within Islamic perspective.

⁵ Ibid., 237. Mainstream welfare economics, which is normative, in fact was influenced by Utilitarianism.

⁶ Ibid., 237.

THE RELIGION OF ISLĀM

Before discussing the behaviour of economic agent in Islamic perspective, it is necessary to have discussion first about Islām generally, in order for the reader to be familiar with it. First, it should be stated here that unlike other religions, Islām as religion (*dīn*) is not cultural synthesis, that could be studied apart from the economics, sociology, and Western scholars have propounded politics of the Islamic peoples as in many occasions.⁷ Consequently, it is wrong as well to reduce the meaning and definition of Islām to mere ‘tent and tribe’,⁸ for there is no logical reason to call Islām as tribe, for it is totally different with Judaism, Confucianism, Ancient Persian, that are confined only to ethnical group and geographical scope. It is also distinguished from Christianity that underwent process of development in her early formation era.⁹

With regard to the originality of Islām, al-Attas strongly asserts in the introduction part of his *Prolegomena*, that:

...“Islām is not a form of culture, and its system of thought projecting its vision of reality and truth and the system of value derived from it are not merely derived from cultural and philosophical elements aided by science, but one whose original source is Revelation,

⁷ Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. (Great Britain: Penguin, 1978), 105

⁸ Renan in Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. (Great Britain: Penguin, 1978), 105

⁹ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. *Risalah untuk Kaum Muslimin*. (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2014), 11. See also al-Attas. *Islām and Secularism*. (Kuala Lumpur, ISTAC, 1990), 15.

*confirmed by religion, affirmed by intellectual and intuitive principles”.*¹⁰

The fact that Islām is revealed by God The Almighty through angle of Gabriel is clear evidence that this religion (*dīn*) is free from any imperfections which are undoubtedly human repertoire. Gabriel brought it to the noblest creature of the universe, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is true that Prophet Muhammad is human being, yet we confirm the degree of soul in term of its nobility. He never told lie out of his desire, so much so that the Arab in the period ascribed *al-Amīn* (trustworthy) to him.¹¹ The Revelation, therefore must not be corrupted, and it was received as it was.

None in this world is equivalent to Prophet Muhammad in understanding the meaning and essence of the Holy Qur’ān. It behooved him then to explicate it through his acts, sayings, or judgement, which were later Muslim scholars, named them prophetic tradition (*sunnah*). The prophetic tradition and the Prophet himself constituted the Reality and Truth. Every Muslim thus is required to believe in them. The prophetic tradition along with the Holy Qur’ān were left by Prophet Muhammad to be Guide for Muslīm as well as the main Sources in Islām.

Perhaps some may be informed by writings of Western scholars that Islām, just like other religion, underwent the development in the

¹⁰ See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. *Prolegomena to The Metaphysics of Islām*. (Kuala Lumpur: CASIS-UTM, 2014), 4. Hereafter cited as *Prolegomena*.

¹¹ QS.53:3.

religious tradition of humankind. With regard to this, al-Attas clarifies that:

“.. developmental process in the case of Islām is only process of interpretation and elaboration which must of necessity occur in alternating generations of believers of different nations, and which refer back to the unchanging Source.”¹²

He explains further that Islām had been already perfected since its beginning. The essentials of the religion such as the name, the faith and practice, the rituals, the creed and system of belief were given by Revelation, not from cultural tradition which necessarily must flow in the stream of historicism.¹³ The fundamental elements like the nature of God; of Revelation; of His creatures; of man and the psychology of the human soul; of knowledge; of religion; of freedom; of values and virtues; of happiness – are permanently established.¹⁴

Over than one millennium, ‘*ulamā*’ in the past had painstakingly struggled keeping the original meaning of these fundamental elements. In the present age, these fundamental elements of Islām, challenged by modernity, should be maintained by every Muslim so that their meanings remain the same and undamaged as they were. This part does have relation to the title of this essay, for the

¹² See al-Attas. *Prolegomena*. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

behaviour of human beings reflects and indicates their understanding about these fundamental elements, and hence in general become evidence whether they pay attention to the religious knowledge.

Islām should be understood as *dīn*, which is the Arabic word, found in the Holy Qur'ān. It is improper as long as Islām is concerned to construe it as *religion* as interpreted and understood throughout Western religious history.¹⁵ This is due to fact that Arabic language, after being Islamized by the Holy Qur'ān, does have scientific character in nature, so that it is guaranteed of precision with respect to meaning.¹⁶ One distinguished feature of Arabic language that makes it so special, is that it has system of root, so any derivation derived from one original word has close meaning to the latter's. In other words, they have close interconnected significations.

