

ISLAM AND INTELLIGENCE: THE ISSUES OF FAITH AND INTELLECT

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Abstract: *Spiritual intelligence is a concept in human intelligence studies based on secularism approach that separates intellect with religious faith. However, it has attracted many faith-based researchers, especially among Muslim scholars and researchers, in discussing the concept and issues of spiritual intelligence. This paper aims to discuss the polemic between faith and intellect in secularism as well as the influence it has brought to Islam using a descriptive research methodology. Based on the review of literatures, the data collected on secularism, faith and intellect were then analysed by means of content analysis. The findings suggest that although secularism advocates the separation of faith and intellect, nonetheless secularism has its own pseudo-religion identity in the form of spiritual intelligence. The implications from the findings of this paper suggests that research of human intelligence from Islamic perspectives should embark on clear Islamic paradigm rather than from the secular human intelligence paradigm.*

Key words: *Secularism, Faith, Intellect, Spiritual Intelligence and Islam*

Introduction

The issues of faith and intellect have become two distinct areas of study with two differing directions. This phenomenon has been discussed at length by many either from faith-based or secular based scholars (Taghizadeh & Ghaderi, 2016; Ferris, 2005; Cox, 2013; Nandy, 1988; George, 1999; Smith, 1973). These two sides of scholars had been criticizing the epistemology and ontology basis of each other's stand with each side showing their strength of argument as well as their justifications. In general, the study of intelligence¹ which has been taken up in contemporary psychology, has gradually evolved from the basic study of intelligence to emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence as well as artificial intelligence. At first, the discussions on intelligence in psychology focused on the functions of the mind and reason in determining success in this world. Later it starts to recognize the functions of the emotion and spirit. In Islam, there are some Muslim scholars (Hanefar, 2016; Elmi & Zainab, 2016; Rahman, 2015; Jumahat & Abdullah, 2014) discuss it from the perspective of spiritual intelligence with different views and standpoint as the basis of their research on Islam and intelligence. The discourse on spiritual intelligence also tends to identify the existence of spirit and its components. In the advent of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, artificial intelligence has proven the ability to replace the human brain in many ways although not totally able to replace it. This prompted to the question what lies behind the motive of studying spiritual intelligence? Is it purely for the sake of knowledge or to materialize and manipulate it? Recent discussion also highlights some of this problem indirectly when discussing about universal epistemological problem relating to generality and specificity of intelligence (Demetriou, 2018).

Human intelligence has been discussed indirectly in everyday issues ranging from educational to political issues. In education, the development of human intelligence is either driven from secular based development or faith-based development. Education nowadays largely based on knowledge economy which is derived from secular based development (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). The revealed knowledge which is from faith-based development is argued lack of scientifically driven human capital that is able to come out with modern technology. The underpinning argument of such claim can be traced back to the history of secularism. So, this paper attempts to study the history of secularism at a glance, and then highlight the issues of faith and intellect based on previous discussions. Thereafter this paper examines the extent of these issues of faith and intellect in the study of intelligence in Islam.

Research Objectives

Generally, the purpose of the paper is to study the issues of faith and intellect from secularistic view and the position of these issues in the study of intelligence in Islam.

Research Methods

This paper adopts a descriptive research approach of qualitative design. It starts from the discussion on secularism. Thereafter, this paper attempts to highlight the issues of faith and intellect based on previous discussion. The discussion of this paper is extended to discuss the study of intelligence in Islam. The content analysis will be used to analyse the previous argument and main idea.

¹ "[*Intelligence*](#)" derives from the Latin [*nouns intelligentia*](#) or [*intellēctus*](#), which in turn stem from the verb [*intelligere*](#), to comprehend or perceive. It implies the use of intellect in understanding the nature of things. (Wikipidea Intelligence, 2019).

Literature Review

In this section the paper highlights the existing literature on secularism and the issues of faith and intellect as the focal point of discussion.

Overview of Secularism

Historically speaking, secularism emerged from the West from the gloomy period of dark age and first appeared in the classical philosophy and politics of ancient Greece. It disappeared and resurfaced after a millennium and half in the Renaissance and the Reformation. It could be simply understood as the establishment of reason over religious faith. Therefore, the departure from reliance on religious faith to reason and science marks the beginning of the secularization of education and society in history. Either it is orthodox secularism or modern secularism, all facets of human life including religion is subjected to the intellect scrutiny. It has given a new direction to educational, social and political system and to the extent considered man as the *de facto* benefits of nature as revealed by reason (Cox, 2013).

