

In the Name of Allah

Horizons of Thought

A Semi- annual Journal on Islamic Thoughts and Teachings

Volume.3, No.1, Spring & Summer 2017

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Horizons of Thought

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- 2) Philosophy of science from the view point of Islam.
- 3) The history of Islamic thought from the doctrinal, social, legal, political, and economic aspects.
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Horizons of Thought is pleased to welcome scientific research and achievements of researchers of the area of the Islamic humanities and appreciate any comments to further the journal's improvement. Please email all your academic manuscripts and comments to www.Nashriyat.ir/SendArticle

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Prerequisite Assumptions For An Authentic Interreligious Dialogue A Qurânic Survey

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Received: 2021/06/16 - **Accepted:** 2021/09/19

Abstract

There are two stages of interreligious dialogue, that is, political and academic, each of which has its own goals and requirements. The Holy Qurân presents an exclusive proposal of an interreligious dialogue that might be successfully fulfilled in the context of its methodological elements and prerequisite assumptions. The exploration of certain academic goals of interreligious dialogue according to the verses of the Holy Qurân is one of the preliminary aims of this paper. In addition, the Quranic prerequisite assumptions for an academic interreligious dialogue will be elucidated and analyzed in this research.

Keywords: Dialogue, Interreligious Discourse, Mutual Understanding, Methodology of Dialogue.

Introduction

There is a new, profound motivation to interreligious, inter-ideological dialogue among religious scholars, thinkers, groups and communities. Recommended by many religious thinkers, interreligious dialogue has been embraced as a way of encouraging theological debate on a global level insofar as several religious and interreligious reflections may participate in it and attempt to forge a new way of thinking and/or to constitute a “universal theology of religion.” This attempt has led them to sketch several designs and projects for interreligious dialogue, each of which has its own principles, rules, goals and discipline.¹

Confirming a kind of dialogical authenticity, the Qurân constructs and corroborates a fundamental dialogical relationship among the followers of the three Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Qurân repeatedly engages the People of the Book² in discussion. It is claimed that “the real dialogue between religions was, however, started by the Qurân.”³ The Qurân, on the other hand, appears to present a much narrower and more exclusive proposal of an interreligious dialogue⁴ that might be successfully fulfilled in the context of its methodological elements and prerequisite assumptions.

In one view, there are three considerations that are of the utmost importance for the practice of interreligious dialogue: “these three issues concern the cognitive, the affective, and the objective aspects of dialogue.”⁵ Highly predetermining an atmosphere in which these considerations could make sense, genuine dialogue requires that each side should totally respect the viewpoint of the other and show extreme patience.

The thesis I am putting forward here is that there are two stages of interreligious dialogue, that is, political and academic, each of which has its own goals and requirements. What I have found so far is the fact that the former has received more attention on the part of theologians and religious thinkers.⁶ Unfortunately they have paid less attention to the latter. This allegation is confirmed by their writings, lectures, and scholarly debates. In addition, the

expected goals of interreligious dialogue, which are found in their meditations, plausibly explicate this claim as well. In this paper, I should like to examine the latter, namely the academic level of interreligious dialogue. According to the Qur'anic discourse, there are some goals and prerequisite assumptions for this kind of dialogue that will be elucidated and analyzed here.

I. Goals of Dialogue

Several goals might be assumed for an authentic interreligious dialogue. These include the desire to advance understanding, excite communication, explore similarities and differences, and facilitate means of witness and cooperation across religious lines. Translating these matters for better communication, mutual understanding and cooperation among religions into reality has proven to be no small task. Concerning several goals of interreligious and inter-ideological dialogue, L. Swidler systematically summarizes the goals: "The goals could be said to be three: (1) to know oneself ever more profoundly; (2) to know the other ever more authentically; (3) to live ever more fully accordingly."⁷

After all, in spite of their significance and necessity, these are not the final and essential aims of the dialogue proposed in this paper. It seems that the aim of an authentic dialogue offered by the Qur'an is more than this; besides this, dialogue seeks essentially a better understanding of one another, the best way of believing the truth, and a perfect and deep path of faith and religious awareness. In one sense, authentic dialogue could be a genuine guide towards the truth. Then, according to the Qur'an, one who guides to the truth should be followed.

Say: Is there any of your associates who guides to the truth? Say: Allah guides to the truth. Is He then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you; how do you judge? (10/35)⁸

It is acceptable that by following the path of dialogue, the people of different religions will be able to give a better witness, to live happily, and to cooperate

peaceably in service to God and humanity. However, the participants must have realistic expectations of what can be achieved through dialogue. “True dialogue is, in fact, based on complete respect for the beliefs and behavior of the partner in dialogue. It aims at improving mutual awareness and understanding, while seeking to penetrate God’s inscrutable decrees. It flourishes in an atmosphere of friendship, frankness, gentleness, mutual confidence, and patience in the face of the various stages that have to be covered.”⁹

Furthermore, it goes without saying that the motivation of an interreligious dialogue would be contrasted in different circumstances and diverse situations. In a political or social position, the participants attempt to make an atmosphere in which the people of multiple culture and religions meet together as friends, reasonably understand one another, and peaceably cooperate with each other. Yet, in an academic position, the aim could be more advanced than this; the wise debaters aspire to achieve a deeper aspect of the reality and find a profound way of the truth. At this point, dialogue becomes an active process that enables the movement of ideas and attitudes to take place. Hence, “dialogue is education at its widest and noblest. It is the fulfillment of the command of reality to become known, to be compared and contrasted with other claims, to be acquiesced in if true, amended if inadequate, and rejected if false.”¹⁰

In a sincere interreligious dialogue set up in an academic setting, the final aim could be the fact that respective partners have to grow together towards a mutually identifiable set of agreements. Attaining these final agreements, some dialoguer may totally lose whatever he or she already had, and someone loses some parts of his or her religious-ideological backgrounds. In one sense, it is true to say that “the end of dialogue is conversion; not conversion to my, your or his religion, culture, mores or political regime, but to the truth.”¹¹

II. Prerequisite Assumptions

To achieve the above-mentioned goals, an authentic interreligious dialogue should be organized on some fundamental rules. If it is granted that “its final

effect should be the establishment of truth and its serious, free, candid and conscious acceptance by all men,”¹² genuine dialogue should be able to discipline our consciousness to distinguish the truth intrinsic in realities. This is why dialogue must have rules granted and fulfilled through some prerequisite assumptions. These assumptions, which are of both methodological and theological foundations, presumably seem essential to the dialogical authenticity of the People of the Book. These are the following:

1. No compulsion in religion

All the prophets, according to Islamic enlightenment, came to show the path, the way of salvation and the manner of life. They did not come as our advocates. This is clearly understood from the Qurân:

Say: O people! indeed there has come to you the truth from your Lord, therefore whoever goes aright, he goes aright only for the good of his own soul, and whoever goes astray, he goes astray only to the detriment of it, and I am not a custodian over you (10/108).¹³

Accordingly, if people intentionally perform some wrong deeds, the prophets are not going to save them. The prophets, however, have shown them the right way and God has given them free-will either to accept it or to deny it. This is why Quran insists that:

There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error (2/256).

This statement, which shows the freedom of humankind to choose or refuse any religion and religious thought, could become as a principle for performing any kind of interreligious dialogue. Accordingly, all participants freely propound their opinions, communicating a profoundly important religious fact. Hence, in an academic setting, it is accepted that modern human being, fully aware of his moral freedom, “cannot be subjected; nor can he subject himself to any being without cause; nor can such cause be incomprehensible, irrational, esoteric or secret.”¹⁴

Concerning the right of religious freedom, the same way is recently confirmed and followed by Christianity when the Vatican Council “declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom.” It also asserts that “religious bodies have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices, everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people.”¹⁵

On the other side, it is held that, as a key matter of religious liberty, “the idea of complete freedom of religion is a non-biblical concept. It is the result of an extreme form of individualism that sets the individual in potential conflict with the community.”¹⁶ Apart from this persuasion, it seems noteworthy that the idea of religious freedom, according to which one can freely maintain or renounce any religion he or she prefers, is a predominant requirement for an authentic dialogue.

2. Conscientious listening to the word

The mutual understanding among religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is not merely the theoretical, descriptive knowledge of them. It is primarily an understanding of the religions in the sense of faith and ethos, of perceiving the moving appeal of their categories and values. To understand them in this way, first we should carefully listen to their words, then apprehend their religious facts and, finally, follow the best of them. The Qurân highly appreciates this manner when it says:

therefore give good news to My servants those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding (39/17-18).

Outlining a new approach in which doctrinal difficulties should be met frankly and then bypassed, someone offers that “two steps are needed: careful listening, and a willingness to cease insisting that the ‘other become like ourselves’.”¹⁷

Then, it is described that, for the spirit of dialogue, three virtues are required: “knowing how to keep silent, how to listen, how to be moderate. The first involves putting aside preconceived ideas, allowing the others to be what they are and what they want to be. The second means the capacity to wait for a moment of grace, when the others unveil his or her secret dreams of sanctity. Moderation demands that one put aside the arrogance of striking declaration, blunt assertions, and long-winded conclusions.”¹⁸

However, we lose the opportunity to have a genuine dialogue if we maintain that, “in the final analysis, realism in dialogue requires that one acknowledge, without losing enthusiasm for dialogue, that not everyone is willing to listen.”¹⁹ It is obvious that the attitude of willing to listen the other side respectfully is a vital condition for everyone who participates in any kind of practical dialogue.

3. No concealing the truth and the Book

To perform and endure a logical process of dialogue, we do need the spirit of trust on all levels. In this regard, Panikkar states: “What is needed is trust, a certain trust that sustains a common struggle for an ever better shaping of reality.”²⁰ This kind of trust could be achieved in the light of authenticity and the lack of adulteration. If we mistrust one another, we are not able to pursue our respectful discussion. There might be several reasons for the spirit of distrust and losing the confidence one of which could be the concealing the proofs that have been cleared in the Book by God. In this regard, the Qurân states:

Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear in the Book for men, these it is whom Allah shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them (too) (2/159).

Another factor of distrust could be the concealing of some parts of the Book or any other religious tradition that has been revealed by God. The Qurân again rebukes this kind of concealment and states:

Surely those who conceal any part of the Book that Allah has revealed and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies,

and Allah will not speak to them on the day of resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement (2/174).

Although “it is difficult, of course, after centuries of polemical combat or in the horror of certain present-day dramas, to trust in the complete disinterestedness of the interlocutor,”²¹ the participants should attempt to procure a kind of trust by removing the mistakes and revealing the truth. It is fully acceptable if someone states: “The mistakes of the past and of the present have been and are at once acknowledged and denounced in what remains of them today: prejudices and misunderstandings which can only be suppressed little by little through a long effort of clarification, conversion, and sensitization.”²²

To achieve this kind of trust, the respective partners in the dialogue must persevere in their efforts. It should be noted that we may have some difficulties with our partners’ reflections because we hear only through a wall and see only through a veil. Disclosing the fundamental facts, as well as revealing the truth, is the best way for removing these difficulties and prevailing a concrete trust among dialoguers.

4. No blind following the ancients

It is acceptable that the historical and traditional heritage could be the best sources on which we have to rely in organizing and forming our fundamental meditation. However, relying on the ancients’ reflections does not (and should not) prescribe any blind following in any level and under any circumstances. According to the Qurân, it is not a good excuse to say that “I am doing this because my father did it before.” The Qurân strongly condemns the groups who reject what has been revealed by God, following their fathers.

And when it is said to them, Follow what Allah has revealed, they say: Nay! We follow what we found our fathers upon. What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way (2/170).

Elsewhere it says:

And when it is said to them, come to what Allah has revealed and to the Apostle, they say: That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us. What! even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way (5/104).

It is cited in the Qurân that this rejection happened whenever God sent any prophet.

And thus, We did not send before you any Warner in a town, but those who led easy lives in it said: Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are followers of their footsteps (43/23).

The teacher in general, whether mother, father or elder, is precisely the one who helps a person to perceive rightly. Hence, education is the best way and process of grafting mankind's past, present and future. However, it does not mean that educated modern individuals are permitted to blindly follow their fathers without any acceptable reason. Merely being done or being affirmed by fathers cannot be a logical proof to accept or maintain an item. If we find a better guide than that on which we found our fathers, what would be the most rational and logical alternative? The Qurân surprisingly raises the question and says:

(The Warner) said: What! even if I bring to you a better guide than that on which you found your fathers? They said: Surely we are unbelievers in that with which you are sent (43/24).

If "we cannot change the words, because the conciliar statement was, indeed, an infallible definition,"²³ then we have only two alternatives: either totally accept it or entirely reject it and say the contrary. However, one may inquire as to the logical or traditional reason of this infallibility that does not let someone change or modify the words!

This methodological turning from a pure historical and traditional approach to a kind of rational and analytical approach is highly considered by modern religious thinkers. This is why the Guidelines of the Secretariat for Non-

Christians acknowledges that “we have to make a thorough re-evaluation of our way of looking at things.”²⁴ Furthermore, this reformation may have effect on, and change some traditional principles such as “Outside the church there is no salvation.” This change could be understood from the declaration of the Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these there are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind.”²⁵

Consequently, about religious facts and ideological realities we, participating in a genuine dialogue, must talk with one another from very live experience, not only from books and traditional heritage.

5. Ultimate following the best

What does it mean when someone maintains that “we can hope to gain truly new insights into the meaning of life”?²⁶ Is it true that this kind of new insight might be obtained merely in the light of recognizing and following the best? This could be understood from the Qurân where it states:

therefore give good news to My servants those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided, and those it is who are the men of understanding (39/17-18).

If “our dialogue partners will serve as mirrors for us, showing us our true selves,” and if “participants are to learn so as to grow, to know the other, to discern and appropriate values, to encounter new dimensions of reality, to witness and be witnessed to,”²⁷ then one may ask, to what extent we are ready to change our mind? To what extent are the participants eager to leave and forget their traditional and historical backgrounds if they, watching “the mirrors,” find them wrong and unacceptable?

It is true that, in an authentic dialogue, participants come primarily to learn from each other, and therefore they should assume that they do not

have the fullness of truth; “consequently they meet each other fundamentally as equals, *par cum pari*.”²⁸ This hypothetical equality among the participants in the very beginning of their dialogue, however, does not imply or necessitate their equality in the result. Assuredly, there would be some inequality concerns about the achievements of their dialogue. Unfortunately, Swidler, as well as his followers, does not explicitly clarify that to what extent the participants are interested in forfeiting some parts or the whole of their theological and religious facts.

In other words, if somebody, participating in a genuine dialogue, notices that he or she is partially or completely inaccurate, is he or she prepared to yield and abjure his or her set of religious facts? However, it seems that believers in dialogue, finally, should cultivate two essential attitudes: renouncing what is illusory and embracing what is accurate.

Maintaining that dialogue is not arbitration or disputation, a Jewish writer asserts that, although the individuals involved in dialogue will have power given to them to change the thinking of the faithful of their own community, his community (i.e., the Jewish community) has given him no such power. He adds, “If I go too far out, I will be repudiated by my own community. The dialoguer who goes too far afield is discredited and with this the effectiveness of dialogue as a changer of consciousness is undermined.”²⁹ Unfortunately, he does not clarify what he means by going too far afield here. It could be plausibly objected that the dialoguer who freely participates in an authentic dialogue should not be afraid of what happens in the thinking of the faithful of his or her community. It seems that this is not an academic excuse to interrupt the dialogue because of being repudiated by someone’s own community. As Küng asserts: “A confession of truth includes the courage to sift out untruth and speak about it.”³⁰ It seems to me that, in an authentic dialogue, participants should earnestly and thoughtfully sustain their discussion until they doctrinally realize the ultimate truth, and practically follow the best.

The question now is, what is the best? The Qurân itself propounds the outlines of the best where it says:

And who has a better religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah? And he is the doer of good (to others) and follows the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one, and Allah took Ibrahim as a friend (4/125).

Elsewhere it states:

Say: Allah has spoken the truth, therefore follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists (3/94).

Finally, the Qurân threatens those who are not following the best with punishment:

And follow the best that has been revealed to you from your Lord before there comes to you the punishment all of a sudden while you do not even perceive (39/55).

Since it is beyond the limits of this paper, I am not going to discuss at length the Qurânic meditation of ‘what is the best?’ And ‘why is it the best?’ The question deserves a more thorough investigation than can be given here.

However, regarding the question of what is true religion, Hans Küng offers his three responses, relying on three dimensions – two horizontals, external-internal, and one vertical.³¹ One may ask whether Küng offers his thesis of three approaches to the true religion before participating in a dialogue, as a presupposition, within a dialogue, as a criterion, or after a dialogue, as a result. Indeed, Küng, falling in a kind of relativity, does not solve the problem. He finally declares what we are considering in this paper: “one should much more be utterly open to learning, to taking up the truth of the others, and without jealousy sharing one’s truth.”³²

III. Conclusion

There are two levels for interreligious dialogue: political and academic, each of which has its own goals and achievements. Mutual recognition, mutual

understanding, and finally, mutual relationship is, to some extent, the ultimate goal for the political level of this kind of dialogue. Nonetheless, on an academic or scholarly level, besides the above-mentioned attainments, seeking the best, accepting the worth, and ultimately following the most perfect idea is a final goal and supreme achievement.

