

AL-ZAHRĀ' الزهراء

Jurnal Studi Islam Komprehensif

مجلة الدراسات الإسلامية والعربية

- Islamic Ethics and Scientific Methodology; An Applied Study on the Field of Humanities

• المنهج المالي عند أبي عبيد من خلال كتاب الأموال

• المنهج النقلي والمنهج العقلي واتصالهما في الإسلام

• البناء المنهجي في دراسة ظواهر العمران البشري

• تدهور الحضارة الإسلامية والتوتر السياسي لبني عباس

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قراء الزهراء الأعزاء

بعد الحمد والثناء لله سبحانه، وبعد الصلاة والسلام على رسول الله
وعلى آله وصحبه ومن والاه.

فمرحبا بقرائنا الأعزاء في رحاب إصداراتنا الجديدة من زهراننا الحبيبة،
ففي هذا العدد ازدهرت الزهراء بكتابات العلماء المشتركين في المؤتمر الدولي
"الإسلام والمنهج العلمي" المنعقد في جامعة شريف هداية الله الإسلامية
الحكومية بجاكرتا، في ٢٠٠٣. وقد تمت مناقشة تلك الأبحاث خلال فعالية
المؤتمر. واختارت الزهراء عددا منها لتكون في متناول قرائها كما تكون خطوة
لتوسيع دائرة آفاق الزهراء واشتراك الأساتذة وعلماء الأمة من خارج البلاد.
ومن ناحية أخرى، نشرت الزهراء في هذا العدد أيضا عددا من كتابات بعض
أساتذة كلية الدراسات الإسلامية والعربية، وهي الأستاذة حمكة حسن
والأستاذة أم فريدة. فشكرا لهؤلاء العلماء على هذه المشاركة القيمة.

مع تحيات

د/ محمد شيرازي دمياطي

Islamic Ethics and Scientific Methodology An Applied Study on the Field of Humanities

Prof. Ahlam Fathy Hassan*

Abstrak

Salah satu ajaran pokok yang digariskan dalam Al-Quran dan hadis adalah pembinaan akhlak bagi umat Islam yang dikenal dengan akhlak Islam. Akhlak ini harus terpatri pad semua aspek kehidupan umat Islam. Bahkan akhlak tersebut harus terialisasi dalam pengembangan intelektual baik yang bersifat kealaman maupun humaniora. Hal inilah yang membedakan antara pemikir Barat dan pemikir Muslim.

Makalah ini mendeskripsikan tiga hal, yaitu: *pertama*, konsep Islam tentang akhlak yang dilengkapi dengan contoh keonkrit yang terdapat dalam Al-Quran dan hadis; *kedua*, deskripsi tentang perkembangan ilmu dan teknologi di Barat serta pengaruhnya dalam pola pikir mereka; *ketiga*, deskripsi tentang hasil yang telah dicapai Barat dan Islam dalam pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologinya. Makalah ini ditutup dengan pembahasan tentang sebab keterpurukan umat Islam dan sebab kemajuan Barat.

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Kata kunci: *al-manhaj al-ilmi: scientific methodology*

In all matters of their lives, Muslims simply adhere or should adhere to the Islamic ethics as manifested in both the Quran and the Sunna, since these are the two fundamental sources for their correct Islamic conduct. Since Islam is a divine – not man-made – religion, its rules are consistent, stable, and everlasting. In its teachings and parables, Islam holds the right scientific methodology for any age since it has been sent for all the people anywhere and at any time. It urges people to learn to achieve higher positions, both religious and secular, to treat others well, not to differentiate between Arabs and non-Arabs, not to harm anyone whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim. It urges equality. Differences between people should be made only according to the degree of their piety and nothing else. In fighting, Muslims should not start a war, and when the other party tends towards peace, then Muslims should also turn to peace. Islam commends those who perfect their work, treat their neighbours well and those who give charity. Islam also prohibits certain evils; it prohibits drinking, gambling and usury. It also condemns adultery, any illicit relationships between men and women, and infidelity of any kind. Indeed, Islam is a way of life that guides us in all the minute details of our daily life.