Secularism can be defined from a philosophical or political perspective. From the philosophical perspective, it is the description of life solely based on material without referring to religion. From the political perspective, it is a separation of power between state and religious authorities. It shifts the focus from religion to other 'temporal' and 'this-worldly' things with emphasis on nature, reason, science, and development (Roznai, 2017).

Secularism is regarded by some as another product of philosophy which is in constant clash between faith and reason. It is not just a clash but a battle between the forces of "faith" and those of "reason". This is also known as the clash of worldview. Secularism itself is a sectarian doctrine with its own metaphysical and moral presuppositions and foundations. It has its own myths and rituals, therefore is a pseudo-religion (George, 1999). In orthodox secularism, moral belief, dualism (mind and body) is its central belief and views bodily life as merely instrumentally good rather than intrinsically good. Among the central issues are the sanctity of human life and the other moral principles such as condemnation of abortion, suicide, infanticide of so-called defective children, and certain other life-taking acts. So, the question posed by religious faith is can reason identify moral truth. This issue will be analyzed further in the next discussion.

As a result of subscribing to the idea of orthodox secularism, there is a condition where political intellectual elite to some extent, recognize religion as an ideology. Religion is therefore divided into faith and ideology whereas religion as faith is viewed as primitive. Political approach toward religious tolerance has been studied and classified either by totally embracing the concept of secularism, rejecting secularism or back to traditional belief and faith (Nandy, 1988).

On the issues of humanitarianism, secularists admit the role of faith in the development of its thought and practices in history. However, as the humanitarian principles and its laws evolve over the time, humanitarianism is also subjected to the secular ideology. Secular in principle is neutral from religion and as for humanitarianism to be free from religion influence has invited critics and debates from faith-based actors in humanitarian. The problem with the role of faith within the framework of secular humanitarianism is that faith-based actors in humanitarian arenas need to demonstrate publicly defensible practices, not 'privatized' commitments (Ferris 2005). Faith needs the scrutiny of reason because the spiritual experiences resulted from it can

be studied. Meanwhile, post-modernism and post-secular must accept the importance of local religious practice and belief in shaping humanitarian strategy (Ager, 2011).

Secularism is not as well established ontologically, epistemologically as well as practically compared to religious faith despite controversies and debates stemming from it. The existence of secularism originally was not meant neither to criticize nor undermine religion. It only emphasizes greatly on the role of man to this universe, hence produce its own domain of knowledge and morality. The direction, destiny, purpose of man are not meant to be discussed in secularism. This contradicted the view of religion which sets clear direction, destiny and purpose of man in this universe. For this paper, the term religious life is interchangeably used with the word faith. The same goes with the term morality and good deeds Therefore, the issues to be discussed in the next sub-section is the issues relating to faith as the focus in religion and intellect as the focus in secularism.

Faith And Intellect

As stated earlier, this paper aims to highlight the issues of faith and intellect. The previous discussion provided a brief overview of secularism and the basic idea of the issues. There were attempts made by the scholars to discuss the issues simultaneously or separately in various aspects (Ager, 2011; Mohd Rosmizi Abdul Rahman, 2016; Smith, 1973; Taghizadeh, 2016; Watt, 1953; Trotter, 1939; Guilford, 1988).

It is interesting to discover that faith has been discussed extensively and deeply in the realm of intellectual discourse to claim its epistemological domain. The distinguished Islamic scholar who discussed lengthily and deeply about the issues of faith and good deeds was Al-Ghazāli. Al-Ghazāli was responsible for the renewal or revival of the respective religious traditions. He had attained and propagated spiritual insight in the light of orthodox teachings. It has been proven that *sufism* as discussed by al-Ghazāli is a method of deriving knowledge is no more the practical art and philosophy. It is now towards natural sciences. Therefore, as discussed earlier, faith is also subjected to the scrutiny of reason (intellect) and need to be verified scientifically.

The study on the structure of intellect (SOI) model has been developed and strongly established. The study of intellect has seen its reduction into property, operation and product. The revised version of SOI contains five basic content properties termed visual, auditory, symbolic, semantic and behavioral. The operation of SOI are cognition, memory recording, memory retention, divergent production, convergent production and evaluation while the products of SOI are units, classes, relations, systems, transformations and implications (Guilford, 1988). The development of this structure model of intellect gave some idea and insight how faith should be discussed and viewed based on SOI framework. The mystical and subjective experiences of faith is difficult to fit under this structure model. Therefore, in order faith to be scrutiny under reason (intellect), the properties of intellect should consider other view suggesting what consists of intellect. In Islam, *al-ruh* (spirit), *al-qalb* (heart), *al-nafs* (soul) and *al-aql* (mind) are indeed the properties of intellect (Elmi Baharuddin, 2015; Mohd Rosmizi Abdul Rahman, 2016). However, Table 1 shows the comparison between intellect and faith in terms of content, operations and products.