In the light of Quranic teachings, one may conclude that those prerequisite assumptions discussed in this paper could be followed in an interreligious dialogue if it is arranged in an academic setting and if the participants should like to promote their perceptions of the truth.

It is evident and acceptable that there “is no peace without peace among religions, no peace among religions without dialogue between the religions, and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another.”³³ But we, in an academic circumstance, should continue beyond this level and, fulfilling this peaceful attainment, attempt to clarify the truth and finally accept and follow whatever has been proved as an ultimate alternative. Because, in this regard, we not only “need not be afraid of the truth,”³⁴ but also we are seeking and following the truth. What Küng considers here seems to be the first step of performing the expected achievements of interreligious dialogue that have been so far examined in this paper.

Considering the result of our discussion so far, one may express that, on an academic level, we need a kind of agreement that dominates both the hearts and the minds of the participants. Hence, what Panikkar declares in this regard might be questioned when he says: “Agreement means convergence of hearts, not just coalescence of minds. There is always place for diversity of opinions and multiplicity of mental schemes of intelligibility.”³⁵ Here, one may wonder how is it possible to have convergence of hearts without coalescence of minds, concerning the above-discussed interreligious dialogue?

A scholarly dialogue, in an academic setting, must not be treated as, or be compared with a political contention or a moral disputation in which the participants are essentially looking for a kind of hopefulness and heart-

concurrence. If we prepare this kind of psychological atmosphere and contrive to devise it, we are successful in our political or moral accomplishments. But this is not enough for a situation in which some scholars attempt to promote their understanding of the reality, revise and/or complete their cognition of the actuality, and finally embrace the ultimate and perfect truth. This is a position in which an authentic dialogue involves “the willingness to dare and risk.”³⁶

Finally, it might be concluded that an authentic dialogue should be understood as a discussion aimed at achieving creative synthesis, rather than simply a prepared contention. By following the above-mentioned prerequisite assumptions, the process of interreligious dialogue could encompass any creative thoughts and desires, and pave the way for wider cooperation of the faithful individuals and groups in an academic discussion.

Endnotes

1. for instance, see the following proposals: L. Swidler, “Interreligious and interideological Dialogue,” in Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 5-50; H. Küng, “Christianity and World Religions: Dialogue with Islam,” in Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 192-209; M. Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, trans. Marston Speight (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), specially pp. 13-44; P. Jacques Lanfry, “Islamic-Christian Dialogue: approaches to the obstacles,” in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 203-224.

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2. This is a Qurânic technical term used for addressing the followers of the Abrahamic religions.
 3. Askari, Hasan, "The Dialogical Relationship between Christianity and Islam," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 42.
 4. By relying on the Qurânic reflection, what I mean here by interreligious dialogue is a trilateral dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the followers of the three Abrahamic religions. For a short history of a well organized Trialogue, see the report by Eugene Fisher, "Kennedy Institute Jewish-Christian-Muslim Trialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 19, 1 (Winter 1982), 197-200.
 5. R. Pummer, "Research in Comparative Religion – Implications for Interfaith Dialogue," in R. Pummer (ed.), *Comparative Religion* (New Delhi: VPH, 1979), 7.
 6. For more details in this regard, see John Renard, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: a Review of Six Post-Vatican II Church-Related Documents," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 283-310.
 7. L. Swidler, "Interreligious and interideological Dialogue," in Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 26.
 8. For the English translation of the Qurân, the version of M. H. Shakir (WOFIS, Tehran, Iran, n.d.) has been followed.
 9. M. Borrmans, "The Doctrinal Basis Common to Christians and Muslims and Different Areas of Convergence in Action," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 236 fn.
 10. I. R. A. Al-Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston, N. Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 9.
 11. *Ibid.*, 9.
 12. *Ibid.*, 10.
 13. Several times the Qurân speaks of the fact that the prophets are not the advocates or custodians over people. See the Qurân, 6/66&107, 25/43, 39/41, 42/6.
 14. I. R. A. Al-Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston, N. Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 11.
 15. Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis humanae*, nos. 2 and 4.
 16. John Renard, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: a Review of Six Post-Vatican II Church-Related Documents," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 303.
 17. John Renard, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: a Review of Six Post-Vatican II Church-Related Documents," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 292.
 18. *Ibid.*, 293, cited from M. Borrmans, *The Muslim-Christian Dialogue of the Last Ten Years* (Brussels, 1978), 50.
 19. *Ibid.*, 309-310.

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 24. *Guidelines for a dialogue between Muslims and Christians* (Rome: Edizioni Ancora, 1969), 86.
 25. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16.
 26. L. Swidler, "Interreligious and interideological Dialogue," in Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 46.
 27. *Ibid.*, 26.
 28. *Ibid.*, 37.
 29. Zalman M. Schachter, "Bases and Boundaries of Jewish, Christian, and Moslem Dialogue," in L. Swidler (ed.), *Muslims in Dialogue* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 313.
 30. Hans Küng, "What Is True Religion? Toward an Ecumenical Criteriology," in Leonard Swidler, ed., *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 238.
 31. See Hans Küng, "What Is True Religion? Toward an Ecumenical Criteriology," in Leonard Swidler, ed., *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 249-50.
 32. *Ibid.*, 250.
 33. H. Küng, "Christianity and World Religions: Dialogue with Islam," in Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 194. Küng, in p. 209, again declares: "I am certain we can have peace among nations only if there is peace among the religions, and especially among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And that will happen only if we are able to speak together as brothers and sisters."
 34. *Ibid.*, 207.
 35. R. Panikkar, "The Invisible Harmony: a Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality," in Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 142.
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Life-Meaning Crisis, Islamic and Humanist Points of View¹

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Received: 2021/08/16 - **Accepted:** 2021/12/19

Abstract

There are many people all around the world dealing with at least one or more types of crises at present time. Most of the persons afflicted are those who especially suffer from the crisis of life-meaning due to their imperfect qualifications, less-experienced lifetime and deficiency of their knowledge. In addition to the above, many people experience stresses occurred to them through the significant concurrence or convergence of events that have ruined their concepts of life.

In accordance with the Islamic world-view, the major conception of human life refers to one's understanding of the original meaning of existence as well as to one's perception of the wisdom behind the general creation. The Qur'an indicates how the major Divine Mission of the Messengers of Allah is to fight against all kinds of ignorance and negligence and furthermore, to support humankind in their confronting to any crisis before they are to be involved into that crisis. Through the present writing, I am interested to reflect upon the aforementioned question and find out any adequate answer to this concrete question from within the Islamic resources.

Key Words: Crisis, Life-meaning, Meaning Crisis, Meaning of Existence

Introduction

People -when distressed- may be categorized into three groups as follow:

1. Those who are unaware or ignorant of whatever happened to them,
2. Those who are not ignorant, but something would happen that makes them negligent of their situation,
3. Those who are neither ignorant nor negligent; however, are incompetent to get rid of the crucial situation.

Many educators, psychologists, psychotherapists and spiritual advisors and counselors have been facing the question of “life-meaning” and have tried to touch upon the three above-mentioned groups and find out a reasonable answer to any of these three situations. However, their reflections upon the same question differ from one another.

A problem like this is considered as an everlasting issue especially overlaying young people’s mind and soul, such that its ambiguity has spoiled their tranquility and damaged their immunity. In fact, the quantity and quality of one’s answer to the question of life-meaning depends on one’s world-view and ideology. In the present article, two major approaches - i.e. the humanist and Islamic visions, contrasting each other - have been first discussed, somehow as two oppositional trends of thought and analysis.

The article then, concentrating on Islamic world-view and ideology and rehearsing some Quranic verses, reflects upon some significant quotes of Muslim Scholars including ‘Allama Tabatabaei, Javadi Amoli, M. Taqi Ja’fari, M. Taqi Mesbah Yazdi and Shahid Motahhari. It is intended to designate the concept of life meaning and its vital role in running and managing human life in real sense. The article explains that in accordance with the Islamic world-view and its value-system, one's perception of the original meaning of existence as well as one's discrimination of the wisdom behind the general creation entitles the major and true conceptualization of human life.

The Role of the World-View and Ideology

Life-meaning, as an outstanding subject-matter, can be discussed from several perspectives such as: ontological, epistemological, psychological, sociological

and personal perspectives. From an Islamic point of view, life-meaning has been supervised by the role of the Divine Agents including: faith in God's Presence all over the existence, Divine Revelation, Godly Mission and Guidance, religious Laws, as well as believing in Holy Mastership and Supervision (*al-Valayah*).

The present writing touches more upon the true understanding of the meaning and purpose of life from ontological and epistemological point of view, focusing on the three-where questions, i.e. “from where, in where and to where”. It is envisioned to find out adequate answers to these questions from within the Islamic resources. The article will come to conclude that obtaining a deeper and more rational concept of life mostly depends on a stronger and more reasonable world-view and ideology. The major role of world-view is to form the personality of the believers and give sense to their lives.

As the Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution maintains, besides so many agents and factors that make human beings' physical structure, there are some other specific issues functioning as the very basis for those nonphysical manifestations. Issues such as “thoughts, beliefs, visions, world-view”, as theoretical wisdom, are considered as foundations for personality training and educating. The Supreme Leader then explains that not every world-view can instruct someone like the Late Imam Khomeini. Any person who believes in God, the Hereafter, presence before God, life after death, trust in God, etc., acts in a way other than the way of those who do not believe so. Thus, each world-view has its own impact on making individual's personality (Ayatollah Khamene'i, 1997, v. 1, p. 32).

On the other hand, practical wisdom has something to do with ideology; with those sorts of “ought” and “ought not”, on the basis of especial world-view and ideology. The content and concept of these kinds of “ought” and “ought not” indicates a necessary relationship established between optional conduct and its result. Such relationship is upon a kind of necessity of action in association with its own result that is called “*zarourat-e bel-qiyas*” in technical

sense. This same necessity functions as a basis for issuing instructions and commands of practical wisdom. For instance, when our wisdom perceives the relationship between justice and salvation, or when it understands the relationship between oppression and cruelty, it concludes that one should practice justice and avoid oppression (Rahnamaei, 2007, p. 32-33).

Life-Meaning Definition

Conceptual Definition

What is the definition of life-meaning? Taking life-meaning as an ageless search into consideration, this is one of the most frequently inquired questions by humankind since the very beginning of human life on the earth. It is a question naturally asked by people since they think that they are capable enough to make choices about life. The question would appear to be difficult to answer, as it would be disputable since every single person, depending on the current circumstances, would judge in accordance to his/her own belief and value-system. It is to perform an ultimate search for the truth and purpose in life, including the ways and approaches for human beings to:

- a) recognize their originality; from where?
- b) identify their existing situation; in where?
- c) understand their point of departure; to where?

In another words, life-meaning reveals for human beings how to

- a) find out the Truth;
- b) know how to move forward;
- c) realize how to fulfill their human missions;
- d) discover the ultimate goal of existence.

Technical Definition

Contemporary Analytic Perspectives

One of the most significant discussions and major tasks in the field of philosophy is to find out life-meaning. From the early history to the present

time, many philosophers have attempted to discover a very quick and concrete answer to this outstanding question.

Life-meaning is a very frequent distinctive issue discussed by both philosophers and non-philosophers of several trends of thought and tradition, including Western and Muslim thinkers. Among the Westerners, one would find those modern humanists who maintain to present a very atheistic vision and image of human life.

The Humanist Conception of Life-Meaning

The following phrase helps us to realize the very humanist interpretation of human life. The quotes indicate how life-meaning has been interpreted and evaluated by Western theoreticians. Among them is John Dewey (1859-1952) who believes that life is meaningful if human nature is well-understood; otherwise, life would easily miss its concept. Dewey maintains: “lack of understanding of human nature is the primary cause of disregard for it. Lack of insight always ends in despising or else unreasoned admiration.” (Dewey, 1930, p. 5) Michio Kaku (1947-) as another thinker, explains:

Beyond work and love, I would add two other ingredients that give meaning to life:

First, to fulfill whatever talents we are born with. However blessed we are by fate with different abilities and strengths. We should try to develop them to the fullest, rather than allow them to atrophy and decay. ... I think we should accept ourselves as we are and try to fulfill whatever dreams are within our capability.

Second, we should try to leave the world a better place than when we entered it. ...²

Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) on the contrary, insists, “life has no meaning. Each of us has meaning and we bring it to life. It is a waste to be asking the question when you are the answer.”³

The Islamic Life-meaning

Quranic Point of View

The Qur'an directly or indirectly insists that the major Divine Mission of the Messengers of Allah is to shed light on the Truth and fight against all kinds of ignorance and negligence.⁴ Moreover, Islamic thought not only guides and supports the believers in their challenging with any crisis, but also alarms and even prevents them in advance, from falling into disaster and before they are to be involved into that crisis. In order for us to realize what is life-meaning from the view of the Qur'an, we'd better recite the following verses at first, then to analyze these verses, concentrating on the purpose of human life on the earth.

Here are the verses:

<p>Did you then think that We created you in vain, and that you would not be returned to us? (Living for returning to Allah)</p>	<p>أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ (المؤمنون: ١١٥)</p>
<p>And I did not create the jinn and humankind except that they should worship Me (Alone). (Coming to the existence to obey and worship Allah)</p>	<p>وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (الذاريات: ٥٦)</p>
<p>(Allah is the One) Who has created life and death so that He may try you which of you are best in deeds ... (From living to dying under the Divine trial)</p>	<p>الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيُبْلِغَكُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ (الملك: ٢)</p>
<p>And We have not created the heaven and earth and what is between them in vain. That is the opinion of those who disbelieve, thus woe to such disbelievers, because of the fire. (Not in vain, but towards an aim)</p>	<p>وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ (ص: ٢٧-٢٨)</p>
<p>And among the people, there is he who sells himself for the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is kind to His worshippers. (God's pleasure the major)</p>	<p>وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (بقره: ٢٠٧)</p>
<p>There has come to you from God a light and a luminous Book, through which God, by His grace, guides all who seek His good pleasure on the pathways of peace, and brings them out of the depths of darkness into light and guides them unto a Straight Path. (Following the Divine Straight Path)</p>	<p>... قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَ يَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (مائدة: ١٥-١٦)</p>

<p>And this worldly life is nothing but amusement and play? but verily the Home in the Hereafter is life indeed, if they are to know (A bridge to the Hereafter)</p>	<p>وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (العنكبوت: ٦٤)</p>
<p>In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful By the Token of Time Verily, Mankind is in loss Except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and advice each other to observe the Truth and advice each other to be Patient and Constant (Four fundamental elements of life)</p>	<p>بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ</p>

Imam Ali's Point of View

The following quotes narrated from Imam 'Ali عليه السلام indicate that life is full of meaning in the light of Theism. From this point of view, "... the teachings of Imam Ali whose deep insight into life can be regarded as a source of inspiration in rendering life are full of meaning in the light of theism and the purposeful design of the Creator in such a way that desire for death is part and parcel of life." (Pakizeh, 2014, n. 19, p. 33-64).

Interpreting life from this angle, as Imam 'Ali upholds, a major criterion for life is to be victorious in your fighting against both internal and external enemies, as a major criterion for death is to be overpowered by your enemies. "Death is in your life as far as you are overpowered and life is in your death as far as you gain victory." (Imam 'Ali, s. 51). Furthermore, the Imam enlightens that "life is in composition of two days; the one favors and the other oppose you. Do not get arrogant if it is favorable and be patient if it is against you." (Ibid, s. 396).

Muslim Thinkers' Points of View

Among the earlier, later and contemporary Muslim scholars, too many philosophers and thinkers have offered their reflection and consideration upon the issue of human nature. Among this great number of scholars, I focus on the interpretations of 'Allama Tabataba'i, 'Allama M. Taqi Mesbah, 'Allama M.

Taqi Ja'fari and 'Allama Motahhari. The following table sheds light on these philosophers' opinions in brief.