On the other hand, most Western countries adhere to no divine religion, since they boast of being secular states. They separate between church and state, (as we see in James Joyce's **Portrait of the Artist**, for instance). Materialistic achievements are the only motivation behind scientific research and actions, both on the individual and the State levels. (Iraq is a good example here of materialistic gain, war is being waged for worldly power. Companies race to get contracts to rebuild Iraq at the expense of human resources, believing that the end justifies the means). We

learn that the writer who wrote the **Harry Potter** books has become richer than Queen Elizabeth herself through her books that deal with the world of magic and magicians. Ethics are neglected in such works for children and are replaced by the hunt after materialistic gains.

My paper will be divided into three parts. Part I will refer briefly to the Islamic ethics, with illustrations from the two basic sources, the Glorious Quran and the Sunna in an attempt to reveal how the Islamic sources give us scientific methodology to follow. Part II discusses the worldly advancement in the West as well as the main influences on their thinking. Part III gives examples from literary works of the two different cultures to show the differences in attitudes between the Islamic world and the West. In conclusion one has to find the reasons behind the advancement of the West and the static state, or the backwardness, of the Islamic countries.

In the field of humanities, in literature in particular, there are various examples to show the Islamic influence on literary works written by Muslim writers who generally adhere to the principles of Islam and who learn from the parables set by the Glorious Quran. On the other hand, there are Western writers who have alienated themselves from any spiritual religion and who follow new methods that might serve their materialistic or hedonistic ends. I am going to give some examples from the two cultures to illustrate my point of view.

Part I: Islamic Ethics

We learn from the Glorious Quran that God has created mankind to worship Him: << **And I (Allah) created not the Jinns and Men except they should worship Me (Alone)**>> (Az-Zariat: 56).

<< وما خلقت الجن والإنس إلا ليعبدون >> (الذاريات: ٥٦).

Therefore, man has to closely follow the divine laws and the Prophetic Traditions for they guide him to the right path.

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was sent to the whole humanity to assert and perfect people's Morals. He says in one of the Prophetic Traditions: "Surely, I have been sent forth only to perfect righteous morals" (narrated by Ahmed). He is inspired by God and by the Glorious Quran to guide people and usher them to the right conduct in their daily life. He reiterates in his Hadith that "There should be neither harm nor reciprocating harm" in all our behaviour to ourselves and to others. He encourages people to give charity, to ask for forgiveness and to be humble to God in the following Hadith:

"In no way can alms decrease wealth; and in no way does Allah increase (the reward) to His bondman for clemency except in might; and in no way does a bondman (show) modesty towards Allah except that Allah raises his rank."
(Narrated by Muslim)

The Prophet (PBUH) urges Muslims to be trustworthy even though others are not: "Pay back whatever you are entrusted with; and do not betray the treacherous." He always gives pieces of advice to Muslims to be united by being kind to one another: "Feed the hungry, visit the sick, and set the captives free."

Islam urges learning from the cradle till death, but still it differentiates between good subjects to learn and condemned ones that are harmful. The Almighty glorifies those who possess knowledge:

<< Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge >> (Al-Mujadalah: 11).

<> يرفع الله الذين آمنوا منكم والذين أوتوا العلم درجات >> (المجادلة: ١١).

In the Quranic verse the people of knowledge are mentioned next to the people who believe which shows the great position they are given. The Prophet also reiterates the grand status of learned people when he says: "The learned are the Prophets' successors", and in another occasion he says: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim". But what kind of knowledge? In fact, knowledge is not restricted to religious knowledge, but also to any kind of knowledge that is beneficial to mankind. As to the knowledge that can harm the person himself who knows or others, it is greatly condemned, as learning magic or attempting to know divine mysteries, for instance. For what its harm exceeds its benefit is forbidden. Moreover, we are commanded by the Almighty to perfect our work and we will be rewarded for that:

<<As for those who strive hard in Us (Our Cause), We will surely guide them to Our Paths (i.e. Allah's Religion: Islamic Monotheism). And verily, Allah is with the "Muhsinun" (good doers) >>. (Al-Ankabut: 69)

<<والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا وإن الله لمع المحسنين >>.