Table 1 Comparison between Intellect and Faith

Item	Intellect	Faith
Contents	Visual	Spirit (<i>al-ruh</i>)
	Auditory	Heart (<i>al-qalb</i>)
	Symbolics	Soul (<i>al-nafs</i>)
	Semantic	Mind (<i>al-aql</i>)
	Behavior	
Operations	Cognition	Worship
	Memory Recording	
	Memory Retention	
	Divergent Production	
	Convergent Production	
	Evaluation	
Products	Units	Morality/good deeds
	Classess	
	Relations	
	Systems	
	Transformations	
	Implications	

From the table 1 above, intellect has been reduced to its contents and the process of identifying the nature of intellect is extended to its operations and its product. In term of faith, it is easy to fill up the contents of faith but in term of operations and products, there is still needs some study to be done.

In the midst of the issues of faith and intellect, spiritual intelligence begins to take its place as a new knowledge. Before the emergence of spiritual intelligence, emotional and multiple intelligence has been given due attention to be the indicator of the wellbeing of a person and not faith. This paper thus, further its discussion to find position of faith in the search of intelligence in Islam.

Islam and Intelligence

Islam and intelligence are the focus of the discussion of this paper based on the previous analysis of the issues of faith and intellect. In searching scholarly writings about Islam and intelligence, studies show intelligence in Islam is derived either from the topic “spiritual intelligence” or mainly from Islamic primary sources which is al-Quran. Studies made by Elmi Baharuddin & Zainab Ismail (2015 &2016) showed how intelligence are being perceived in Islam through the lens of spiritual intelligence. Spiritual is a non-material aspect and has been agreed among Muslim scholars led by Al-Ghazali to consist of *al-ruh* (spirit), *al-qalb* (heart), *al-nafs* (soul) and *al-aql* (sense). It covers the domain of faith, worship and morality (Muhammad D, 2004). However, from that study of spiritual intelligence, the results show there are seven domains of spiritual intelligence in Islam which are the domain of *al-ruh* (spirit), domain *al-qalb* (heart), domain *al-nafs* (soul), domain of *al-aql* (sense), domain of faith, domain of worship and domain of morality (Elmi Baharuddin, 2015). Elmi Baharudin (2015) then concluded that spiritual intelligence according to an Islamic perspective is also known as the intelligence quotient of religion, that is suggesting a new concept in intelligence.

Another attempt made by Muslim scholar is by discussing spiritual intelligence from the Quranic framework. Such an attempt has enlightened the varied concepts and foundations of Islamic intelligence as opposed to the underpinning of spiritual intelligence. The underpinning of spiritual intelligence leads to the realization of moral purposes in life, raises the courage to ask fundamental questions, and helps plot a better and more meaningful course of life. Spiritual intelligence is meant to be dissociated from religious beliefs so as to accommodate non-religious thinking. In other words, spiritual intelligence is a framework for identifying and organizing the requisite skills and abilities needed for the adaptive use of spirituality (Bensaid, 2014). The current direction and focus of spiritual intelligence are just on psychometric instruments to test and measure spiritual skills and abilities and as such neglects the inner spiritual potential. Islamic spiritual intelligence is not merely knowledge of the spiritual realm as dwelling too much on that is discouraged in Islam. It moves in the direction to set, build and regulates spiritual in establishing its potential.

Conclusion

The discussion on secularism, faith and intellect has outlined the issues to be tackled when researching about Islam and intelligence. There is a tendency in secularism to view spiritual intelligence as faith. All efforts to standardize models of spiritual intelligence over diverse settings of complex religious and cultural compositions require giving due attention to the very system of beliefs, spirituality, morality and law to not de-sacralize or secularize. By discussing spiritual intelligence as intelligence in Islam or by Islamize it by just adding “Islamic spiritual intelligence”, it is feared to mislead our understanding of what intelligence in Islam is supposedly to be. As it is true to say that everyone has a spiritual dimension, it is however not necessary that they have religious consciousness.

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