Every economic agent, especially those who are Muslim, should know that the term *dīn* has four primary significations, they are: (1) *indebtedness*; (2) *submissiveness*; (3) *judicious power*; (4) *natural inclination or tendency*.¹⁷ He was *indebted* to God because God had given him chance to experience living in this world. Thus God as Debtor, deserves the *submissiveness* of the one who is indebted to Him, that is, man. Thereafter, God through the religion of Islām, has *judicious power* over His creatures. Finally, man as His slave and being *indebted*, must have *natural inclination* to willingly serve and worship God.

¹⁵ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶ See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. *The Concept of Education in Islām*. (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1999), 2

¹⁷ See al-Attas. *Prolegomena*. 42.

Knowing that he himself is in the state of being indebted to God, man has nothing to repay the debt unless he returns himself back to his Lord, otherwise he will always be in the state of loss (*khusr*).¹⁸ Al-Qur’ān provides a clue to man that man has nothing but two by which they enable him to repay the debt, that is, he must have Faith (*‘āmanū*) and do righteous deeds (*‘amilū al-ṣāliḥāt*). The former is compulsory, without which the latter will not be accounted, and respectively the latter complements the former. So, it becomes clear now for what reason God gives metaphor that the unbeliever’s acts are like ashes.¹⁹

A Muslim economic agent, once he has better understanding concerning this term *dīn*, knows and cares about everything he does. His heart will never be negligent in remembering God, and his conduct is voluntarily organized only for the sake of God. Given that explication, it can be said that, to Muslim, the code of ethics finds its foundation within the religion of Islām, and we are not in the same position with those philosophers who believed that ethics falls under the realm of philosophy. Corroborating this opinion, Alparslan states:

“..there has never been a thinker who develop an ethical philosophy independently of Islām as a religion. In fact there can be no ethical philosophy within the

¹⁸ QS.103:1-3.

¹⁹ QS.14:18.

Islamic worldview, since ethics is integrally combined with religion.”²⁰

The discrepancy of two standpoints implies great consequences. If ethics is considered as part of religion, then it is necessary for the believers to practice it in their daily life. Moreover, based on the unchanging Sources, in Islām the code of ethics firmly stands on the solid ground, for it has clear-cut demarcation of what is wrong and what is good, so that common good for all human beings with diverse characteristics and backgrounds can be realized. Contrary to the former, if ethics is deemed to fall under the area of philosophy, then it has no solid ground to stand firmly. This is due to the fact that the theory concerning ethics always changes, for its propounders who are mostly philosophers are non-Muslims and they speculate a lot while they synthesized it.

ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

Our attention has been drawn to the brief sketch concerning the religion of Islām in general. I hope it is beneficial for the readers, although it is exposed in cursory manner. Now under this heading, we are proceeding to reveal the non-observable foundation of all human action, so-called worldview. Alparslan defines it as:

²⁰ Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Islamic Science: Towards A Definition*. (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 25

“..that vision of reality and truth, which, as an architectonic mental unity, acts as the non-observable foundation of all human conduct, including scientific and technological activities.”²¹

He means, by foundation, the reason and intentions underlying the act, disposition of the agent and whatever justification may be given for his action.²²

The definition of worldview propounded by Alparslan above was in fact inspired by al-Attas.²³ If one notices carefully, he will find two key terms were retained there, namely: reality, and truth. In the case of Islām, both *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirah* are real, and they are inseparable. Thus to every Muslim, *al-dunyā* was provided in order to him to prepare for the *al-ākhirah*, and as such everything in Islām is ultimately focussed on the *ākhirah*-aspect without thereby implying any attitude of neglect or being unmindful of the *dunyā*-aspect.²⁴

No wonder then if people who are non-Muslim ignore *ākhirah*, even God, as reality. That is obviously because their worldview is different from that of Muslim. Alparslan asserts that the major factors leading to the rise of certain worldview in the mind of an individual are mainly religion, cultural environment and education.²⁵ The psychology

²¹ Ibid., 29.

²² Ibid., 27.

²³ See al-Attas. *Prolegomena*. 2.

²⁴ Ibid., 1.

²⁵ Açıkgenç. *Islamic Science*. 15.

of the person, language, natural environment and other social condition are also dominant in the disclosing process of a worldview.