(العنكبوت: ٦)

Through the Glorious Quran, Almighty God gives us the stories of Prophets to learn from them. The best of the stories, as the Quran mentions, is the story of Youssuf (Joseph) because it contains many lessons and wisdom. It is a story about piety and temptation where the Hand of God is manifest. Youssuf's half brothers plot against him but he is saved by the Almighty. He was cast into a deep well and the place was unfrequented by caravans, when suddenly a caravan is sent to that place, and the man who was sent to draw water from the well, drew Youssuf as well. We all know the story of Youssuf, let me reiterate some of the lessons we learn from this story. We learn how Youssuf stood fast against temptations; how God rewards His faithful servants, Youssuf and Ya'qub, (Joseph

and Jacob); how leisure time if not exploited in useful aims could lead people astray as in the case of Al-Aziz's wife, and many other lessons. These are ethics that Muslims should follow till the day of judgment. Another lesson we learn is how Youssuf while in prison attempted to guide criminals to the way of God. He did not stop preaching to the people who were criminals, but he spoke of God's mercy. We also see the patience of Ya'qub who suffered greatly but was rewarded at the end when his sons and his sight were returned to him. The Quran gives us a good lesson through the words of Youssuf:

<< He said: "I am Joseph, and this is my brother (Benjamin). Allah has indeed been gracious to us. Verily, he who fears Allah with obedience to Him (by abstaining from sins and evil deeds, and by performing righteous good deeds), and is patient, then surely, Allah makes not the reward of the good-doers to be lost." >>
(Youssuf: 90)

>> قالوا أءنك لأنت يوسف قال أنا يوسف وهذا أخي قد من الله علينا إنه من يتق ويصبر فإن الله لا يضيع أجر المحسنين <<. (يوسف: ٩٠)

So, through concrete examples we learn the scientific methods which we should follow.

The story of Prophet Ayoub (Job) is a good parable for patience and a good example of firm faith in God. Ayoub was a wealthy man who owned a whole village. He also had many children; boys and girls. He was generous, charitable and kind to people around him. He was loved by all the people who knew him and by the angels in heaven. When Satan heard the angels praise Ayoub, he decided to tempt him whenever there was a chance. The chance came when one misfortune after another was inflicted upon Ayoub. A small incident made the people misunderstand him and they

started turning against him, then his lands were turned barren because of severe drought, his cattle and sheep were destroyed and he lost all his wealth. This was a great chance for Satan to take in order to turn Ayoub against the Almighty and turn to Satan's temptations, but Ayoub remained patient, ever steadfast in his trust of God. Another calamity was inflicted upon him when he received the news of the death of all his children. Tears fell from his eyes, which pleased Satan, but he did not turn away from the Almighty. Soon afterwards, he caught an infectious, incurable skin disease, which turned people away from him, except his own patient wife, but he still thanked God for everything. When he stood trial patiently, God rewarded him at the end; he recovered his health, his wealth, and his children:

<< And remember Our slave Job, when he invoked his Lord (saying); "Verily! Satan has touched me with distress (by losing my health) and torment (by losing my wealth)! (Allah said to him): "Strike the ground with your foot: This is a spring of water to wash in, cool and a (refreshing) drink." And We gave him (back) his family, and along with them the like thereof, as a Mercy from Us, and a Reminder for those who understand. >>
(Sad: 41-43)

>>واذكر عبدنا أيوب إذ نادى ربه أنى مسنى الشيطان بنصب وعذاب. اركض برجلك هذا مغتسل بارد وشراب. ووهبنا له أهله ومثلهم معهم رحمة منا وذكرى لأولى الألباب <<. (ص: ٤١-٤٣)

Part II. The Advancement of the West

The technical and materialistic advancement in the West is balanced with spiritual vacuum and moral deterioration. Western countries have abandoned heavenly religion and followed new concepts created by their scientists, radical thinkers, and

philosophers. Major influences have been Karl Marx (1818- 1883), Sigmund Freud (1865- 1939), Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905- 1980).