<p>'Allama Tabataba'i Human Life Link to the Creator</p>	<p>'Allama looked at human nature first and foremost in terms of its link to the 'Cause of the causes', the Creator. His concern was human nature from the very outset of the creation of human soul and before its inherence in human body to the end of the physical life on this earth, and even into the soul's life after death and finally at the Resurrection (Tabataba'i, 1986, pp. 165-314).</p>
<p>'Allama Tabataba'i To Forget One's Self to Fall into Perdition</p>	<p>"Whoever forgets his/her self ... s/he will go astray and fall into perdition Such a person in fact sinks into a darkness from which there is no escape." (Tabataba'i, 1986b, p. 202).</p>
<p>'Allama Tabataba'i Never to Give up</p>	<p>"Believers do not give up on themselves or feel abject under any circumstances, because they know themselves to be attached to the limitless power of the Creator of the universe. They are mindful of Him and sheltered by Him in all circumstances; their hearts are calm, clear, and strong." (Rahnamaei, 2017, p. 161).</p>
<p>'Allama Tabataba'i Gradations of the Souls</p>	<p>Hierarchical Groups of Human Beings (Theological Division) Gradations of the Souls with Each Group A Hierarchical and Theological Division of God's Servants Seen in Terms of Their Respective Soul Gradation</p> <p>I God's Prophets and Their Successors</p> <p>\. the soul of body ʁ. the soul of power ʀ. the soul of passion and appetite ɛ. the soul of faith o. the holy soul</p> <p>II Believers; the Followers of God's Prophets</p> <p>\. the soul of body ʁ. the soul of power ʀ. the soul of passion and appetite ɛ. the soul of faith .. the holy soul is excluded</p> <p>III Unbelievers</p> <p>\. the soul of body ʁ. the soul of power ʀ. the soul of passion and appetite .. the souls of faith is excluded .. the holy soul is excluded (Tabataba'i, 1986a, p.177-178).</p>

Analysis of Human Nature: Humanist versus Islamic Approach

The following table demonstrates a brief comparison between humanist reflection versus Islamic reflection on human nature.

<p>Humanist Position Natural Evolution No Divine Element Is Involved</p>	<p>Islamic Position Divine Creation Divine Agents Is Involved</p>
<p>Two Principles: “First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.”(Rahnamaei, 2017, p. 161 and Kurtz, p. 8)</p>	<p>Major Principle: To look at human nature first and foremost in terms of its link to the ‘Cause of the causes’, the Creator, concerning human nature from the very outset of the creation of human soul and before its inherence in human body to the end of the physical life on this earth, and even into the soul’s life after death and finally at the Resurrection (Ibid, p. 158).</p>
<p>Human-made God Naturalistic Realism An Ideal Objective The humanist vision of God is a human-made god created by the human mind and chosen as an ideal objective. The number of this god may increase by the expansion of the number of human persons themselves. To this extent, every single human being may have his or her own god that is his or her ideal objective end. The life and power of such a god, as well as its light and manifestations depend upon the amplitude of life, power, light and manifestations that the individual has devoted to his or her ideal objective. In short, it is an individual god and not a universal one. This is an individualistic approach to the notion of God, which suggests the injection of relativism into the conceptualization of God. God according to this notion can never take a role in the unification of human society. The element of unification should be looked for somewhere else. It is in fact the business of social norms and standards to suggest general rules and criteria to be practiced in human life as a unifying agent of the human society (Ibid, p. 399-400).</p>	<p>The Unique Creator Transcendental Realism Allah Realization God, on the other hand, according to Islam is the One Creator Whose light, power, life, and manifestations are everywhere explicitly clear. Nowhere can one find where the same God is not present with all His essence and attributes. In fact, all parts of the universe including the universe of human beings are signs of His existence. This is God the One and the only Creator of the universe. Not only all human beings, but also all creatures are continuously inclining and departing towards Him since they are unexceptionally His creatures and He is undoubtedly their first cause of existence. He is the Lord to Whom the origination of all beings refers. All life, power, light, love, etc., are continuously bestowed from His Splendor upon the world of existence. The Islamic God has both Basic Elements and Manifestations upon Whom the reality of all realities have been depended (Ibid, p. 400-401).</p>

To this point, we have looked over some of the major differences between the conceptualization of human life in accordance with humanism and Islam.

Circulation of Human Life

The circulation of human life can be identified in accordance with one's answer to the following questions as so called "three-where questions: *from where-in where-to where*". In order to find out the answer to the above three-where questions, one could refer to one's self and arrange a personal recitation with his or her own self.

The following poems and phrases indicate how to start one's self-recitation.

Why Negligence?

- This is my thought every day and my words every night.
- That why am I neglect of my own temperaments?
- Where did I come from?
- What was the objective of my coming to life?
- I am thinking to where will be finally my departure.
- Where is my true homeland?
- I am astonished why the Creator has created me?
- Or what was His intension behind my existence?
- I know definitely that my spirit belongs to the transcendence.
- Thus, I have intended to move forward there.
- I am the bird of the Divine Kingdom, not belonging to the domain of the material dust.
- A few days has been made for me a cage of my body.
- Happy be the day when I will be flying towards the Divine Friend; flying towards Him intending His Domain.
- I did not come here in this mundane world by my own choice and intension. The One Who brought me to existence will return me to my true homeland.⁷

I
Where Did I Come from?
From the Divine Kingdom

- a) I was created in accordance with the Divine plane.
- b) A sense of divinity has been inserted in my soul.
- c) I have not been left alone by myself.
- d) There is always Someone who I feel confident to be in His attendance .
- e) I must try to recognize Him clearly and follow His commands in order to fulfill His intension behind my creation.

II
Where Am I Situated?
In the Status of Fulfilling
My Duties towards My Lord and My Fellow Human Beings

- a) I have been brought to the existence in order to fulfill the wisdom behind my life for which I have been created.
- b) I am now in my mundane life duration, under the umbrella of my Creator's mercy, grace and support.
- c) My perfection is to attain God's Pleasure, which is the greatest goal of my existence.
- d) I must prepare myself for an everlasting departure from mundane life to the Hereafter.

III
To Where Will Be My Departure?
To the Kingdom of the One Who originally created me
and let me come to existence

- a) I have to know my Creator, to whom I am going to arrange my departure.
- b) In order for me to achieve God's pleasure, I have to get nearer to Him
- c) In order for me to get nearer to my Lord, I must perform His Commands as He has issued.
- d) The belief in the Oneness of God demands me not to trust in anyone other than Him.
- e) I must arrange everything to manage my life and spend it just for the sake of my departure to my Lord.

Conclusion

Through an analytic-descriptive study, the article tried to find out a clear answer to the question of “life-meaning”. It run over conceptualization of life meaning, its roots and its impact on determining human style of life from the view-points of some more outstanding philosophers and thinkers from both humanist and Islamic approaches.

The purposes of human life should be evaluated alongside the purposes of existence. Considering Islamic thought, it is obvious that life-meaning is in close relation to the meaning of existence itself. Therefore, for realizing the philosophy of being and recognizing life-meaning, one has to rely on teachings of wisdom and religion about existence. Both of these two ontological and epistemological resources insist that existence as a whole and human life very specifically, have very definite purposes.

Thus considered, life-meaning is in conjunction with the philosophy of existence to the extent that life-meaning refers to the philosophy of existence. Philosophy of existence for its part, is in close relation with human life and human life in its turn, depends on knowing the identity of human being both as it is and as it should be. This is because life-meaning comprises within itself a process from being to becoming. In this regard, human mentality has been engaged in an everlasting dispute between the Godly and evil supervision; between the Mastership of the Divine (Valayah of Allah) and that of the Satan (Valayah of Taghut). The believers are ascertained that Allah spreads His vision over all human existence. Living under the supervision of Allah provides the situation for fighting against the Satan. This part is left up to the intension and will of the individual to choose one (God’s supervisions) and reject the other (Satanic supervision).

As a result of this discussion, the following notes have been figured out from the context of the study:

1. Living with no clear concept of life seems neither justifiable nor intolerable.
2. The type of world-view and value-system determine the nature of life-meaning.
3. Life-meaning has its own origins and backgrounds in transcendental sphere.
4. The transcendental origins of life-meaning give color and specify human's lifestyle.
5. According to Islamic ontology and epistemology, in order to have a progressively pleasant life, the mundane and material domain of human's life must be always under the inspiration and supervision of the Divine Kingdom.
6. One's acquiring knowledge of God, the Most High, leads to one's trusting in Him.
7. One's trusting in God energizes him/her to follow the path of God in nice formulation to the extent that s/he would obtain true life-meaning.
8. The more a world-view and ideology are espoused, the more they are scientifically valued in modeling true life-meaning.
9. The most trustworthy way to clean life from any Satanic trend is to establish it on the basis of belief in Allah, the Most High.
10. The last but not the least, human life should move forward to its highest level until it becomes a manifestation of the Alive Almighty Creator.

Endnotes

1 . The subject was presented in Shi'a – Mennonite Dialogue, the 7th hold by Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg Canada, March, 8-10, 2018.

2 . <http://www.mkaku.org/>

3 . <http://www.allaboutworldview.org/humanism-meaning-of-life-faq.htm>

4 . For instance cf. the Qur'an, 48: 8-9, 2:151, 14:5, 33:45-46

5 . <http://www.motahari.ir>.

6 . <http://www.academicjournals.org/journals/ERR/article-full-text/>

7 .The poem is attributed to the very famous poet Jalal al-Din Mohammad Balkhi (Mawlana), 1207-1273.

See:

<https://yaahagh.com/rumi/354>

<https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/persian-all-day-i-think-about-it-then-at-night-i-say-it-rumi.2862168/>

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Toward an Islamic Solution to the Problem of Identity Crisis

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Received: 2021/09/16 - Accepted: 2022/01/19

Abstract

One of the worldwide theoretical and practical challenges to the people living in the twenty first century is the problem of identity crisis. It is connected with the issue of globalization, which began, with a big hue and cry, by the final years of the twentieth century. Globalization as a cultural, social, economic, and political movement, is planned and carried out by dominating secular powers of the world, during which a “cultural surprise-attack” or the so-called “cultural invasion” is discharged in order to globalize the materialist belief-system, secular values, and hedonistic life-style. Since culture is the building block of the identity of a person, a society, and a civilization,¹ a prerequisite for such an action-plan was to destroy the cultural infrastructure of the victim individual (or society) in order to pave the way for the alien culture to intrude, which mostly culminates in identity crisis.

In this paper, I will examine the nature of identity (at both individual and social levels), its importance, transformation, and crisis. Then I will analyze the determinate factors in such a crisis, and bring the discussion to an end with proposing some Islamic-based solutions to identity crisis as one of the major problems of youth living in this period of human history.

Keywords: Identity, Identity Crisis, Globalization, Islam, Youth.

The Question of Identity

The literal meaning of identity is sameness and uniformity, but its technical meaning includes some qualifications. Here by identity we mean human identity, or personal identity which implies the uniqueness of a person. A correct answer to the question of what identity is, also determines which types of changes a person can undergo without ceasing to exist as a human person (Korfmacher). Therefore, it has something to do with qualities and characteristics shared by all members of the human race, as well as those that distinguish one from others. Without going into philosophical delicacies and debates over the essence of identity, we may make this general statement: identity is what distinguishes a person from others including some geographic, genetic, psychic, and physical features. However, characteristics that determine a person as a human being refer to the non-physical aspect of a person, one's mental life, the most important component of which lies in one's consciousness and conscious activities (Noonan & Curtis).

Personal identity includes such elements as one's answers to the questions of who am I, whence did I come from, why am I here, and whither am I finally going. It has a strong connection, and sometime is equated, with culture. Culture also consists of different components such as beliefs, values, motivations, language, arts, and national (or domestic or ethnic) heritage, but not all of these elements are at the same footing. What shapes the bedrocks of a culture, and supports other cultural elements is the framework of one's understanding, called worldview. Worldview forms the mentality of people, and enables them to interpret all things and events in this context, and ascribe meaning to them. This mental framework gives rise to a system of values which, in turn, produce and reinforce proportionate motives, and finally lead to actions congruent with such values and intentions.

These systems of "thought", "value", "motivation", and "action" are expressed through language, script, arts, and symbolic rituals and ceremonies as

different reflections of the fundamental elements of culture. Cultural foundations influence all aspects of one's life, including one's relation with God, spirituality, personal behavior, family life, social interactions, political decisions, and one's treatment of the environment; and in one word, they shape one's lifestyle that encompasses all cultural manifestations. (Goodenough, 1957, p. 167; Geertz, 1973, p. 12; Pandian, 1991, p. 3)

Since people normally live and interact with others in a society, part of their self-understanding and the uniqueness of their beliefs, values, and actions comes from their belonging to a society vis-à-vis other societies to which they do not have the same connection. Therefore, "social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept, derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group." (Turner & Oakes, 1986, pp. 237–252).

Some people speak of identity structure to include both personal and social aspects of identity. Peter Weinreich, for instance, defines *Identity Structure* as

a structural representation of the individual's existential experience, in which the relationships between self and other agents are organised in relatively stable structures over time ... with the emphasis on the socio-cultural milieu in which self relates to other agents and institutions. (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003, p. 1)

Function of Identity

Credible responses to the basic identity questions can give one a perspective on one's place in the world, a sense of purpose in one's existence, and a meaningful life; whereas, leaving them unanswered, or providing them with inadequate or wrong responses has the potential for throwing one into the deep valley of skepticism, disorientation, and nihilism. Social identity, as an element dividing people and societies into "us" and "others,"² gives people a sense of unity among themselves, and independence from others. It makes a society adamant in the face of internal disintegration as well as foreign cultural incursion, military invasion, or political interference.

In the global village of today, there has remained little place for distinct identities, whether personal or social. The world has become a moving whole: thoughts and ideologies, techniques and technologies, people and commodities, pictures and messages are moving all the time from one society to another. However, there are some relatively stable elements, securing a place for identity. These factors include worldviews, value systems, and some social institutions that have their roots in religion, culture, civilization, and the history of a people. The comparatively unwavering condition of such elements is an obstacle in the face of complete alteration and annihilation. They resist against incongruent elements, defy change, and oppose the process of the melting of a society in the uniformly global pot.

Identity Modification

Despite all the benefits of maintaining individual and social identity, there is another fact that should not be disregarded. In fact, beliefs, values, and social institutions vary from one culture to another, and not all of them correspond to the reality of the world, the real needs of the human being, and to what is best for one's wellbeing. Therefore, all elements of all cultures cannot be judged as equally worthy. They are not absolutely fixed, solid, and immune from change either. For these reasons, it is natural for truth-seeking people to reflect on, and criticize their own beliefs and values, and try to fix their flaws or weaknesses, as they have to evaluate and scrutinize other cultures.

If a person or society enjoyed a rational and dynamic identity, it would have a strong culture and healthy spirit; hence, such acts of correction and repair would help it grow and survive in the midst of the clash of cultures. One has to check all the time, one's belief system, value system, as well as lifestyle, social institutions, and other cultural elements of the society against reality and rational arguments. Wrong components should be fixed, and weak foundations strengthened. An exchange of ideas between different cultures can help this process, if there were sincerity and equal opportunities for all parties involved.

The relation between different societies and cultures is similar to the relation of living organisms having constant contact, exchange, and cooperation. A strong and stable culture which is built on rational foundations, can communicate with other cultures while keeping its own independent identity. People embracing that culture as their identity can recognize positive elements in other cultures to assimilate, while identifying their negative elements and weak points to avoid. They not only can prevent themselves from being infected by the wrong elements, but also can help other cultures to fix their flaws and grow as well.

Besides strong and rationally defensible foundations there is another condition for a culture to survive. Citizens in different levels of the social strata must receive proper education and enjoy enough awareness for encountering opponent cultures. They should be equipped with the required diagnostic, as well as defensive, means equal to those of their adversaries. Of course, such a strong identity will only be formed when clear and logical ideas and values are elaborated on, and false ideas and superstitions are rejected and eliminated.

Identity Suppression

If the basic elements of identity, whether individual or social, were irrational, fragile, or not convincing anymore, people begin to seek new elements to replace them. This condition makes it ripe for cultural crusaders looking for such problematic circumstances to assimilate other cultures through a process of globalization.

Assaulting ideologies, accompanied by economic pressure, political hegemony, and fallacious propaganda and advertising try to destabilize other cultures. It leads to what one may call identity suppression, in which distinct social and cultural norms are eliminated, and people are robbed of their identities along with geographic boundaries. Anthony Giddens, the British sociologist, writes:

[G]lobalization changes the everyday life, especially in the developing countries, by creating international systems and powers. Globalization is not merely the background of contemporary policies, but in general, changes the institutions of the societies in which we live. (Giddens, 1998, p. 33)

In the midst of such bewilderment, what determines the dominance of one culture over its opponents is neither its theoretical firmness, nor the justifiability of its values, or the rationality of its action-codes, but a combination of its materialistic and sensual attractions, artistic beauties, and sophisticated methods of marketing in presenting cultural goods and services which rob people of their hearts and blinds their eyes.

Imam Ali (Alayh- al-salam) analyzes this situation in the fiftieth sermon of *Nahj-al-Balaghah*, when he explains the root causes of social disturbances, where he says:

The only point of departure for disturbances are personal desires that are followed, and false decrees that are fabricated contrary to the commands of the Book of God, and some people follow others on the basis other than the religion of Allah. (Imam Ali, Sermon 50).