Further explanation about worldview, particularly Islamic worldview, can be found in his other work, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*. Therein, to be exact in chapter two, Alparslan systematically explicates the Islamic worldview. As he reckons, there are five fundamental structures in it, namely: Life, World, Knowledge, Man, and Value structures. Life structure is natural structure, which develops out of the human biology. Within it, certain conceptions concerning the world we live in develop gradually from infancy to adulthood.²⁶

Within world structure, there are five fundamental concepts as integral elements namely: oneness of God (*tawhīd*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*), resurrection (*ḥashr*), knowledge (*‘ilm*), and deed (*‘amal*)²⁷. The first three are the most essential of all, for they are essentially requirements for being a Muslim. It does not mean, however, that these are the only fundamental concept of the Islamic worldview, because each structure by itself represents a doctrinal element which includes within itself many other fundamental Islamic key terminologies.²⁸ As for the man structure, it is represented by the concept of *khalīfah* and *ummah*. As such this structure manifests the Islamic understanding of man and society, which is totally grounded in

²⁶ Açıkgenç. *Islamic Science*. 22.

²⁷ Alparslan Açıkgenç. *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*. (Kuala Lumpur: IKIM, 2014), 123.

²⁸ Açıkgenç. *Islamic Science*. 24.

the world structure, because these conceptions themselves are derived from the concepts of *tawhīd*, prophethood, religion and *ākhirah*.²⁹

Within value structure, we have morality and law under *al-fiqh* (Islamic Law). The separation between the two is only for the sake of academic study. Nevertheless in reality, the ethical and legal principles are altogether supported with religious consciousness.³⁰ Hence, it sounds so strange to us, for example, if Muslim just considers lawfulness (*ḥalāl*) of food he consumes it without thinking of other ethical matters, like, when he should stop consuming it, to whom he should share it, etc. Unfortunately, these matters are now pervading in our midst, indicating the great gap between ethics and legal principles.

THE NATURE OF MAN AND HIS ACTIONS

Under this heading, we shall discuss the powers possessed by the human soul in general way, not in detail. Hopefully by this, the readers will recognize among these power, what are the most potential that can cause man become injustice.

Man has dual nature, he is both body and soul, he is at once physical being and spirit.³¹ It is his soul, in the realm of pre-existence of the world that testified Allāh is his Lord, and himself is His servant. That testimony made him bound in covenant (*al-mīthāq*) determining his purpose and attitude and action with respect to his self in his

²⁹ Açıkgenç. *Islamic Science*. 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

³¹ See al-Attas. *Prolegomena*.143. See also QS.15:26-29.

relation to God.³² As far as discussion of soul is concerned, it is divided into three: the vegetative (*al-nabāṭiyyah*), the animal (*al-ḥayawāniyyah*), and the human (*al-insāniyyah*) or the rational (*al-nāṭiqah*).³³

With regard to the vegetative soul, it possesses eight different faculties, namely: the faculty of nutrition (*al-ghādhiyyah*), generation (*al-muwallidah*), growth (*al-nāmiyyah*), assimilation (*al-jādzibah*), retention (*al-māsikah*), inflection (*mutaṣarriḥah*), decomposition (*mutaḥallilah*), and the faculty of driving away (*al-dāfi'ah*).³⁴ Some philosophers hold that in fact there is only faculty, yet its functions vary due to the condition.³⁵ Both human being and vegetation have in common these faculties.

As for the animal soul, they are bestowed two types of power: motive and perceptive, each of which is of two kinds. The motive power comprises of two: the arouser of action and the actuator³⁶, meaning to say that the former is, analogically speaking, the software whereas the latter is the hardware. The arouser of action has two kinds: the faculty of desire (*al-shahwāniyyah*) and the faculty of anger (*al-ghaḍabiyyah*).³⁷ The faculty of desire and anger are possible where the

³² Ibid., 144.

³³ Ibid., 149.

³⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. *Kitāb al-Nafs wa al-Rūḥ wa Sharḥ Quwāhumā*. Ed. Muḥammad Ṣaghīr Ḥasan al-Ma'sūmī. (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, n.d), 75. Further explanation pertaining these faculties please refer aforementioned book.

³⁵ Ibid., 99.

³⁶ Al-Attas. *Prolegomena*. 149.

³⁷ Ibid., 149.

soul, by its imagination, perceives something to be beneficial or dangerous to it³⁸.