Freud has been a major influence, especially in America. In an on-line article¹, Basheer Ahmed, a Muslim psychotherapist who works in the States, tells us:

Freud's focus on sex as the driving force of human behavior and repression of sexual desires as a cause of neurosis, made a considerable impact on medical and social scientists. Individuals are encouraged to express freely aggressive and sexual desires, which further contribute in changing the sexual attitudes and lack of inhibition in the society at large. (Date of access: June 12, 2003)

Basheer Ahmed further explains that Freud considered any kind of religion as the "universal obsessional neurosis", and ends his article by asking the question: "Shall Muslim psychiatrists and psychotherapists incorporate the Islamic values, ethics and code of behavior in techniques of psychotherapy?"

Another influential figure in the West is the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre whose theory of existentialism disturbed the Western thought for many years. He openly rejected the idea of a divine Creator and therefore did not believe in life after death. His views were adopted by a number of European writers who wrote about man's absurd position in the universe since his life is thought to be meaningless and his death is the ultimate end. Sartre's views were expressed in his stories and plays.

Nietzsche was a German philosopher who totally rejected the values of religion, calling them the "slave morality" of Christianity

¹ "Islamic Values and Ethics in Prevention and Treatment of Emotional Disorders"

and announced the death of God. He argued that since 'God is dead', people are free to create their own values, their own moral codes and their deities. His thoughts found an echo in the hearts of many who wanted to be free from the shackles of religion, and he actually exercised a considerable influence on modern literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis.

Karl Marx was also a German philosopher, social theorist and economist whose views are expressed in his influential treatise **Das Capital (Capital)**. This book is the fundamental text of communism, which seemed to be the perfect solution to class struggle. Though communism was adopted by some states (most notably the Russia) and greatly fought against by others (most notably the United States), it has left its impact on the world. Materialism replaced spiritualism, all forms of religion were abandoned, and man lost his individuality.

Part III: Examples from the two Cultures

While most literary texts written by Muslims are written under the umbrella of Islamic rules of conduct, whether intentionally or unintentionally, literary texts in the Western world avoid didactic or edifying themes and consider them inferior to others.

As already mentioned, in Europe and the States, literary works in the 1950s revealed the impact of Sartre, Einstein, Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx, who reiterated the absence of a divine power and thus left the reins to atheists to indulge into their views. The Absurd dramatists in England, France, and the States came out with plays to show that man's position in the world is precarious and absurd since he is not in harmony with his surrounding, and that death brings no relief. Sartre himself expressed that in his book, **Being**

and Nothingness, and in his novels and plays. Sartre existentialism demands that we completely abandon the traditional notion of human beings as the carefully designed artifacts of a divine creator. We have to create our own destiny. Another French writer who believed in Sartre's ideas of existentialism is Albert Camus. He came out with a definition of the word 'absurd' which describes man's condition in modern times and wrote some plays to illustrate his views. Samuel Beckett (1906- 1989), an Irish who lived mostly in France, wrote a number of Absurd plays, one of which is **Waiting for Godot** (1952). The play revolves round two characters, street tramps, who wait for someone called Godo to save them, but he never comes. In the meantime, while waiting they talk about insignificant things, which shows they have no values, no ethics, no regrets or hopes for the future. In short, they have nothing to live or die for. When the play ends where it began we understand that, according to the author, life is meaningless. The play is still considered a masterpiece and is taught in many modern courses in drama, though some critics consider it a dated play.

When we come to the present time, we discover a considerable number of literary works dealing with violence to reflect what is happening in their society. These works deal with disintegration in the family, lack of love, extramarital relationships, irresponsibility of parents towards their children, and filial ingratitude. In short, the ills of the society denote lack of morality on the part of individuals. What is more eccentric is that a number of such works have autobiographical elements or are based on what actually happens in the society.