Then he refers to the trick employed by those who lead such disastrous events as an instance of mixing of truth with falsehood, which gives the evil powers the upper hand. He continues:

So if falsehood did not mix with truth, truth would not be covered up from truth-seekers, and if truth were purified from falsehood, enemies of truth would have been muted. But a piece of truth and a piece of falsehood are taken and mixed together, and that is where Satan holds sway over his followers. (Imam Ali, Sermon 50)

Identity Crisis

Deficiency in the basic factors of personal or social identity sometimes leads to confusion. This happens, when people do not find stronger, more substantial, and more attractive components in the assaulting culture, or new

elements do not fit in with the persisting elements of one's original culture. In such a perplexing situation, people do not find any firm base in their own culture, nor do they find shelter in the intruding one. So they find themselves suspending with a sense of mental vacuum. It increases the chance of identity crisis and a source of different types of individual abnormality and social turmoil. (Cote & Levine, 2002, p. 22)

Secularism with its atheist philosophy and individualistic value system is a complete recipe for such a disaster. Alasdair C. McIntyre, a communitarian ethical philosopher, believes that modern societies lack social identity due to the dominance of liberal philosophy, which leads to the disintegration of values and beliefs (McIntyre, 1999, pp. 147-148), and nothing remains to give them a sense of unity and harmony. They neither have any goal in their lives, nor do they feel secure in their beliefs, nor do they have any basis for their values. Each day they have a different opinion, and choose a different value, depending on the direction of the wind and social atmosphere. Imam Ali (PBUH) describes the situation of such people when he says:

... وَهَمَجُ رَعَاةٍ، أَتْبَاعُ كُلِّ نَاعِقٍ، يَمِيلُونَ مَعَ كُلِّ رِيحٍ، لَمْ يَسْتَضِيئُوا بِنُورِ الْعِلْمِ، وَكَمْ يَلْجَأُونَ إِلَى رُكْنٍ وَثِيقٍ.

... and the imprudent punks run after every caller and bend in the direction of every wind. They neither seek light from the brightness of knowledge, nor do they take protection of any reliable support. (Imam Ali, Sermon 147)

Victims of identity crisis are not limited to the citizens of the third-world countries. This is a cross-cultural virus that infects identities worldwide. Of course, victimized societies are stratified in different levels, inasmuch as some Western cultures feel victimized by some others. Such developed countries like France and Canada also complain about the “American cultural invasion.” (Smith, 1994) Once, Pierre Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister of the time (1968-1984), said to the authorities of the United States, “Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly or

temperate the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.” (Wikipedia) This is why they have come up with different plans and programs to strengthen their native cultures and prevent further damage.³

Of course, the identity of a people is not threatened merely by external factors, if people enjoy such positive personality characters as self-esteem, adherence to moral ideals, and readiness for resistance, but lack of such features make them vulnerable to cultural attacks. For example, the sense of inferiority can lead people to irrationally mimic celebrities, who are supposed to benefit from a superior culture. And celebrities, in turn, may be misused in order to infiltrate alien cultures into a society. Strengthening and defending one’s identity needs hard work and sacrifice, so comfort-loving, hedonism, worldly-mindedness, and lack of foresight are among other problems that make some people giving in their identity.

Globalizing powers use complex tactics and various techniques to meet the least resistance in pursuing their objectives. Instead of encountering scholars and bringing their theories to the scene of academic battle of other cultures, and instead of honestly describing their ideas, they target the weakest people in a society, i.e. children, teenagers, and juveniles. They try to manipulate hearts and minds, transfer materialistic standards and values, and propagate their lifestyle through various means, and mostly through entertainment. They use picture stories, colorful magazines, sports, films, animations, computer games, websites, social networks, and satellite channels to belittle and destroy other cultures—especially religious cultures—and to replace them with a secular one, full of individualism and egoism, indifference toward others and their pains, consumption and pleasure-seeking, sex and aggression, forgetting about spirituality, and neglecting God and the hereafter. These personality diseases and moral deficiencies prepare the ground for identity crisis.

The Noble Qur’an explains the phenomenon of identity crisis in terms of forgetting about God, when it says:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ (حشر: ١٩)

And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget about themselves.

Juvenile and Identity Crisis

The most vulnerable people in the face of identity crisis are juveniles, and it makes them the main targets of cultural surprise attacks. As Erikson suggests, during the stage of adolescence, one's dependence on, and interest in traditional ideas and values are weakened, and therefore, adolescents seek new ways and potentialities in their lives by questioning traditional ideas. Therefore, the danger of being trapped in an identity crisis increases in this period.

In fact, young individuals are subject to a more malignant disturbance than might have manifested itself during other stages of life, precisely because the adolescent process can induce the individual semi-deliberately to give in to some of his most regressed or repressed tendencies in order, as it were, to test rock bottom and to recover some of his as yet undeveloped childhood strengths. This, however, is safe only where a relatively stable society provides collective experiences of a ceremonial character, or where revolutionary leaders ... provide new identity guidelines which permit the adolescent individual to take chances with himself. Historical crises, in turn, aggravate personal crises; and, indeed many young people have in the recent past been judged to suffer from a chronic malignant disturbance, where we now know that an aggravated developmental crisis was dominant. This, then, is the clinical anchorage for the conception of an identity crisis. (Erikson, 1975, pp. 18-22)

The youth in the simple and closed societies of the previous centuries, were able to preserve their culture and identity, thanks to the limited means of communication, strong family ties, and social support. New generations, however, are prone to irrational beliefs and baseless values, publicized through

the state-of-the-art media. It is the responsibility of the elites and scholars to rationally elaborate the right cultural elements of their own values, and educate people, especially the youth, to give them self-esteem. It may also be the case that despite the rationality of cultural elements and the ability of scholars, they lack the proper means, qualified methods, and required opportunities for cultural exposition. All result in the emergence of a society with “identity crisis”.

Juveniles in such a society will wander between disparate and sometimes contradictory elements of different cultures. More tragic is the situation of the youth living in societies who enjoy rich cultures and historical civilizations, and have experienced stable social identities for centuries, but have become the target of cultural invasion by groundless new cultures. On the one hand, they are attached to their own beliefs and values, and are unable to abandon them altogether. On the other hand, the attractions of modern and postmodern ideologies and imported ideas and values which are manicured and beautified by all sorts of deceiving attractions, propagated through various means of communications and media, and accompanied with assorted kinds of sensual, economic, entertaining, and fancy elements, force them to accept philosophies and values which suffer from disintegration and lack of rationality and harmony. Of course, those who consciously choose their beliefs and values on rational bases will be less influenced by such cultural surprise attacks, but common people, especially the juveniles, will be the prime losers because they mostly imitate famous persons.

Those who are stuck in such a miserable situation as victims of cultural invasion, and cannot convincingly defend their beliefs and values feel as though they have become prey to the aggressive culture. They may react in one of the several ways:

1. They may forget about their own identities, alienated, and sink in sensuality, and become a libertine as suggested by the liberal culture;
2. They may become depressed and take refuge in narcotics and opium so that they do not feel the pain of such nihilism and humiliation;

3. They may fall prey to anxiety and irrational rebellion because they see their culture and their identity as a human being, crushed by an irrational culture, without being able to effectively defend themselves against it. So they may become fanatical nationalists or defenders of a distorted form of their own religious culture, like the Isis.

But the question remains, whether there is any way for repulsing such a cruel and disgraceful surprise attack. Is it possible to fight against the horrible waves of cultural invasion and soft attacks? If it is possible, then what are its conditions and requirements? For sure, such a cultural assault cannot be combated with weapons and missiles; it needs cultural arsenal.

Islam and Identity Crisis

According to the Islamic teachings, a comprehensive outlook on the issue of personal identity is formed, by taking all the three dimensions of human personality into consideration. Islam portrays different elements of human identity as a tree, whose root consists of theoretical articles of faith. They include answers to the most basic questions regarding the source of being and the beginning point of the human existence, the objective and the final station of human life, and the path one has to take in order to attain the best of one's life for the final destiny.

Since one's identity is based, before everything else, on the way one understands and interprets the world and what happens therein, Islam emphasizes the deepening of one's worldview by contemplation. It demands people to deepen their understanding through research and education and resolve their intellectual problems through personal inspection and group discussion. The Noble Prophet is narrated as advising one of his fellows, Abazar, "O Abazar! Sitting for an hour with a group of people discussing a matter of knowledge, is loved by God more than reciting the whole of the Qur'an for twelve thousand times." (Majlisi, vol.1, pp. 203-4)

Islam makes it an obligation of the knowledgeable people to teach others (Amudi, vol. 1, p. 52), and puts the burden of seeking knowledge, especially of religious matters, on the shoulders of the common people, (Majlisi, vol. 67, p. 68) and advises them to follow the lead of experts.

Islamic perspective of the world and of human being provides a unique understanding of the world as a hierarchical system, which stems from the source of being, i.e. God, and comes down to the least perfect existent. According to this systematically holistic view, the human being is depicted as the one creature that is wholly dependent on its creator, and given the opportunity to travel by its free will, through the stages of perfection to the highest possible level for a creature. It is also given the chance to choose the wrong path, and hence become one of the most inferior creatures.

The fruit of the tree of identity is one's action, toward God, oneself, other people, and the environment. Islam provides a system of action-plan that begins and ends with God. The right path to healthy identity, perfect personality, and otherworldly salvation, all are considered as different stages of "proximity to God". Therefore, adherence to practical religious directives is not considered on a par with engaging in secular actions in personal and social situations. Such a united complex of interconnected regulations helps the shaping and preserving of a Muslim's personal identity in the domain of action.

Furthermore, Islamic teachings demand Muslims to practice their faith by good intentions, and pave the way by instructing piety. Islam puts a great emphasis on the motivational foundations of human actions, as the medium harboring one's belief system and one's action, and gives intention priority over all other elements that shape an action. It is narrated from the Honorable Prophet that: "The intention of a faithful is more important than his action," (Majlisi, vol. 67, p. 249) and "Allah will resurrect people on the basis of their intentions." (Majlisi, vol. 67, p. 249) Such an emphasis on intention comes from the fact that the form of action does not identify the whole personality of the agent. The same action may be performed for a variety of reasons, and each

one has a different meaning and may lead to a different result. Action, in its turn, leaves its mark on the other components of one's identity. Therefore, belief without practice is not sufficient, and what connects the two is intention. This triad provides a person with a system of personal identity, in which each part supports the other, and some parts are fed with others.

In The Noble Qur'an, the effectiveness of good action is conditioned upon faith:

« مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثِيَ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ. » (نحل: ٩٨)

Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he [or she] be faithful, we shall revive him [or her] with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do.

This was about personal identity. When it comes to the issue of social identity, there are numerous decrees that shape and preserve the identity, unity, and harmony of the Muslim *Ummah* (community) in the face of cultural attacks. For instance, all Muslims are required to take care of each other, and this is so important that the Prophet said: “whoever got up in the morning without caring for the problems of other Muslims, he is not a Muslim.” Caring for each other includes a wide range of situations, from providing material needs, healing psychological wounds, teaching necessary issues, and helping someone to find the right path. Muslims also are required to say their daily prayers in the same language, i.e. Arabic, toward the same direction, i.e. Mecca. All of these elements help members of a society to share certain features and shape unanimity among themselves.

Preserving social identity requires also protecting society as a whole against alien elements that threaten the solidarity and harmony of society. It is considered the responsibility of each and every individual to monitor possible flaws in this regard, and to do one's best in finding the cure, and the best way to protect social identity. This is why assimilation of Muslims in the pagans is

prohibited in Islam. The principle of commanding the good and forbidding the evil can be considered as one of the most effective tools concerning this objective as well.

It follows from what we said that from an Islamic point of view, the human identity of people, whether personal or social, is based on correct beliefs, Divine values, and right intentions that result from them, not on the basis of geographic location, political system, race, sex, language, or other factors. Furthermore, not all personal or social identities are worthy of maintaining and defending. An identity which is based on false understandings, secular and temporal values, and irrational and superstitious traditions, has to be changed and be replaced by a sound identity. Such change has to be brought about by education and cultural means. However, if individual and social identity in a society is shaped on the basis of Divine foundations and firm roots, it has to be preserved and reinforced. This can be done only by explaining, expanding, and deepening its ideas and ideals.

It is the duty of the cultured and educated people of such societies, especially those who are specialized in religious studies, to understand and promote right beliefs and combat false interpretations. Of course, it is evident that if understanding and evaluation is not translated into action, the society and its conditions will not benefit from them. If we see people who claim to adhere to the Islamic belief system, and adore its Divine values, but such ideas do not appear in their actions, we have to realize that something is wrong.

Concluding Remarks

Often times, behavior that appears in advertisements or entertainment is emulated which may be originally designed, not so much to intentionally undermine religious values per se, as to increase consumption and profits, regardless of their destructive effects on humanity, spirituality, and eternal wellbeing. Religious values are displaced mainly because the main aim of people has become their own pleasure and benefits, and they have become their

own subject of worship. Religious way of life, on the other hand, does not generate the kind of worldly profits that a hedonistic lifestyle produces.

Ideally, then, to deal with the problem of social identity, the entire educational entertainment, media, institutions, and arrangements in the society should be considered and restructured. Exposure to harmful forms of entertainment and media presentations cannot be eliminated, unless the educational strategy includes “consciousness raising”, so that the manipulative techniques used by the media to promote hedonism are exposed, identified, analyzed, and met by alternative ones.

Endnotes

1. One of the latest manifestations of such a cultural attack can be seen in the document called, “*Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, issued by the United Nations in 2015. This “new universal Agenda” includes 17 “integrated and indivisible” goals and 169 targets to be realized by the year 2030 by all countries around the globe. It is meant to transform their culture, education, and economy, as well as their political, judiciary, and legislative systems.

2. C.f. "Social Identity Theory" at:

<http://www.tcw.utwente.nl/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20clusters/Interpersonal%20Communication%20and%20Relations/>

3. For example, they established “Canada Council for the Arts”, and the “Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences”, also known as the “Massey Commission”.

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Observations on Moral Difficulties in Counseling Experience

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Abstract

In this study we have surveyed some of the leading factors that cause irreligion and immorality, including: weakness of religious insight, an unhealthy family environment, the association of pressure and violence with religion, tendencies toward carnal desires, the deviations of some outwardly religious people, and worldliness. We have also alluded to the fact that the Noble Qur'an itself displays sensitivity to these issues and counsels steps to counter these harmful factors, including: proper religious education, the cultivation of healthy families, tolerance and nonviolent methods for religious training, the curbing of carnal desires with the help of prayer, the wisdom to distinguish true religious teaching from the deviations of some who pretend to be religious teachers, and attention to the fact that the goal and meaning of life is not to be found in worldly attractions. All of these steps are essential to the task of self-training and the realization of one's humanity that are taught by religion.

Keywords: Escaping from religion, Youth, Counseling, Cyberspace.

Introduction

All Divine religions are unanimous in the idea that a religion has a plan to guarantee human felicity. This guarantee is not limited and restricted to the hereafter; but performing religious duties causes individual and social prosperity. In other words, religious instructions and customs exist in all dimensions and aspects of life, so that their innumerable results can appear in persons and society.

Although religion has magnificent goals and a comprehensive plan, it is threatened by some factors (Abbasi, 2007). One of these factors is escaping religion especially by the youth. One may realize this point considering various people counseling to solve this problem. The people who sought counseling includes father, mother, child, spouse, friend, teacher, and student at different ages with different economic or scientific levels.

There are other problems that seem to bring about escaping religion. Some examples are: a father who tries to force his child to worship God without teaching him/her the necessary awareness, or a spouse who behaves violently, although he/she has a religious appearance, or a young person who spends too much time in cyberspace.

Perhaps all of these examples gradually makes a distance between people and the actuality of religion.

The question in this text is:

Does religion cause individual and social problems? How do abnormalities in society cause a decrease of inclination towards religion? In a comprehensive phrase, what is the reciprocal relation between escaping religion and the abnormalities of society?

It is worthy of mention that even though we see escaping religion all over the world, we cannot definitely say that people's relation with religion is cut completely, because, according to the Glorious Qur'an religiosity is natural thing and it is inseparable from mankind. Allah says:

So set your heart as a person of pure faith on this religion, the original nature endowed by Allah according to which He originated mankind (There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know.) (30:30)

Another point is that escaping religion is an old problem and is an irrefutable reality mentioned in the verses of the Noble Qur'an (Hoseini, 1982). For example, a number of Jewish people defected from the religion of Moses to worship the golden calf. Some "people of the book" denied Allah's signs while they testified to their truth, and a few of Muslims escaped their religion and sought shelter with the pagan inhabitants of Mecca.

There is a point to be made here. Recent research shows that people who are committed to a religion of some kind, rarely suffer from abnormal behavior or criminal acts. Catholic youths brought up by mothers committed to religion are less likely to commit crimes whereas those who are brought up by mothers who are not frequent churchgoers or avoid going to churches are more likely to commit sins and crimes (Bahrami, 2004).

Causes

WEAKNESS OF RELIGIOUS INSIGHT

Lack of correct knowledge about the essence of religion and its role and output in preparation for worldly and other-worldly happiness, non-separation between the essence of religion and outward pretensions of religiosity, such that a person might enter the weak points of seemingly religious people into his/her mental files about religion, all bring about inattention to religion and escaping it (Abbasi, 2007).