With regard to the perceptive power of animal soul, it is of two kinds: in the first place is five external senses (*al-ḥawāss*) which perform the function of perception of particulars in the external world. The second perceptive power is, contrary to the former, five internal faculties. These powers called five internal faculties are: common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), the representative faculty (*al-khayāliyyah*), the estimative faculty (*al-wahmiyyah*), Retention-Recollection (*al-ḥāfidzah* and *al-dzākirah*), the imaginative faculty (*al-mutakhayyilah*).³⁹

On the other hand, the rational soul is divisible into two: cognitive power (*al-quwwah al-naẓariyyah*) and active power (*al-quwwah al-‘amaliyyah*). By mean of cognitive power, the rational soul receives abstract universal forms (*al-ṣuwar al-kulliyyah al-mujarradah*). Whereas by mean of active power the rational soul is able to govern the body.⁴⁰ These two powers are interchangeably called intellect (*al-‘aql*). Al-Attas says, in relation to certain powers of animal soul, the rational soul produces human emotions, skills, arts, and ethical behaviour.⁴¹

There are three different states of human soul mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān, namely: the first, the tranquil soul (*al-naḥs al-muṭma’innah*) is when the human soul achieves tranquillity in the

³⁸ Al-Rāzī. *Kitāb al-Nafs*. 76.

³⁹ Al-Attas. *Prolegomena*.150-153.

⁴⁰ Al-Rāzī. *Kitāb al-Nafs*, 77.

⁴¹ Al-Attas. *Prolegomena*.155.

remembrance of God and abides the knowledge of His divinity, and soars towards the highest levels of the angelic horizon;⁴² the second, the soul that censures itself (*al-naḥs al-lawwāmah*) is when the animal power drag rational soul down to the lowest foothills of the bestial nature⁴³; the third, the soul that incites to evil (*al-naḥs al-ammārah bi al-sū'*), is when the human soul remains captive in the second state so much so that he appears as man only in shape and construction.⁴⁴

Al-Rāzī says in his commentary of the Holy Qur'ān *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* that shameful deeds (*al-faḥshā'*), injustice (*al-munkar*), and rebellion (*al-baghy*) are indetical with the faculty of desire (*al-shahwāniyyah*), the faculty of anger (*al-ghaḍabiyyah*), and the imaginative faculty (*al-mutakhayyilah*) possessed by the human soul.⁴⁵ The faculty of desire always, he explains further, seeks appetitive pleasure (*al-ladzdzāt al-shahwāniyyah*), the faculty of anger always inclines to cause evil (*al-sharr*), affliction (*al-balā'*), and injure (*al-īdzā'*) to other people, while the imaginative faculty forever seeks for superiority and conceit over people, and desire to be the leader.⁴⁶

These three faculties above, al-Rāzī adds, need to be controlled and disciplined by the rational soul by virtue of its being angelic matter. Then, the human actions produced by the controlled three powers will not cause harm to himself and others. Al-Attas as well asserts it is possible for man to attain to the angelic nature by means of

⁴² Ibid., 147.

⁴³ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁵ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. 31 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Bahiyyah al-Miṣriyyah, 1938). 20:104; see QS.16:90.

⁴⁶ al-Rāzī. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. 20:104.

knowledge, moral excellence, and good works.⁴⁷ Again, of course we construe them here as we understand them within the Islamic worldview as *‘ilm* (in some case *ma‘rifah* also can be used), *ḥusn al-khulq*, and *al-a‘māl al-ṣāliḥāt*, not from what Western people understand.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the knowledge, moral excellence, and good works are interrelated and and it is impossible for each to stand individually without the others. In his study entitled Abu Hamid al-Ghazali on Human Action, Asham Ahmad found that good works are nothing without intention (*niyyah*), sincerity (*ikhhlās*), and truthfulness (*ṣidq*).⁴⁸ Intention cannot be created for it is natural inclination of the soul. Even so, man, by means of knowledge, is able to direct that natural inclination toward the good. Because the more knowledge he possesses, the more he loves his God, hence, the more he is sincere in all his actions.

It becomes clear now, that when Prophet Muḥammad says *innamā al-a‘māl bi al-niyyāt* in fact it presupposes the availability of knowledge in the heart of the actor. Thus the knowledge is necessary because every human act indeed requires the knowledge, so to speak, it implies human consciousness that he is responsible for all his both right or wrong deeds in the Judgment Day; that he understands well the

⁴⁷ Al-Attas. *Prolegomena*. 147.