Edward Bond (1934-) is considered one of Britain's most important and innovative playwrights today. His play **Saved** (1965) is about a mother who abandons her baby in a park. While sleeping

in his pram, a group of street boys pull the baby's hair, rub dirt into his face, but the baby does not respond to their rough play. They start stoning him until he finally dies.

In his play, **Lear**, Bond takes the theme of Shakespeare's tragedy, **King Lear**, to reveal abject and grotesque violence in modern British society. The father is turned against his daughters, and the daughters treat their father in the most cruel way. In fact, characters become the product of their materialistic and unjust society. Lear's two daughters, Bodice and Fontanelle, marry their father's enemies, they incite their husbands to fight Lear, and they betray their husbands. Moreover, they show more cruelty when they cut the tongue of Lear's assistant and then poke needles into his ears. Lear is then put under trial and his daughters attend the court scene to show their detestation. Because of his insanity, he is put in jail. While there, his daughters sign his death warrant. When one of his daughters is put to death for treason, he cold-bloodedly attends her autopsy. Lear is then blinded by a modern machine. The play is in fact full of unheard of violence; rape, cruelty and filial ingratitude. Violence is shown also in plays written by American dramatists.

In **Buried Child** (1997), Sam Shepard (1943-) denotes the spiritual death of an American family. Dodge is the father who is always drinking and cannot take any responsibility for his family. Halie, the mother, has an illicit relationship with Reverend Dewis, a symbol of the corruption of the Church. One of the children, Tilden, flees to New Mexico but finds no relief. Bradley is the second son. Both treat their father violently; they savagely shave his head until blood comes out and then cover it with corn hack in disrespect of their drunken father. A family secret is then revealed and we discover that there was an incestuous relation between one of the boys, Tilden, and his mother. A child is born as a result, it

was drowned by Dodge and the child's body was buried in the farm.

David Mamet (1947-), an American playwright wrote his play, **American Buffalo** (1975), which displays verbal as well as physical violence in American society. A number of criminals plot to rob a bank. However, because they greatly distrust one another they resort to verbal and physical violence.

A good example of the race for materialistic gain is the series of children's books by the British novelist, J. K. Rowling. Rowling was working as a teacher in Portugal, married a Portuguese television journalist and gave birth to a baby girl, Jessica. Failure of her marriage led her to leave her job to take care of her child. She decided to write books for children to sustain herself and her baby girl. All she thought of was to get money. So, she gave vein to her imagination and created her first book of the series about the fictional world of Harry Potter, **Harry Potter and the Philosopher: Sorcerer's Stone** (1997). On the success of the first book, others followed: **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** (1998); **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** (1999); and **Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire** (2000). Her films are turned into movies, were translated into many languages, and she is now a multimillionaire. Her name has been included in Forbes' annual Celebrity 100 list as the 24th highest celebrity earner in the world, having earned \$40 million in 1999. In 2000, she achieved the highest world wide sales for the first three books. But what are the contents of her books? She portrays the world of witches and witchcraft. Evil magicians, snakes and reptiles are some of the characters in her books. Murders are mysteriously committed and morality is absent. Here is an extract **Goblet of Fire**:

Something was slithering towards him along the dark corridor floor, and as it drew nearer to the sliver of firelight,

he realized with a thrill of terror that it was a gigantic snake, at least twelve feet long. Horrified. Transfixed, Frank stared at it as its undulating body cut a wide, curving track through the thick dust on the floor, coming closer and closer – what was he to do? The only means of escape was into the room where two men sat plotting murder, yet if he stayed where he was the snake would surely kill him- (p.17)

Unlike the fluctuating thinking of the West, the stories in the Glorious Quran are full of everlasting parables for the believers. The story of Youssuf (Joseph), mentioned above, is a very good example as it gives us a model to follow until the Day of Judgment.