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Among the contributory factors to the irreligiousness of people, one can refer to the family environment. God States in the Noble Qur'an:

When they are told, ‘Follow what Allah has sent down,’ they say, ‘We will rather follow what we have found our fathers following’ (2: 170).

Friends and instructors can also play a significant role in making people turn away from religion. The people of Moses under the influence of SÁmirī abandoned the religion of Moses:

“He said, ‘Indeed We tried your people in your absence, and SÁmirī has led them astray (20:85).

In the Hereafter, the inmates of the Hell make excuses for God and introduce their wicked friends as responsible for their being irreligious:

“Woe to me! I wish I had not taken so-and-so as a friend!” (25:28).

PRESSURE AND VIOLENCE

To mention another important contributory factor of social aberrations, we can refer to compulsion or force which is sometimes used to make people do some acts or follow some patterns of behavior. Compulsion, violence, and strictness have unfortunate consequences, some of which can be referred to as stubbornness, doing secret activities, dishonesty, and revenge. Those who are subject to acts of violence are lead to cause more pain or degradation for the others, take more revenge than the others and break social norms (Sajedi, 1395).

Sociologists take compulsion and its concomitant obligations as paving the ground for certain people to violate social norms and to express disapproval of laws and regulations. Acts of violence committed in the name of religion and compulsion on people to convert to a religion have no result but making a group of people turn away from religion. These violent acts also form an image of religion in their minds which is rigid and compulsory accompanied by pressure, threats and terror (Bahrami, 1383).

According to the Holy Qur’an, mercy (kindness), self-restraint and tolerance serve as factors that attract people to religion, whereas rigidity, pressure and compulsion cause people to distance themselves from religion:

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you. So excuse them and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs. (3:159).

TENDENCY TO CARNAL DESIRES

The misplaced and incorrect demands of some people, their mental and emotional abnormalities, dissatisfaction, unrest, and getting trapped by the devil, etc., cause some people to become weak, corrupt, and to engage in illegal profiting and occupations.

Therefore, they think that being constrained by religion and its commands is troublesome. As we see in the Glorious Qur'an about the defection of some people from God's unity and the return journey, it is written::

Indeed, man desires to go on living viciously (75:5).

Imam Şādiq (pbuh) says:

Be afraid of your desires just as you are afraid of your enemies, because there is no enemy for man stronger than following his desires and what he says by his tongue (Koleini, 1981).

There are certain people who resist religion due to the fact that Prophets' teachings are incongruent with their carnal desires and pleasures and that they put restrictions on their sexual freedom and extremism:

Certainly, We gave Moses the Book and followed him with the apostles, and We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, manifest proofs and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit. Is it not that whenever an apostle brought you that which was not to your liking, you would act arrogantly; so you would impugn a group [of them], and slay a[nother] group? (2: 87)

This group resists religion and worship their whims and desires as objects of worship.

It is worth noting that the contributory factors to irreligiousness exceed the number of cases taken up so far, of which just a few important ones have been mentioned here (Bahrami, 1383).

The most important strategy to prevent people from being irreligious is to introduce the true nature of religion in an appropriate way. If religious believers do their best to show that religion is not something irrational, present ample evidences for the truth of religious doctrines and beliefs, do whatever they can to remove doubts from the minds of the audience and speak of people's happiness in this world and their felicity in the hereafter, if they follow religion trying to show that there is no conflict or inconsistency between religion and science, we will no longer see people being irreligious:

[This is] a blessed Book that We have sent down to you, so that they may contemplate its signs, and that those who possess intellect may take admonition. (38:29)

Religion is also characterized by having the quality of giving peace of mind and tranquility:

...those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (2: 38).

...—those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah.' Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance! (13:28)

Human-making / Humanization

Psychological and mental disorders of a group of religious people, deviations of some religious spokesmen and corruption in social settings are among the reasons behind irreligiousness (disregard of religion). In order to prevent this form of irreligiousness, we must inevitably eliminate the causes of aberration, deviation and corruption. (Bahrami, 1383) From the Qur'anic viewpoint, beliefs and acts of worship play a very important role in the process of prevention:

“Indeed, the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs” (29: 45).

The Wrong Deeds of Some Religious Scholars

Just as the reforms of religious leaders bring about reforms and improvements of people's behavior, the growth of religion and the tendency of people toward [religious] values, so the corruption and misdeeds of religious leaders and scholars will lead to deviations and irreligiousness among people, because when people see that those who claim leadership do not believe in their words, and act against the precepts of religion, this will cast doubts on the sincerity of their invitation, and they will not take their religious obligations and practices seriously. The Qur'an states:

O you who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do? (61: 2)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) says:” the laps [and misguidance] of a scholar corrupts entire worlds.”.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him) said the following to Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ansari: “O Jabir! The mainstay of religion and the world are four persons: The scholar who acts upon his knowledge, ... when the scholar wastes his knowledge, the ignorant feels too ashamed to learn, ...”

Love of This World and Worldliness

Extreme and excessive interest in the adornments of this world and materialism are also among the reasons why people develop a dislike for religion. Love of this world, if not accompanied by reason and logic, leads to worldliness and results in the misery of man in this world and the Hereafter. Islamic teachings condemn excessive worldliness and consider it as a source of disbelief and deviation. God says: “That, because they preferred the life of the world to the Hereafter and that Allah does not guide the faithless lot. They are the ones on whose hearts Allah has set a seal, and on their hearing and their sight [as well], and it is they who are the heedless. They are those whose hearts, hearing and sight are sealed by Allah; they are the heedless” (16: 107-8).

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Spirituality and Economics, The Position of Spirituality in the Islamic Model of Economic Education and Training of Youth

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Received: 2021/04/16 - **Accepted:** 2020/08/19

Abstract

Nowadays many countries started to develop some models of economic education for improving the economic knowledge of precollege students. The typical model of economic education promotes a “neoclassical model” of rational economic behavior,” that leads to self-interest maximization. The promotion of a hedonistic logic of rational decision-making, however, might crowd out morality and spirituality as important teachings of religions. Looking for a spiritual model of economic education, we could form a dialogue between Christian and Muslim scholars on basic religious economic content standards. The current paper tries to explore an Islamic model of economic education and training and analyze its effect on spiritual development of children and youth. It is conjectured that the Islamic model of economic training is intended to improve spiritual rationality by the aid of some Islamic economic rules and policies. The Institution of Zakah, for instance, is intended to purify those who give this Islamic tax, whereas traditional taxes are obligatory and target no spiritual goal. Attention to the halal and tayyib (pure) income in the Islamic model of economic education and training is also a strategy for improving the logic of spiritual rationality in kids.

Key Words: Spirituality, Morality, Economic education and training, Islam, Youth.

Introduction

Recent decades witnessed an unusual attention to economic education for pre-college students. Traditionally economists were engaged in their technical studies on the analysis of market mechanism with no enough attention to social factors that influence economic agents. They were mainly analyzing the effects of changes in prices on economic decisions of the so-called economic man. Such a man is known to have self-interested rational preferences. By considering preferences exogenous, economists typically have no plan for forming and changing desires. What they are expected to do is to manage price fluctuations by the aid of the invisible hand of the market or the visible hand of the government.

The project of economic education is a new plan for forming desires, tastes, preferences, on the one hand, and enhancing the knowledge of economic agents, on the other hand. The current paper tries to evaluate this project from a particular viewpoint. The question is whether there is a place for spirituality in the traditional models of economic education for pre-college students? The main concern is to address the same question about Islam's plan for economic education. I hypothesize that spirituality is an important goal in an Islamic model of economic education.

The History of Economic Education in the West

Economic education has received attention in different religions, civilization and cultures. There is no clear record about economic education in the west before the Renaissance. After it, however, we see great attention to economic education among families. It has been reported that French and British families tended to hire economic teachers for their children. Miss Edgeworth, a contemporary of David Ricardo, the famous economists of the 18th century, “states in her letters that political economy was so much the fashion that distinguished ladies before engaging a governance for their children inquired about her competence to teach political economy” (Gide & Rist, 1915, p. 119).

At that time, abstract thoughts of Ricardo were presented in newspaper articles and popular tales such as *Conversations on Political Economy*, by Mrs. Marcet (1916), *Illustrations of Political Economy*, by Miss Martineau (9 vols., containing thirty stories, 1832-34)(Ibid).

A century later, the American Economic Association (AEA) was founded as a formal institution whose founders expressed their interests in economic education. “One explicit aim of the nascent society was to educate public opinion about economic questions and economic literature” (Hinshaw & Siegfried, 1991, p. 373). In 1891, Simon Patten, a future president of the association published a paper named “The Educational Value of Political Economy”, which deserves to be considered as the seminal work in modern education. In this paper, Patten “argued that economics should place mathematics and physics for training in reasoning and that moral and political thought should be separated from instruction in economics”(Ibid).

In the late 19th century, economics or political economy gradually changed to a separate discipline and found its way in the curriculum of famous colleges and universities. Attention to public economic education in the late 19th century is clearly manifested in a book by Fredric Clow (1899) named *Economic as a School Study*. In this book, Clow paid attention to the importance of economic education in high schools (Clow, 1899).

Under the influence of the first and second world wars and severe economic crises, there was a lower attention to the public economic education in the early 20th century. Nonetheless, the American Economic Association was active in organizing some scientific discussions on economic education. In the mid-20th century, AEA was the most influential association on economic education. It established “The Committee on Economic Education” in 1955 for improving economic education. In 1960, AEA formed the “National Task Force on Economic Education” as a subgroup intended to identify the minimum level of economic knowledge for ideal citizens. The group published a report on “Economic Education in the School” in the

1960s, which was an influential work for forming the structure of economic contents for educating in schools (Hinshaw & Siegfried, 1991).¹

In 1969, “The Journal of Economic Education” started to publish papers on the new field of economic education. The journal and other publications in the field opened the way to the introduction of national standards for economic education by the so-called National Council on Economic Education in the USA. Even though such standards have been designed for American students, it had a decisive impact on designing economic education courses in other countries. Nowadays, the American “National Council on Economic Education” is not only responsible for policymaking on economic education in the USA, but also in charge of defining economic education programs all over the world. Therefore, the term national is omitted from the name of the council and its name is changed to the “Council on Economic Education”. The council is active in the determination of economic education models. It also acts as the supervisor on economic education programs (Toghyani & Payghami, 2016, pp. 46-50).

The first economic education model was introduced under the title of “A Framework for Teaching Basic Concepts” by the National Council on Economic Education in 1977. The framework was revised in 1984 and with some modifications published as the “Voluntary National Content Standard in Economics” in 1997. The second edition of these standards was published in 2010. The standards refer to what students in each age level should know in order to improve their cognitive capacities, desires and behavioral routines in the future. These standards are the basis for specifying the content of books and other educational materials (Ibid, p. 50).

A Nation at Risk

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report about the quality of education in the USA, under the title of ‘A Nation at Risk:

The Imperative for Educational Reform'. Terrell Bell, the Secretary of Education in Donald Reagan's administration started the investigation from 1981. The purpose of this investigation, as David Pierpont Gardner, the chairman of The National Commission on Excellence in Education states, was "to help define the problems afflicting American education and to provide solutions" (Gardner, 1983). The report starts by warning against the risks of the low quality of economic education in the USA as follows:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur-others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments (Gardner, 1983, p. 9).

The report refers to the superiority of the industrial products of countries such as Japan and Germany over those of the USA due to their excellent educational system:

The risk is not only that the Japanese make automobiles more efficiently than Americans and have government subsidies for development and export. It is not just that the South Koreans recently built the world's most efficient steel mill, or that American machine tools, once the pride of the world, are being displaced by German products. It is also that these developments signify a redistribution of trained capability throughout the globe.

Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all-old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering (Gardner, 1983, p. 10).

According to this report, the concern “goes well beyond matters such as industry and commerce. It also includes the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of our people”. According to the report, “The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life”. It was noticed that “A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom” (Gardner, 1983, p. 10).

After pinpointing the shortcomings of the American educational system, the report comes with some suggestion for solving the problem. It is proposed that there is a need for an educational reform that focuses on the goal of creating a learning society (Gardner, 1983, p. 14). It was conjectured that “formal schooling in youth is the essential foundation for learning throughout one’s life. But without life-long learning, one’s skills will become rapidly dated” (Gardner, 1983, p. 15).

The publication of this report had a decisive impact on the American educational system. In 1980s, there was pressure on schools to improve their

performance due to the proposed educational standards. In 1994, the act called “Goals 2000: Educate American Act” was approved. According to this act, all states were encouraged to introduce content standards for their educational system (Toghyani & Payghami, 2016, p. 53).

Content Standards in Economics Education

To provide a content standard for economic education in schools for the first time, Philip Saunders and June V. Gilliard published “A Framework for Teaching the Basic Economic Concepts” in 1977. Funded by the United States Department of Education, The Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics, which was revised several times from 2008 to 2010, contains concepts on microeconomics, macroeconomics and international economics (Siegfried & et. al, 2010).

The Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics provide a tool for educators, specifying what students, kindergarten through grade 12, should learn about basic economics and the economy as they go through school, so that they will be better-informed workers, consumers and producers, savers and investors, and most important, citizens (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. ix).

The proposed framework contains 20 basic economic concepts. “Each standard includes a set of benchmarks divided into achievement levels for grades 4, 8, and 12. The benchmarks “develop the economic reasoning behind the standard. In this way, the standards and benchmarks add up to more than a simple list of “things to know.” As students observe the reasoning process used by economists and practice it themselves, they will acquire analytical skills they can apply to emerging economic issues unforeseen at the time these standards were written” (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. v).

Table 1: American Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics

N.	Standards	Short description
1	Scarcity	Productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others.
2	Decision making	Effective decision making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are “all or nothing” decisions.
3	Allocation	Different methods can be used to allocate goods and services. People acting individually or collectively must choose which methods to use to allocate different kinds of goods and services.
4	Incentives	People usually respond predictably to positive and negative incentives.
5	Trade	Voluntary exchange occurs only when all participating parties expect to gain. This is true for trade among individuals or organizations within a nation, and among individuals or organizations in different nations.
6	Specialization	When individuals, regions, and nations specialize in what they can produce at the lowest cost and then trade with others, both production and consumption increase.
7	Markets and prices	A market exists when buyers and sellers interact. This interaction determines market prices and thereby allocates scarce goods and services.
8	Role of prices	Prices send signals and provide incentives to buyers and sellers. When supply or demand changes, market prices adjust, affecting incentives.
9	Competition and market	Competition among sellers usually lowers costs and prices, and encourages producers to produce what consumers are willing and able to buy. Competition among buyers increases prices and allocates goods and services to those people who are willing and able to pay the most for them.
10	Institutions	Institutions evolve and are created to help individuals and groups accomplish their goals. Banks, labor unions, markets, corporations, legal systems, and not-for-profit organizations are examples of important institutions. A different kind of institution, clearly defined and enforced property rights, is essential to a market economy.
11	Money and inflation	Money makes it easier to trade, borrow, save, invest, and compare the value of goods and services. The amount of money in the economy affects the overall price level. Inflation is an increase in the overall price level that reduces the value of money.
12	Interest rates	Interest rates, adjusted for inflation, rise and fall to balance the amount saved with the amount borrowed, which affects the allocation of scarce resources between present and future uses.
13	Income	Income for most people is determined by the market value of the productive resources they sell. What workers earn primarily depends on the market value of what they produce.

14	Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurs take on the calculated risk of starting new businesses, either by embarking on new ventures similar to existing ones or by introducing new innovations. Entrepreneurial innovation is an important source of economic growth.
15	Economic growth	Investment in factories, machinery, new technology, and in the health, education, and training of people stimulates economic growth and can raise future standards of living.
16	Role of government and market failure	There is an economic role for government in a market economy whenever the benefits of a government policy outweigh its costs. Governments often provide for national defense, address environmental concerns, define and protect property rights, and attempt to make markets more competitive. Most government policies also have direct or indirect effects on peoples' incomes.
17	Government failure	Costs of government policies sometimes exceed benefits. This may occur because of incentives facing voters, government officials, and government employees, because of actions by special interest groups that can impose costs on the general public, or because social goals other than economic efficiency are being pursued.
18	Economic fluctuations	Fluctuations in a nation's overall levels of income, employment, and prices are determined by the interaction of spending and production decisions made by all households, firms, government agencies, and others in the economy. Recessions occur when overall levels of income and employment decline.
19	Unemployment and inflation	Unemployment imposes costs on individuals and the overall economy. Inflation, both expected and unexpected, also imposes costs on individuals and the overall economy. Unemployment increases during recessions and decreases during recoveries.
20	Fiscal and monetary policy	Federal government budgetary policy and the Federal Reserve System's monetary policy influence the overall levels of employment, output, and prices.

Source: (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, pp. iii-iv)

The writing committees of the standards have clearly specified what students should know about each economic concept and how they should be able to use this knowledge at the completion of grades 4, 8, and 12.