⁴⁸ Asham Ahmad. *Al-Ghazali on Human Action*. (M.A. theses, ISTAC, 2002). Sincerity means to uphold the unity of intention, that is, for the sake of God’s pleasure. Truthfulness encompasses three dimensions of human ethical endeavor: verbal, intellectual, and practical. In short, Truthfulness is one’s conformity to the truth in all those dimensions.

purpose of his creation in this world; and that he had made covenant (*al-mīthāq*) with God before he came into existence.

ECONOMIC-DRIVEN BEHAVIOUR OF MAN

In the discussion of microeconomics, the behaviour of the individual is divisible only two: income, which is basically the acquisition of sustenance, and outcome, which is basically the spending aspect. As what has been briefly alluded in introduction section, current economics regards mundane phenomena as the sum output of the individuals action, and their action are driven by self-interest without considering any values, and without putting emphasis on intention whatsoever. This of course contradicts completely with the teaching of Islām as we are about to explore it under this heading.

1. Earning Livelihood (*al-Iktisāb*)

Al-Iktisāb literally means seeking sustenance. It is *maṣdar* form of the Arabic word *iktasaba*. The word *iktasaba* finds its origin in the Arabic word *kasaba*, which means (more general than *iktasaba*) all human actions, goodly or badly, consciously or unconsciously. However in the non-strictly (or general) usage, *iktasaba* and *kasaba* can be described as to earn livelihood.⁴⁹ Both these terms are interchangeably used, as the Holy Qur'ān frequently mentions in several verses.⁵⁰ It thus gives impression that seeking sustenance, which is economic-driven behaviour, is a tiny part of the entire human

⁴⁹ Zubaydī. *Tāj al-'Arūs*. 40 vols. (Kuwait: Maṭba'at Ḥukūmah al-Kuwayt, 1965), 4:144.

⁵⁰ QS.42:30; QS.5:38; QS.2:267, QS.2:286.

actions. Hence, whatever attitudes of Islām towards human actions goes as well to human economic-driven behaviour.

The legal status of seeking sustenance in Islām is primarily permissible⁵¹. But it becomes obligatory when his basic needs (food, drink, clothing, and shelter) and mediums by which he accomplishes religious observances are in need to be fulfilled. Obviously this is because discharging the obligatory (*al-farīdah*) is not attainable except by seeking sustenance, then it too becomes obligatory.⁵² Men are encouraged to do so, as it is mentioned in some Quranic verses⁵³. But this does not mean that earning negates placing trust (*tawakkul*) Allāh like some adherent of psedo-*sūfī* said.⁵⁴

From Islamic speculative science (*‘ilm al-kalām*) perspective, seeking sustenance as a means of worship is reasonable, and is not contradictory at all with the concept of *tawakkul*. At the moment man (as agent) seeks sustenance, God creates in him a power (*quwwah*) that attaches to man’s act. Thus seeking sustenance, is in fact the object of two power; God’s power (*qudrah*) and man’s power (over acquisition or *kasb*).⁵⁵ Hence, actually man has no power, he only has intention (*niyyah* or *irādah*). God entrusts man the power. If man

⁵¹ QS.2:275.

⁵² Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī. *Kitāb al-Kasb*. Trans. Adi Setia in *Right Livelihood and The Common Good*. (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2013), 23.

⁵³ QS.2:198; QS.62:10.

⁵⁴ al-Shaybānī. *Kitāb al-Kasb*. 29. People of self-mortification (*taqashshuf*), called *Karrāmiyyah* declared that it is forbidden to earn living. The founder of this movement is Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Karrām, who was born *ca.* 190/806. For further details please see *The Encyclopaedia of Islām*. Ed. E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat. 13 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997). 4:667.

⁵⁵ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I’tiqād*. Trans. Aladdīn M. Yaqub. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 97.

utilizes that power to seek lawful (*ḥalāl*) sustenance, he will get rewards from God. On the contrary, if he abuses what is entrusted to him by seeking the illicit (*ḥarām*), then he will get punishment from God.⁵⁶

In order to seek lawful sustenance, it is required for Muslim, in relation to economic agent, to acquire the science of earning (*‘ilm al-kasb*) that will pause him practicing corrupt transactions and guard himself against them.⁵⁷ The discussion on the science of earning falls within the realm of transactional jurisprudence (*al-fiqh al-mu‘āmalah*). Despite legal dimension in nature, it does not mean that the ethics is separated from discussion, and thus excluded. Above all, al-Ghazālī in fact emphasizes as well justice (*al-‘adl*), magnanimity (*al-iḥsān*), and the merchant’s showing concern for his soul and his religion (*al-shafqah*).⁵⁸