Hayy Ibn Yaqhdhan by the Andalusian, Muhammad Ibn Tufail, who was a physician and philosopher in the 12th century, is a good story based on the idea that one can reach the truth about Creation through meditation and contemplation. It is about a child who grows up alone on a desert island and discovers the truth about creation through his reason. Ibn Al- Muqafa' wrote the famous allegory of **Kalila Wa Demna** (Kalila and Demna) using animals as symbols of human beings to give his moral judgments. Ali Ahmed Bakthir wrote **Wa Islamah** (O My Islam) to explain the misunderstanding about Islam. Ali Al-Garem wrote **Ghadet Rasheed** to give us a model of Islamic ethics in the conduct of its heroine. Mustafa Lutfy Al-Manfaluti introduced another kind of stories with the aim of edification through enhancing human values and giving good example, and also by criticizing corruptions and social evils (Tayyar Islami, p. 20). He wrote **Al Nazarat and Al 'Abarat**. Georgie Zidan wrote stories that deal with the history of Islam. Through his social and historical stories, Naguib El-Kilany has presented a clear Islamic vision which is not associated with a certain place or time.

Muslim communities in the West abide by Islamic laws and express that in their writings. Irshad Abdal-Haqq is an Arab American; he works as a communications lawyer in Washington, DC. He has won several awards for his essays and technical writings. In 1995, he founded the *Journal of Islamic Law* (later renamed the *Journal of Islamic Law & Culture*), for which he also wrote extensively. **Brotherhood of the Gods** is his first novel. It is a novel about Muslim Americans. It breaks new ground by

revealing the history and culture of the six million Muslim Americans who identify with the American Society of Muslims. **Brotherhood of the Gods** is the fascinating story of David Rasheed, a former teacher turned amateur private detective, who is sent to investigate the assassination of a prominent Newark Imam. David's search for the killer takes him on a disturbing journey through the city's secret places where he meets pseudo-Islamic groups that adopt the Western concepts about Islam. It is an edifying story of good-versus-evil, and right-versus-wrong. Much of the material is taken from what happened to African American and Muslim communities during the 1960s and 1970s. His second novel, **A Darker Shade of Freedom**, also treats the relationship between races, violence, and religion in American society.

Conclusion: Is Islam to Blame?

Muslims then have all the fundamental elements to lead the world. Islam is far from being a backward religion; it has its supreme morals and principles as well as the right scientific methodology to follow. But why are they more advanced than the Muslim world? Is Islam to blame? Should we copy the West and leave our morals behind us?

In fact, Muslims are not strictly adhering to the principles of Islam. One important reason for our present plight is that Muslims are disintegrated although Islam calls upon them to unify and to hold on to the way of God. The Almighty says in the Glorious Qur'an: <<And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an) and be not divided among yourselves>> (*Al-Imran*); and << And verily! This is your Nation (of Islamic Monotheism) is one Nation, and I am your Lord, so keep your

duty to Me>> (*Al-Mu'minun: 52*). The same idea is reiterated in other places in the Quran:

<< And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an), and be not divided among yourselves>> (*Al-Imran: 103*).

Here is another verse of the Glorious Quran that urges Muslims to become one unified nation:

<< The believers, men and women, are supporters of one another, they enjoin (on the people) *Al-Ma'ruf* (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all what Islam orders one to do), and forbid (people) from *Al-Munkar* (i.e. polytheism and disbelief of all kinds, and all what Islam has forbidden); they offer their prayers perfectly; and give Zakat (obligatory charity) and obey Allah and His Messenger>> (*At-Tauba: 71*).

The Messenger, peace be upon him, says: "Whoever hears a man calling 'O Muslims' and does not answer him, he is not a (true) Muslim." Islam, then, cares that the Muslim should live the entire intellectual, emotion, and experimental interaction with his fellow Muslim.

Other weaknesses that blight our Islamic nation are: lack of seriousness in work; lack of discipline; wasting our time on trivial matters; and talking too much instead of taking actions.

However, one should not be pessimistic for I believe the nation now is beginning to be more united due to the brutal campaign against Islam led by the United States and Israel. There are more people now who are turning to Islam for guidance and direction.

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