Table 2. American Content Standards in Economics for Pre-College Students at the completion of grades 4, 8, and 12

N.	Standards	Grades		
		0-4	4-8	8-12
1	Scarcity	✓	✓	✓
2	Decision making	✓	✓	✓
3	Allocation	✓	✓	✓

4	Incentives	✓	✓	✓
5	Trade	✓	✓	✓
6	Specialization	✓	✓	✓
7	Markets and prices	✓	✓	✓
8	Role of prices	✓	✓	✓
9	Competition and market	✓	✓	✓
10	Institutions	✓	✓	✓
11	Money and inflation	✓	✓	✓
12	Interest rates	-	✓	✓
13	Income	✓	✓	✓
14	Entrepreneurship	✓	✓	✓
15	Economic growth	✓	✓	✓
16	Role of government and market failure	✓	✓	✓
17	Government failure	-	✓	✓
18	Economic fluctuations	-	✓	✓
19	Unemployment and inflation	✓	✓	✓
20	Fiscal and monetary policy	-	-	✓

Note: N: New content; R: Reminder of the old content with additional points

Source: (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, pp. 2-48)

The committee has also introduced the relevant benchmarks for each standard. As an example, the following three tables show the relevant benchmarks for the standard of decision making:

Table 3. American Content standards in Economics; Benchmarks: Grade 4

At the completion of Grade 4, students will know that:	At the completion of Grade 4, students will use this knowledge to:
1. Choices involve getting more of one thing by giving up something else.	1. Analyze how to divide their time on a Saturday afternoon when the possibilities are raking leaves to earn money, going to a movie with friends, and shopping at the mall with their aunt. Students will identify the possible uses of their time and explain how it could be an “all-or-nothing” decision or a decision to do a little more of one activity and a little less of another.
2. A cost is what you give up when you decide to do something. A benefit is what satisfies your wants.	2. List the costs (what you give up) and benefits of buying a pet.

(Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. 6)

Table 4. American Content standards in Economics; Benchmarks: Grade 8

At the completion of Grade 8, students will know the Grade 4 benchmarks for this standard, and also that:	At the completion of Grade 8, students will use this knowledge to:
1. To determine the best level of consumption of a product, people must compare the additional benefits with the additional costs of consuming a little more or a little less.	1. Solve the following problem: Your grandmother gives you \$30 for your birthday and you are trying to decide how to spend it. You are considering buying t-shirts (\$15 each), going to the movies (\$10 per ticket), or taking some friends out for pizza (\$7.50 per person). You do not have to spend all your money on one thing. You can use some money for one thing, and some for another. How would you spend your money to get the greatest satisfaction?
2. Marginal benefit is the change in total benefit resulting from an action. Marginal cost is the change in total cost resulting from an action.	2. Identify the marginal benefit of buying and consuming additional granola bars. Contrast this with the marginal cost of acquiring additional granola bars.
3. As long as the marginal benefit of an activity exceeds the marginal cost, people are better off doing more of it; if the marginal cost exceeds the marginal benefit, they are better off doing less of it.	3. Apply the concepts of marginal benefit and marginal cost to reducing pollution.
4. Many people have a tendency to be impatient, choosing immediate consumption over saving for the future.	4. Explain the benefits of having saved an allowance for an extended period.

(Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. 6)

Table 5. American Content standards in Economics; Benchmarks: Grade 12

At the completion of Grade 12, students will know the Grade 4 and Grade 8 benchmarks for this standard, and also that:	At the completion of Grade 12, students will use this knowledge to:
1. To produce the profit-maximizing level of output and hire the optimal number of workers, and other resources, producers must compare the marginal benefits and marginal costs of producing a little more with the marginal benefits and marginal costs of producing a little less.	1. Decide how many workers to hire for a profit maximizing car wash by comparing the cost of hiring each additional worker to the additional revenues derived from hiring each additional worker.

2. To determine the optimal level of a public policy program, voters and government officials must compare the marginal benefits and marginal costs of providing a little more or a little less of the program's services.	2. Use the concepts of marginal cost and marginal benefit to evaluate proposals for making your school building more attractive; select the best proposal and defend your decision.
3. To compare marginal benefits with marginal costs that are realized at different times, benefits and costs must be adjusted to reflect their values at the time a decision is made about them. The adjustment reflects expected returns to investment compounded over time.	3. Discuss how a business might evaluate an investment decision that costs \$10,000 today and returns \$12,000 one year from now.
4. Costs that have already been incurred and benefits that have already been received are sunk and irrelevant for decisions about the future.	4. Explain why the fact that you lost your first ticket to an upcoming concert is irrelevant to whether you should purchase a replacement. Explain why some people would consider the cost of the lost ticket in deciding whether to purchase another ticket even if they had the money to do so.
5. People sometimes fail to treat gains and losses	5. Explain why some people might treat \$100 found on the street differently than \$100 that has been lost out of one's pocket.
6. Some decisions involve taking risks in that either the benefits or the costs could be uncertain. Risk taking carries a cost. When risk is present, the costs should be treated as higher than when risk is not present.	6. Explain why an investment that pays a guaranteed \$1,000 a year, is more desirable for most people than an investment that pays \$2,000 a year with a 50% chance and \$0 with a 50% chance.
7. Risk can be reduced by diversification.	7. Explain why mutual funds have become a popular investment tool. Explain why it might make sense for someone who sells umbrellas to also sell suntan lotion.

(Siegfried & et. al, 2010, pp. 6-7)

The Ideal Economic Agent in the American Model of Economic Education

Even though it is claimed that the “standards attempt to reflect consensus in the discipline,” the writing committees declared that they used the “majority paradigm” in economics: “The final standards reflect the view of a large majority of economists today in favor of a “neoclassical model” of economic behavior”. According to them,

The Writing Committee’s use of this paradigm does not connote a repudiation of alternatives. Rather, it reflects the assignment to produce a single, coherent set of standards to guide the teaching of economics in America’s schools. Including strongly held minority views of economic processes and concepts would have confused and frustrated teachers and students who would then be left with the responsibility of sorting the qualifications and alternatives without a sufficient foundation to do so (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. vi).

In fact, the standards are “written for teachers to use to help students learn the crucial reasoning and decision-making skills” based on the “neoclassical model” of economic behavior” (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. ix). Such skills are expected to “serve them well all of their lives, in all of the many roles that they may play as responsible and effective participants in the American economic system” (ibid).

Looking at the content standards, one could realize how the “neoclassical model” of economic behavior” is hidden behind them. Roughly speaking, the proposed educational model is intended to convince students that a free market economic system performs well in the economy and it should be occasionally supplemented by the government intervention due to market failures. In other words, it is implicitly argued that a free market economic system could satisfactorily allocate scarce resources to unlimited needs.

In the neoclassical model of economic education, the rational economic man is an ideal economic agent. He tries to maximize his utility or profit subject to budget constraints. Such an endeavor is supposed to satisfy social interests in a free market context due to the functioning of what Adam Smith calls the ‘invisible hand’ of the market.

Following James Buchanan (1991), the above claim is grounded on three basic ontological foundations, namely individual autonomy, rationality of choice, and spontaneous market coordination (Buchanan, 1999, pp. 14, 22). Individual autonomy is "an idea that is generally understood to refer to the

capacity to live one's life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one's own and not the product of manipulative or distorting external forces" (Chirstman, 2003). Here autonomy refers to methodological individualism according to which individuals are considered as the unit of analysis not aggregate entities such as tribe, or family. Rationality is the logic of decision making by economic agents in the economy. A rational economic man is then considered to maximize his utility or profit subject to budget constraints. Finally, the spontaneous market coordination mechanism is a claim about the functioning of a free market economy. It is claimed that unintended social benefits result from self-interested actions of rational economic men. Adam Smith uses the metaphor of invisible hand to address the capacity of a free market for ensuring social benefits.²

To justify their claim on the superiority of a free market system over other systems, neoclassical economists developed the theory of price or Microeconomics according to which prices are functioning to coordinate the supply and demand and maximize the social welfare. It is argued that in a free competitive market, the output is maximized at the lowest possible price. As the result, both producers and consumers benefit from the functioning of the market so that both consumer and producer surplus is maximized. Such an economic system is a self-regulating system. If there was a deviation from the equilibrium price or quantity, market forces function to bring the economy back to the equilibrium. As a result, a free market system has been claimed to be the best way for the allocation of scarce resources to unlimited needs and desires.

Missing Spirituality in the Traditional Model of Economic Education

The traditional model of economic education for pre-college students tends to form the so-called economic men whose main goals are the maximization of self-interest (utility or profit maximization). Looking at the 20 basic concepts of the American economic education model, we could realize that the ideal economic agent is what we know in economics as the economic man or homo

economicus. Among the concepts, one could not find any reference to topics such as morality, ethics or spirituality. Instead, the selected terms are admiring the economic life style of the so-called economic man. To justify this claim, we should look at the description of the concepts in the “Voluntary National Content Standard in Economics”.

The content standards convince students that the maximization of self-interest in a competitive market under the condition of scarcity not only provides “them the highest possible net benefits”(St.4: Incentives, G12, N.1), but also promotes “the national level of well-being”(St.9: Competition and Market Structure, G12, N.1):

- Responses to incentives are usually predictable because people normally pursue their self-interest or deviate from their self-interest in consistent ways (St.4: Incentives, G8, and N.1).

- Acting as consumers, producers, workers, savers, investors, and citizens, people respond to incentives in order to allocate their scarce resources in ways that provide them the highest possible net benefits(St.4: Incentives, G12, N.1).

- People tend to respond to fair treatment with fair treatment, and to unfair treatment with retaliation, even when such reactions may not maximize their material wealth (St.4: Incentives, G12, and N.3).

- The pursuit of self-interest in competitive markets usually leads to choices and behavior that also promote the national level of well-being (St.9: Competition and Market Structure, G12, N.1).

Under the concept of decision making, students are explicitly advised to follow a marginalistic approach when they make a choice, which is consistent with a utilitarian approach:

- To determine the best level of consumption of a product, people must compare the additional benefits with the additional costs of consuming a little more or a little less (St.2: Decision Making, G8, N.1).

- Marginal benefit is the change in total benefit resulting from an action. Marginal cost is the change in total cost resulting from an action (St.2: Decision Making, G8, and N.2).

- As long as the marginal benefit of an activity exceeds the marginal cost, people are better off doing more of it; if the marginal cost exceeds the marginal benefit, they are better off doing less of it(St.2: Decision Making, G8, N.3).

- Many people have a tendency to be impatient, choosing immediate consumption over saving for the future (St.2: Decision Making, G8, and N.4).

- To produce the profit-maximizing level of output and hire the optimal number of workers, and other resources, producers must compare the marginal benefits and marginal costs of producing a little more with the marginal benefits and marginal costs of producing a little less (St.2: Decision Making, G12, N.1).

- To determine the optimal level of a public policy program, voters and government officials must compare the marginal benefits and marginal costs of providing a little more or a little less of the program's services(St.2: Decision Making, G12, N.2).

Costs and benefits are clearly defined as the opportunity costs and benefits that are related to the consumption of goods and services:

- Economic wants are desires that can be satisfied by consuming a good (an object), a service (an action), or a leisure activity (Standard 1: Scarcity, G4, and N.2).

- Whenever a choice is made, something is given up because resources are limited (Standard 1: Scarcity, G4, and N.4).

- Making good choices should involve trading off the expected value of one opportunity against the expected value of its best alternative (Standard 1: Scarcity, G8, and N.2).

- The choices people make have both present and future consequences (Standard 1: Scarcity, G8, and N.3).

- The evaluation of choices and opportunity costs is subjective; such evaluations differ across individuals and societies (Standard 1: Scarcity, G8, and N.4).

- A cost is what you give up when you decide to do something. A benefit is what satisfies your wants (St.2: Decision Making, G4, and N.2).

The marginalist tradition is extended to cover temporal decisions. Students are then asked to compare marginal benefits with marginal costs over time by using the technique of discounting.

- To compare marginal benefits with marginal costs that are realized at different times, benefits and costs must be adjusted to reflect their values at the time a decision is made about them. The adjustment reflects expected returns to investment compounded over time (St.2: Decision Making, G12, and N.3).

- Costs that have already been incurred and benefits that have already been received are sunk and irrelevant for decisions about the future (St.2: Decision Making, G12, and N.4).

- People sometimes fail to treat gains and losses equally, placing extra emphasis on losses (St.2: Decision Making, G12, and N.5).

There has been also attention to risky decisions, which requires the comparison of the expected marginal costs and benefits:

- Some decisions involve taking risks in that either the benefits or the costs could be uncertain. Risk taking carries a cost. When risk is present, the costs should be treated as higher than when risk is not present (St.2: Decision Making, G12, and N.6).

- Risk can be reduced by diversification (St.2: Decision Making, G12, and N.7).

It is again argued that the price mechanism yields the maximization of self-interest and social interest automatically with minor interventions by the government in the economy:

- If a price is above the market clearing price, it will eventually fall, causing sellers to produce less and buyers to purchase more; if it is below the market clearing price, it will eventually rise, causing sellers to produce more and buyers to purchase less (St.7: Markets and Prices, G8, N.4).

- An increase in the price of a good or service encourages people to look for substitutes, causing the quantity demanded to decrease, and vice versa. This well-established relationship between price and quantity demanded, known as the law of demand, exists as long as other factors influencing demand do not change(St.8: Role of Prices, G8, N.1).

- An increase in the price of a good or service encourages producers to supply more, and vice versa. This relationship between price and quantity supplied is normally true as long as other factors influencing costs of production and supply do not change(St.8: Role of Prices, G8, N.2).

- Competition among sellers results in lower costs and prices, higher product quality, and/or better customer service. When competition among sellers is limited, sellers have some control over the prices they set (St.9: Competition and Market Structure, G8, N.2).

The content standards, of course, admit the possibility of the market failure. Due to the market failure, "Governments often provide for national defense, address environmental concerns, define and protect property rights, and attempt to make markets more competitive". As a result, "There is an economic role for government in a market economy whenever the benefits of a government policy outweigh its costs" (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. 38).

- Markets do not allocate resources efficiently if: (1) property rights are not clearly defined or enforced; (2) externalities (spillover effects) affecting large numbers of people are associated with the production or consumption of a product; or (3) markets are not competitive (St.16: Role of Government and Market Failure, G12, N.1).

Nonetheless, there is also attention to the possibility of government failures, which happens when "costs of government policiesexceed benefits (Siegfried & et. al, 2010, p. 41).

- A government policy to correct a market imperfection is not justified economically if the cost of implementing it exceeds its expected benefits. (St.17: Government Failure, G12, N.1).

All in all, the content standards are admiring the economic life style of a rational economic man who tries to maximize his self-interest by comparing the expected marginal benefits of consuming goods and services over time with the expected marginal costs.

The Side Effects of the Traditional Economic Education Model

Some economists warned against the side effects of the formal model of economic education in colleges, what could be also relevant to the pre-college students. A substantial body of researches suggest that economics students are more selfish than other professionals, partly due to their particular model of education (Marwell & Ames, 1981; Carter & Irons, 1991; Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993; Bauman & Rose, 2009).

In a study by Gerald Marwell and Ruth Ames (1981), students of economics were "much more likely to free-ride in experiments that called for private contributions to public goods" (Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993, p. 160). John Carter and Michael Irons (1991) also measured the self-interestedness of economists by examining their behavior in the ultimatum bargaining game. In this study, "economics majors performed more in accordance with the predictions of the self-interest model than did non-majors" (Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993, p. 161).

The results of the study by Frank et al. (1993), also showed that "the proportion of pure free riders among economists (that is, those who reported giving no money to any charity) was more than double that of any of the other six areas included in the survey" (Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993, p. 162). Frank et al. (1993) found that "economists would be more inclined to construe the objective of the game in self-interested terms, and therefore more likely to refer exclusively to features of the game itself" (Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993, pp. 166-167). They also found that the economists' higher defection rate is partly because they are more likely to expect their partners to defect. Frank et al. (1993) realized that "while expectations of partner performance play a strong

role in predicting behavior, defection rates would remain significantly higher for economists than for non-economists even if both groups held identical expectations about partner performance" (Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993, p. 167). They also found "evidence consistent with the view that differences in cooperativeness are caused in part by training in economics" (Frank, Gilovich, & Reg, 1993, p. 170).

Using administrative data on donations to social programs by students at the university of Washington, Bauman and Rose (2009) found that "economics majors are less likely to donate than other students and that there is an indoctrination effect for non-majors but not for majors" (Bauman & Rose, 2009, p. 1).

From Market and Government Failures to Human Failure (Economic Men at risk)

While the American model of economic education has correctly paid attention to the risks of the low quality of economic education in the USA, it found the solution in training some economic men in schools.

From a Quranic point of view, "verily Man is in loss, except such as have faith and do righteous deeds and (join together) in the mutual teaching of truth, and of patience and constancy" (Q 103, 2-3).³ An economic man without faith and spirituality fails to perform well in the economy. As soon as the market and government fail to function properly, the homo economicus also fails to perform well. It means that the economic man is at risk and we face the human failure, which mainly roots in the spiritual failure of human beings. It happens when they forget their origins and their connection to God. We read in the Quran: "And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves" (Q 59, 19).⁴

It is tempting to argue that market and government failures mainly result from human failure. The market and government fail to function properly because economic agents are not perfectly rational.