2. Spending Side (*al-Infāq*)

The current microeconomics terms spending side as consumption. This term precisely does not project the worldview of Islām at all, for it is originated from Latin language *consumptio*, which bring impression of ‘*the utilization of economic goods in satisfying wants*’. The proper term for portraying spending side in the worldview of Islām is *al-infāq* which conveys meaning ‘depletion, usage up the supply of, or diminishment in number or quantity’. The Holy Qur’ān mention the

⁵⁶ It becomes clear then why it is impossible for God to be asked for what He has done. See.QS.21:23.

⁵⁷ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. *Kitāb Ādāb al-Kasb wa al-Ma‘āsh*. Trans. Adi Setia in *Right Livelihood and The Common Good*. (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2013), 181.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

term *al-infāq* in many occasions,⁵⁹ indicating that such term in one respect had been Islamized.

As far as the term *al-infāq* is concerned, al-Shaybānī in his *Kitāb al-Kasb* divided it into three stages.⁶⁰ The first stage is basically fulfilment of one's basic needs, such as food, drink, cloth, and shelter,⁶¹ each of which is subject to three different degrees, namely the indispensable (*qadr al-darūrah*), the sufficiency (*ḥadd al-kifāyah*), the permissible (*min al-mubāḥāt*).⁶² The second stage is fulfilment of what are in the first stage plus fulfilment of nuclear family's needs, whereas the third stage is fulfilment of what are in the first and the second stage plus fulfilment of relatives' needs.

Although apparently consumption and *al-infāq* are similar, conceptually they are different. The term consumption in microeconomics allows squandering (*al-ishrāf*) in all commodities so long as the individual consumption contributes to aggregate consumption, which in turn adds to country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Islām, as opposed to microeconomics conception of consumption, condemns squandering (*al-ishrāf*) certainly because it

⁵⁹ QS.2:195; QS.65:6; QS.36:47.

⁶⁰ Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī. *Kitāb al-Kasb*. Ed. 'Abd al-Fattāh Abū Ghuddah. (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 2005), 121. *Al-kasb* and *al-infāq* are in fact similar to two sides of one coin, in other words they are equivalent. If basic needs (*infāq*) cost someone RM1000 a month, then he is obliged to do earn (*al-kasb*) at least RM1000 in order to cover his monthly expenses.

⁶¹ QS.2:57; QS.2:60; QS.7:26; QS.4:28. Al-Shaybānī also includes, if any, one's debt into the first stage of *al-infāq*.

⁶² Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī. *Mīzān al-'Amal*. Ed. Sulaymān Dunyā. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1964), 379.

indicates one's carelessness about himself, surrounding people, and eventually his religion.

In addition, the act of squandering, in food and drink especially, shows one's failure in controlling his very animal soul, which is triggered mainly by the appetitive faculty. In this state, man's desire to satisfy his thirst and hunger is too excessive, so that it goes beyond what is necessary. The exaggeration occurs as well to a squandering act in cloth and shelter, except that the latter betrays predominance of the satanic imaginative faculty (*al-quwwah al-wahmiyyah al-shayṭāniyyah*) over the rational soul.⁶³

CONCLUSION

This essay alludes that economics as people understand nowadays is very recent term introduced by Western scholar the late of eighteenth century, despite its Greek origin. The underlying assumptions and premises of such science must suit the current spirit of civilization giving birth to it. Therefore, one necessary thing that Muslim scholars must do is to understand properly the Religion of Islam, Islamic Worldview and the nature of man and his actions. Only then Muslim economic agent can behave rightly when involved in economic activities without worrying of being trapped in Utilitarianism attitude. This way, the Islamisation project will find its way more widely

⁶³ al-Rāzī. *Al-Taḥfīr al-Kabīr*. 20:104. al-Rāzī in some occasions uses alternatively the word imagination with the word satanic. He explains that this imaginative power often casts to human soul a feeling of love for pride and superiority over people. Thus in this respect, by possessing fabulous suit and wonderful shelter, one may expect people admiration for his belonging.

opened. It is because to Islamize Muslim mind is serious business. Once they are Islamized, another aspects of human life, whether social, political, or economic, will follow and suit the Islamized mind, so to speak, Islamization of Muslim mind is main solution solving various problems.

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