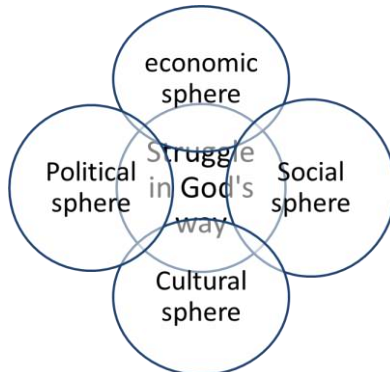
Cultural Configuration of an Islamic Economy

To solve the human failure problem, Islam tries to incorporate morality and spirituality in the economy. By considering economic behavior as an act of worshipping God, Islam tends to integrate the economic and cultural realms. It also introduces some socioeconomic institutions for promoting spirituality in individuals. Among others, Islamic taxes, including Khoms and Zakah, are designed not only to perform as a tax for financing the government, but also to purify the taxpayers. Islam also promotes social norms such as halal income, hard work, contentment and sacrifice. The internalization of such norms could help us to solve the human failure problem.

Economic Behavior as an Act of Worshipping God

One of the strategies of Islam for incorporating morality and spirituality in the economy is to consider the economic behavior as an act of worshipping God (ibadah). The prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) says: "Worshipping God has ten components; nine parts of it is the seeking of halal earnings" (Majlesi, 1983, p. 9).⁵ From an Islamic point of view, any activity would change to an act of worshipping God (ibadah), if the performer has the intention to satisfy God.

In an Islamic culture, the seeking of halal earning looks like fighting for God. Imam Ali said: The person who trouble himself in seeking the halal earning, he looks like a fighter in the way of God (Ibn Abi Jomhor, 1985, p. 194).⁶



The Culture of Halal and Tayyib Product and Income

Islam is trying to develop the culture of halal and tayyib product and income. Halal (lawful) and tayyib (pure) products are goods and services that are pure and clean from any harm to individuals and the society. Being harmful for the body and soul, alcoholic drinks, for instance, are not halal and tayyib products. From an Islamic point of view, harmful ways of earning income, such as earning income from usury, and gambling, are also prohibited.

Consistent Norms of Hard Work, Moderation and Sacrifice

In an Islamic economy, the norms of hard work, moderation and sacrifice are promoted in the case of production, consumption and distribution, respectively. Muslims are asked to work hard, consume less and pay part of their income to the poor. The norm of moderation in consumption, not only functions to control wasteful consumptions (Israf and Tabzir), but also enables individuals to devote their extra income to good deeds (Infaq: paying Zakah and Sadaqah). By the way, the norms of hard work, moderation and sacrifice guarantee efficiency and justice simultaneously.

Islamic Taxes and the Goal of Purification

One of the outstanding aspects of Islamic taxes such as Khums and Zakah (almsgiving) is that they are expected to purify taxpayers.

Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing (Q 9, 103).

Muslims should pay Khums and Zakah for the sake of God, otherwise it is not acceptable. Islam introduces a voluntary tax system in which taxpayers are self-motivated. They calculate their Khums and Zakah by themselves. In contrast, conventional taxes mainly use a control-incentive framework for tax compliance. In an Islamic tax system, morality plays an important role in tax

compliance. It is believed that the use of control and incentives might produce problems such as intrinsic motivation crowding out effect and weakening the moral training capacity of taxes.

Thanks to recent literature on the hidden costs of reward and punishment, control policies and conventional incentive policies might crowd out moral incentives for tax payments in two ways (Frey, 1997). Control policies erode self-esteem and incentive policies change the mentality of agents about the type of market for tax payment. Incentives and controls signal the transformation of a social market to a money market (Heyman & Ariely, 2004).

It seems that Islam have expanded a self-report tax system, with flexible tax rates, to crowd in moral motives for tax compliance. It also necessitates good intentions in tax payment because such an institution is expected to purify people and train them. By the way, it seems that Islam has been aware of the negative effects of control and incentive policies on the tax morale.

Towards an Islamic Model of Economic Education (IMEE)

Muslim scholars rarely paid attention to the Islamic model of economic education. There are some references to the importance of issues such as morality in the Islamic economic system without attention to what we could derive as a model for policy making in the area of economic education. Nonetheless, there are many clues in the Quran and Hadith about economic education and training.

The Goals of Islamic Economic Education

Looking for an Islamic model of economic education, we mainly should pay attention to the ideal economic agent from an Islamic point of view, as well as what we could call an Islamic economic life style. The ideal economic agent from an Islamic perspective is clearly different from the so-called economic man or homo-economicus. The agent can be called matured economic agents with spiritual rationality. One of the implications of admitting spiritual

rationality in Islamic economics is the introduction of a particular economic life style, which goes beyond the neoclassical model of economic conduct.

An Islamic Economic Life Style

From an Islamic perspective, economic agents have imperfect rationality due to their problems in acquiring information, managing desires, and discovering the best means for satisfying desires. Religions, particularly Islam, help economic agents to recognize their real needs (maslaha), filter their desires and find the best ways for satisfying their needs. Islamic ideology, jurisprudence, and morality function to fix the problem of imperfect rationality.

Accordingly, a matured consumer is expected to follow Islamic legal and moral codes when she/he is consuming. Since a matured consumer believes in God and the life in the Hereafter, it is easy for him/her to regulate and modify his/her expenditure according to Islamic legal and moral rules. He/she then would follow the rule of moderate consumption, avoid wasteful expenditure, and restrict his/her consumption of luxuries. He/she also devotes some part of his/her income to others through obligatory and voluntary donations. In a Hadith from Imam Sadeq, the sixth Imam in Shia tradition, we read:

Properties belong to God; they are just deposited in the hands of people. People are allowed to eat economically, drink economically, wear clothes economically, marry economically, drive economically and use the spare properties for helping the poor believers... (Majlesi, 1983, p. 225).⁷

From an Islamic perspective, producers have also imperfect rationality due to their irrational beliefs and desires. Islam is trying to fix the problem of imperfect rationality by encouraging producers to obey several jurisprudential and moral rules such as the rule of fair price and fair profit. By promoting the culture of halal and tayyib product, Islam wants to facilitate the efficient allocation of resources to needs. As a result, a matured Muslim producer has a

multi-objective production function in which different goals such as gaining profit, preserving the environment and giving priority to the production of necessities are guiding decisions.

From an Islamic perspective, the invisible hand of market and the visible hand of the government could not guarantee the 'harmony of interests'. We need the invisible hand of morality under the guidance of religion as a mechanism for educating and purifying economic agents and modifying their economic decisions (Haneef, 1995, pp. 113-114).

Islamic economics is based on a paradigm which is not secularist and value neutral. It treats all human beings as vice-regents of God and brothers unto each other. All resources at the disposal of human beings are a trust and must be used for the well-being of all in conformity with the values provided by the Shari'ah. However, well-being in Islam is not a function of just material possessions and unlimited consumption. It is rather a function of the balanced satisfaction of both the material and the spiritual needs of the human personality. This can be done by actualizing the maqasid al-Shari'ah (goals of the Shari'ah) (Chapra M. , 2000, p. 55).

Morality works as a filter for adjusting the choices by consumers and producers to the requirements of the social life.

Before even entering the market place and being exposed to the price filter, consumers are expected to pass their claims through the moral filter. This will help filter out conspicuous consumption and all wasteful and unnecessary claims on resources. The price mechanisms can then take over and reduce the claims on resources even further to lead to the market equilibrium. The two filters can together make it possible to have optimum economy in the use of resources, which is necessary to satisfy the material as well as spiritual needs of all human beings, to reduce the concentration of wealth in few hands, and to raise savings, which are needed to promote greater investment and employment (Chapra M. , 2014, p. 46)

Matured Economic Agents

Economic man is not an ideal economic agent in an Islamic society. He is not considered even as an actual economic actor. Islamic economics recognizes the spiritual aspects of human beings besides their mundane dimensions. Accordingly, a matured economic agent is not trapped in a mundane game of self-interest maximization. Instead, he/she is looking for a virtuous life in this world and the world after. Prudence is then only one virtue besides other virtues such as justice, equality and fairness. By considering non-self-interested motives of economic agents into account, we could speak of a matured economic man in the light of Islamic teachings.

A matured economic agent is expected to solve the problems of imperfect rationality by acquiring appropriate information, managing desires, and discovering the best means for satisfying needs. She/he is then expected to have rational desires, beliefs and measures under the guidance of Islamic teachings. Having rational desires, the matured economic man has both self-interested and altruistic motives. In this way, we come to the so called spiritual rationality.

**Table 6: Islamic Content Standards in Economics versus
Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics**

N.	Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics	Islamic content standards of economic education
1	Scarcity	Scarcity and misdistribution of income & wealth
2	Decision making	Matured decision making
3	Allocation	Allocation
4	Incentives	Incentives, intrinsic and extrinsic motives
5	Trade	Pure Trade
6	Specialization	Specialization and struggle for <i>halal</i> and <i>tayyib</i> Income
7	Markets and prices	Markets and prices
8	Role of prices	Role of prices and moral cleansing
9	Competition and market	Competition and cooperation
10	Institutions	Institutions
11	Money and inflation	Money, and inflation
12	Interest rates	Profit rates

13	Income	<i>Halal</i> and <i>tayyib</i> Income
14	Entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurship
15	Economic growth	Flourishing
16	Role of government and market failure	Role of government and market failure
17	Government failure	Role of morality and government failure
18	Economic fluctuations	Economic fluctuations
19	Unemployment and inflation	Unemployment and inflation
20	Fiscal and monetary policy	Fiscal, monetary and economic education policy

The Islamic Content Standards of Economic Education

As soon as Islam considers humanity failure as the source of market and government failures in the economy, it is necessary to present new basic concepts or standards for economic training. Below the list, Islamic content standards of economic education are suggested in comparison with the “Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics.”

Table 6: Islamic Content Standards in Economics versus Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics

The proposed Islamic economic content standards have the following main characteristics:

1. There is a reference to market, government and human failures in the economy.
2. Human failure is considered as the root of market and government failures.
3. Human failure happens because economic agents have imperfect rationality.
4. Economic agents have imperfect rationality due to their problems in acquiring information, managing desires, and discovering the best means for satisfying desires.
5. The internalization of morality and spirituality in economic agents is a solution to the imperfect rationality problem.

6. Morality and spirituality function to filter desires before they were subject to the market filter, so we could have spiritual rationality.

7. Institutions could function to internalize morality in economic agents.

8. As a socio-economic institution, Zakah, for instance, does not only perform as a tax, but also perform as a tool for purifying taxpayers.

9. Fiscal and monetary policies should be supplemented by moral policies.

Table 7: Islamic Content Standards in Economics

N.	Standards	Grades		
		0-4	4-8	8-12
1	Scarcity and misdistribution of income & wealth	✓	✓	✓
2	Matured decision making	✓	✓	✓
3	Allocation	✓	✓	✓
4	Incentives, intrinsic and extrinsic motives	✓	✓	✓
5	Pure Trade	✓	✓	✓
6	Specialization and struggle for hallal and tayyib Income	✓	✓	✓
7	Markets and prices	✓	✓	✓
8	Role of prices and moral cleansing	✓	✓	✓
9	Competition and cooperation	✓	✓	✓
10	Institutions	✓	✓	✓
11	Money, and inflation	-	✓	✓
12	Profit rates	-	✓	✓
13	<i>Halal</i> and <i>Tayyib</i> Income	✓	✓	✓
14	Entrepreneurship	✓	✓	✓
15	Flourishing	✓	✓	✓
16	Role of government and market failure	-	✓	✓
17	Role of morality and government failure	✓	✓	✓
18	Economic fluctuations	-	✓	✓
19	Unemployment and inflation	✓	✓	✓
20	Fiscal, monetary and economic education policy	-	-	✓

Conclusion

Even though the economic system of Islam is primarily intended to coordinate the creation and distribution of income and wealth, it is also expected to perform as an education and training system. Islam considers

the act of earning halal and tayyib (pure) income as an act of worshiping God. Some Islamic taxes such as Zakah (almsgiving) are designed to purify the taxpayers. It is then obligatory that they intend pleasing God by tax payment. Islam also tries to cultivate the culture of halal and tayyib product and income in believers so that they have enough motive to perform according to the principle of justice.

Such a cultural view to the economy in Islam roots in the Islamic ontological outlook. Islam considers human beings to have imperfect rationality. According to the Quran, man surely is in loss, except those who believe in God and do good deeds. Being in danger of ignorance, human beings permanently need attention (Zikr). Hence all social systems should be in the service of notifying them and helping them to escape from the veil of ignorance. It means that we need a model of economic education and training that helps the economy to have the ideal matured economic agents with spiritual rationality.

Very recently economists have paid attention to the importance of economic education. They designed some models for economic education. In their model one could rarely see any reference to the important issue of spirituality in the economy. The so-called “Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics,” promotes a mundane economic life style on the basis of a self-interest maximization paradigm (instrument rationality). Accordingly, students are informed that the invisible hand of market perform properly to allocate scarce resources to needs. The government then play a minor role in fixing market failures and supporting a market equilibrium.

From an Islamic point of view, as market and government might fail to perform well, economic agents might also fail to perform correctly due to the problem of imperfect rationality. There is then a need to purify economic agents and cultivate spirituality and morality in them to have the

so-called spiritual rationality. The proposed economic content standards in the paper make advantages of Islamic insights on the cultural configuration of the economy such as considering economic behavior as an act of worshiping God, promoting the culture of halal and tayyib product and introducing socio-economic institutions like Zakah.

Endnotes

1. The National Task Force on Economic Education was also active in the production of a TV program on USA's economy, which was broadcasted from the national TV from 1962 to 1963 with about 1 million viewers (Toghyani & Payghami, 2016, p. 47).
2. Based on methodological individualism, the individual element is an independent entity that has self-contained properties. It is followed by the idea that the individual is responsible for his/her own fate. Your success and failure depends on how hard you work. Holism says that individual element is inextricably tied to other individuals. Individuals are interdependent, and they are internally related. Holism regards individuals as reciprocally influencing each other. The child affects the family while being affected by it. Based on holism, the whole is more than simply the sum of the parts. Or the whole is different from the sum of individual constituents. This whole then affects the qualities of the constituents (Ratner, 2016).
3. Other translations: (1) Most surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience. (2) By eventide, every man [is indeed] at a loss except for those who believe, perform honorable deeds, encourage truth, and recommend patience.

وَالْعَصْرِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَئِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالحَقِّ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالصَّبْرِ (عصر: ١-٣).

٤. وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ ... (حشر: ١٩).

٥. پیامبر ﷺ: الْعِبَادَةُ عَشْرَةٌ أَجْزَاءُ تِسْعَةٌ أَجْزَاءُ فِي طَلَبِ الحَلَالِ (علامه مجلسی، ج ١٠٣، ص ٩، ح ٣٧).

٦. قَالَ عَلِيٌّ: الشَّائِخُ فِي طَلَبِ الرِّزْقِ الحَلَالِ كَالْمُجَاهِدِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (ابن ابی جمهور، ١٤٠٥ ق، ج ٣، ص ١٩٤): قَالَ

رسول الله ﷺ: الكاذب على عياله من الحلال كالمجاهد في سبيل الله (همان، ص ١٩٩).

٧. المَالُ مَا لَلَّهِ يَضَعُهُ عِنْدَ الرَّجُلِ وَدَائِعَ، وَجَوَزَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلُوا قَصْدًا، وَيَشْرَبُوا قَصْدًا، وَيَلْبَسُوا قَصْدًا، وَيَنْكِحُوا قَصْدًا، يَرْكَبُوا قَصْدًا،

وَيَعُودُوا بِمَا سِوَى ذَلِكَ عَلَى فُقَرَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَيَرْمُوا بِهِ شَعَثَهُمْ، فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ كَانَ مَا يَأْكُلُ حَلَالًا، وَيَشْرَبُ حَلَالًا، وَيَرْكَبُ حَلَالًا،

وَيَنْكِحُ حَلَالًا، وَمَنْ عَدَا ذَلِكَ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ حَرَامًا... ثُمَّ قَالَ - لَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (بحار الأنوار، ج ١، ص ٢٢٥).

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An Integrative Study of the Impacts of Marketing and Ethnocentrism on Domestic Goods Consumption

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Received: 2021/06/18 - **Accepted:** 2021/10/25

Abstract

Consumption management, by emphasizing the implementation of general policies to reform the consumption pattern and promote the consumption of domestic goods, which is one of the general policies of resistive economics, means that researchers in the field of Islamic patterns need a more accurate understanding of factors affecting consumer tendency to buy domestic goods. The main purpose of the present study is to examine how consumer attitudes towards a country in addition to all the variables affecting it, such as marketing, can affect its desire to buy imported or domestic products. The results of this study, which uses a critical comparative method, indicate that the variables affecting the consumption of domestic goods are divided into three categories: personality factors, demographic factors and price factors, each of which are influential in directing consumer behavior towards choice of buying domestic or foreign goods. In addition, the effective strategy in influencing these factors as much as possible on consumer behavior depends on potential capacities available in each of these three categories, which are discussed in detail in each section, and have consequences such as: maximum employment, consumption management, import substitution and the welfare of society.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Consumption culture, Domestic products, Ethnocentrism, Marketing, Consumption pattern modification.

Introduction

There is ample evidence from researchers that consumer attitudes toward the purchase of foreign goods have different functions across cultures (Deighton, 1992, p. 362); (Ang et al., 2004, p. 191); (Arnold & Thompson, 2005, p. 869). In other words, consumers with diverse cultures display different consumer codes when it comes to buying foreign goods (Bartels, 1967, p. 23); (Singhapkadi et al., 1994, p. 65). These diverse behaviors mean that a consumer with a different culture has a different ethical philosophy, and as a result, different judgments are expressed about the purchase of foreign goods and the type of attitude towards it.

The increasing importance of marketing and ethnocentrism for consumers, especially consumers in less developed or developing countries, becomes clear when the consumer pays attention to the fact that making every purchase of imported goods, although of a higher quality than a similar domestic product, equals destroying a job opportunity, causes currency to leave the country, and, most importantly, harms its own well-being. In fact, the culture of ethnocentrism is recognized as one of the most important determinants and influential factors in the decision to buy foreign goods, and in a global economy where the consumer has the ability to decide among thousands of goods, understanding the fact that the consumer can change the conditions of the global economy for the benefit or loss of the country.

Given the importance of the culture of ethnocentrism and marketing among different countries, research in this field emphasizes that the effects of goods produced in developed countries on the consumer are more than developing countries (Wang & Lamb, 1983, p. 78; Schooler, 1971, p. 71). Similarly, other studies point to the facts of these attitudes, and the effects of these cultures on attitudes toward the purchase of foreign goods, the resources of that country's belief system, and consumer perceptions of similar quality of goods (Shankermahesh, 2004, P. 161). In other words, a greater impact of culture and attitude towards foreign goods can be seen in the goods of

countries with different belief structures, as well as with different socio-cultural context, than the goods of countries with similar structures in culture and belief (Min Han, 1990, p. 24).

In this study, we seek to understand and examine how ethnocentrism and marketing tendencies of the consumer toward their own country can affect their willingness to purchase imported products from other countries. In this context, the general structure of the present study is formed in such a way that after introducing the introductory topics in the first part, the next part examines the research method, the second section is devoted to examining the theoretical foundations of the paper, the third section devoted to marketing and its influences on domestic goods consumption, fourth part explains ethnocentrism and nationalism and expresses their differences and similarities, the fifth section considers the capacities of the variables affecting ethnocentrism in the three areas of demographic factors, personality factors and price factors, and finally the final section is devoted to examining the results of the present discussion and its implications.

1. Methodology

In the present study, using a critical comparative method and a relatively comprehensive study of papers in the field of consumer nationalism and marketing, I have tried to examine the various dimensions of this issue in terms of the importance and effective role it can play in supporting the purchase and consuming of domestic goods. In addition, due to the importance of the effective factors in the field of consumer nationalism, this study has paid special attention to the macro-dimensions and various influential ones in the field of ethnocentrism and marketing.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

The usefulness of discussing the theoretical foundations of marketing and ethnocentrism in drawing general lines of consumer consumption behavior has

been considered by many researchers such as: (Warde et al., 2017) or (Welch and Warde, 2015), and one of the most important issues in determining this outline of consumer consumption behavior to ethnocentrism and consumption of foreign goods as an indicator for measuring cosmopolitanism has been the focus of research in this field.

The concept of consumer nationalism, considered by some scholars to be a sociological phenomenon (Bandara and Miloslava, 2012, p. 5), and by others to be a socio-psychological term (Markin, 1974), is one of Sumner's (1906) earliest studies of ethnocentrism. Shimp (1984, p. 285), with the help of Sumner (1906) in his definition of ethnocentrism, points out that it is incorrect to buy foreign-made goods because it hits the domestic economy. Extensive studies in this field, such as: (Vida & Reardon, 2008, p. 38), or (Parts & Garmatjuk, 2015, p. 613), indicate the tendency of nationalist consumers to domestic goods, but these consumers pay less attention to non-domestic goods (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004, p. 82). In general, consumers evaluated foreign products as being better quality, innovative, well-designed and lower priced than imported goods (Saffu et al., 2010, p. 210).

In fact, consumers do not always evaluate the products they want to buy based on their usual characteristics such as price or quality of manufacture, and sometimes the most important criterion in the process of buying a product is the consumer ethnocentrism tendency (Parts & Garmatjuk, 2015). As a result, consumers who take advantage of the ethnocentrism tendency tend to consider foreign products to be of lower quality and less qualified than domestic products (Saffu et al., 2010, p. 210). In fact, these researchers point out that sometimes domestically produced goods may rank far lower than foreign goods in terms of quality and price, but there is such a tendency in some consumers and some positive consequences that such consumers pay attention to it, which causes the consumer to prefer domestically produced goods to similar foreign goods, which in many ways are superior to the production of the consuming country.

Ethnocentrism can even be relevant in countries where major consumers prefer imported goods to domestically produced goods (John & Brady, 2011, p. 76), so the theoretical framework of ethnocentrism can be open to small economies with small structures (Ferrin et al., 2015, p. 78)

The need to pay serious attention to marketing and ethnocentrism should not go beyond moderation, otherwise it will lead to extremism, in which case domestic goods are preferred over foreign goods and will lead to slowing down the country's economic development. For example, researchers such as Smaiziene and Vaitkiene (2014) point out that the extremist ethnocentrism tendencies may lead to over-counting on domestically produced goods or completely ignoring non-native goods (Smaiziene & Vaitkiene, 2014, p. 466). Based on the data collected from a sample of 352 consumers in the Republic of Lithuania, the researchers evaluated the ethnocentrism of consumption among the sample according to the CETSCALE criteria. In this study, they divided the statistical population into four sections from the lowest level. They categorize ethnocentrism to the highest level, pointing out that consumers with a high level of ethnocentrism do not care about the brand of domestic goods, they make purchases regardless of the composition of some goods (in the case of food), or the indicators that differentiate goods. (Ibid, p. 466). Certainly, such an action against domestic goods will cause less attention to be paid to producers who are more qualified to advance the country's goals towards progress, in addition to the fact that relative prices in the economy will be disrupted.

3. Marketing

The factors determining the optimal performance of domestic goods consumption have been studied in several studies, such as: (Amine & Cavusgil, 1983); (Piercy, 1983); (Bilkey, 1985); and (Namiki, 1994); and in particular in the field of successful and effective strategies, in the field of firm productivity such as export marketing consequences that can play a

role in improving its performance, numerous studies have been conducted that can be referred to: (Leonidou et al., 2004). Research in this area emphasizes the importance of firms' export strategies and their marketing performance in order to achieve domestic consumption. In summary, and in an overview of the importance of marketing strategies in improving the performance of firms in order to achieve mass domestic goods consumption, it is emphasized that the marketing literature believes that firms' marketing strategies in the field of export have a direct impact on their performance in the market (Olson et al., 2005); (Vorhies & Morgan, 2003). Despite the breadth of work done in this area, most of these studies focus on the behavior of markets themselves but their role in export marketing performance, such as: (Chung, 2012); (Souchon & Diamantopoulos, 1996), which has led to the adoption of such policies in the field of entry and exit to international markets by companies, is one of the most difficult management tasks in the field of domestic goods consumption. In many cases companies cannot succeed in this area and strategies have failed (Thorpe & Morgan, 2007); for example, the activities of firms in the field of marketing face problems such as: geographical distances and psychological differences between producers and consumers and producers' familiarity with the culture of export markets. (Bello & Gilliland, 1997).

In addition, most empirical studies in export marketing are based on information from firms operating in the markets of developed economies (Ellis et al., 2011); (Zou et al., 2003). The result of such research has been a lack of attention to exporting firms and organizations in developing countries in order to take advantage of export marketing. This point is more worrying for Iran because in recent years we have seen an increase in the number of knowledge-based companies in the field of domestic consumption and these companies need to know more about the structural and institutional performance of international markets in terms of reaching mass domestic goods consumption, conditions that if are well applied by firms, they can see positive changes in

improving domestic consumption (Li and Gima, 2001). As a result, due to the insufficiency of determining the marketing components in the field of developing countries, we will continue to deal with the key components that apply to Iran in international marketing.

3-1. Marketing components

In the process of starting to study these variables, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that researchers in the field of export marketing, believe that the two indicators of “Market-Oriented Responsiveness” and “Product-Innovation Capabilities” are special social and institutional resource products in empowering firms to maintain and expand new international markets (Silva et al., 2016); (Ruvio et al., 2014); (Zou et al., 2003). Responsiveness is defined as the ability to respond to the changing expectations and needs of consumers in export markets and the desire to produce new goods to compete internationally (ottosson & Kindstorm, 2016); (Asseraf & Shoham, 2016). Product-Innovation also works in such a way that it can offer firms the opportunity to benefit from higher prices for their products and industry leadership (Sundqvist et al., 2012), as such firms are offering products different from other firms.

The two central components that we will examine in the following, are under the set of these two indicators; these two components are technology and paying attention to the marketing capacities of food exports at the level of international markets.

Figure 1- Framework and model of domestic goods consumption



Source: Author's Findings

3-1-1. Technology

There is no precise and consensus definition of technology in research. Various components in research are mentioned as identifiers for technology such as: hardware, software and media (Bouwman et al., 2005), and in another research even the use of available personal tools such as tablet, including personal computers and mobile phones (Wymbs, 2018). In this section it refers to the technology of the same network equipment that facilitates accessibility for manufacturers to communicate and therefore includes a wide range of equipment in this fields such as: social networks, software, hardware, etc.

Today's digital communications exploited by the Internet account for about 22% of global economic output (Manyika et al., 2016). The development of communications which has been accompanied by a reduction in the distance between nations and the convergence of consumer preferences, has significantly increased the ability of firms to supply their products in domestic and international markets. However, despite the widespread attention of firms in this area and the allocation of abundant resources to it, only 3% of articles -about 159 of the 6045 articles published in 29 marketing journals in the period of 1994-2018- on the effects of information technology on international export marketing have been done (Watson et al., 2018), result in such a large gap in research. It turns out that according to a study (O'Brien, 2016) conducted on nearly a thousand active marketers in the United States and the United Kingdom, the results show that only 8% were able to improve their digital marketing skills and entry into domestic and international markets. Although they have been able to use it properly in practice, two-thirds of the sample surveyed in the two countries have acknowledged that they need to update their information.

In this regard, the marketing literature suggests that technology-related communication activities by exporters are improved by the use of software and other ICT media (Osmonbekov & Chelariu, 2014); (Nguyen & Barrett, 2006).

The use of communication and information technology such as network software, marketing information systems, email, Internet and social networks can effectively improve communication with domestic consumer markets. Communication and information technology has the potential to help exporters identify new consumers and distributors and create valuable information about foreign market trends and how to compete against them. For example, (Medina et al., 2019), (Glavas et al., 2017) or (Bennett, 1997) in their research have concluded that Internet access helps to find opportunities in new domestic consumers. In addition, information and communication technology is a rapid tool in conducting marketing research and cost savings and promotes the quality of information available from markets (Zhu & Nakata, 2006).

Adopting an active policy in the field of market change at the domestic goods consumption level requires constant monitoring of opportunities and challenges in international markets, and the use of technology is a great help to companies as a source of valuable information in the field of exports, especially in the case of Iranian companies. In terms of international market information, they do not have the challenges and opportunities in this field, in addition, those who have just entered the field of export to global markets seem more inclined to take advantage of this opportunity created by technology, because this makes it easier for them to integrate with their domestic customers and take advantage of export target markets properly; furthermore such marketers can follow the footsteps of their international competitors.

3-1-2. Foods

The importance of communication between firms and their consumers has long been the focus of researchers (Drucker, 1986), and therefore the main idea of marketing based on the relationship between consumers and producers has been the main concern in this field of marketing (Wooliscroft et al., 1965). Therefore, product innovation as one of the key and effective components in this regard is able to empower and facilitate the institutional capabilities of firms in the field of domestic consumption.

In this regard, food is of strategic importance in the national economy of each country as one of the vital elements of the active forces; and serious attention to this industry as one of the vital components of the country's economy, can play a significant role in development and growth. The food industry in Iran is experiencing sharp fluctuations due to the global economy and markets, which has made the process of domestic goods consumption difficult for entrepreneurs. In this market, we see an imbalance between supply and demand, a lack of precise and transparent control over exports and imports, and a lack of attention to the development plans of this industry in terms of exploiting them in the field of export marketing (Cerovic and Meler, 2003, p. 176).

In such circumstances, appropriate systemic and institutional measures that are in line with the spirit of Iran's economic policies, and can help producers in rescuing food marketing from these unfavorable conditions, emerge on a large scale, while food marketing as a process in the formation of export target markets can be considered both at the micro and macro levels. In such a process where food marketing can be examined at both micro and macro levels, it seems that this marketing process can serve as a bridge and link between food companies and consumers in export target markets and as a tool to facilitate the exchange and access of producers.

3-2. Islamic Principles of Marketing

The principles of marketing in religion, as part of the Islamic economic system, are derived from the principles governing Islamic economics, so it must be evaluated within that framework. Accordingly, marketing in Islam at the macro level should be done in order to comply with Islamic rules and values and respect for the rights of individuals and justice and equality and avoid exploitation and avoid stagnation and maximum use of human factors and natural resources (Motahhari, 1994, P. 306).

In fact, marketing in the approach based on Islamic countries involves mutual benefit, which is praised in the traditions. For example, in a tradition of

Imam Hassan (AS) we read: Nothing is superior to two qualities, faith in God and benefiting the brothers (Faizakashani, 1406, vol. 26, p. 285).¹

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in a gathering of pilgrims and neighbors of the Holy Shrine of Razavi speaks of the need to use marketing:

Overseas marketing and export is also one of the types of support for Iranian goods. Having 15 neighboring countries - apart from other distant countries that can consume Iranian goods – we should use this neighborhood and export Iranian goods. This is the responsibility of the State Department, it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce, it is the responsibility of popular economic actors. They gave me a statistic that I do not remember exactly - because I did not write it down but it was very important - that if we could get 20% of the production of our neighboring countries - only our neighbors - [i.e.] 20% of the total Commit to consuming them, a certain number of jobs [will be created] - a very high number that I do not remember right now, I cannot say - which will have a great impact on creating jobs in the country and creating national wealth (the leader’s statement, 1/1/95).

4. Ethnocentrism and Nationalism

“ethnocentrism” term derived from the two Greek words ‘Ethno’ meaning nationality, and ‘Ethnikos’ meaning belonging to a particular race or ethnicity (Chan & Rossiter, 1998), and give attention to “nationalism”, and the differences and similarities between them, can be explored and helped to better understand the purpose of the discussion and to avoid misunderstandings in this regard.

Ethnocentrism and nationalism are similar in that they both require the induction of consumer-behaviors in exchange for the purchase of foreign goods; however, there are differences between the two terms, the use of which in a subject and the fact that they are not separated from each other will confuse the reader.

Rosenblatt (1964, p. 131), in explaining the dimensions of these differences, argues that nationalism requires more than ethnocentrism allegiance to institutions with independent dimensions, especially political. Understanding this difference is, in fact, somewhat related to the similarity that Rosenblatt makes between the two terms, which both contain positive attitudes toward one's own group and a negative attitude toward the other, but in expressing one of the differences between the two terms, they believe that nationalism is more related to a positive attitude towards political institutions.

5. Effective Variables in Ethnocentrism

Various economic and non-economic factors can affect the culture of ethnocentrism in choosing to buy domestic or foreign goods. The present study believes that the factors affecting ethnocentrism are divided into three categories: demographic factors, personality factors and price factors.

Factors such as: price, income, poverty as price factors; age, gender, level of education, race, brand, luxury, culturality and social class as personality factors; and hostility, propaganda, religion, urbanization, the influences of the country of origin, politics, quality, as demographic factors can all affect ethnocentrism.

Due to the great importance of demographic factors as the basis for the formation of consumer ethnocentrism behaviors, we first discuss demographic factors in detail, then examine personality factors and price factors.

5-1. Demographic Factors

5-1-1. Country-of-Origin

One of the theories in the field of factors affecting the consumer's tendency to buy foreign goods, which has been mentioned in several studies, indicates a greater focus on the country of origin of the consumer in his judgment of the quality of foreign goods (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004); (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). On the other hand, as the research of the last two decades

shows, considerable research has been done on the effects of the country of origin, as a source of formation of consumer culture of ethnocentrism, on assessing the consumer mentality and his judgment about buying foreign goods (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Of course, some studies on the effects of the country of origin, such as: Herche (1992) or Olsen et al. (1993) indicate the difference between ethnocentrism and the country of origin, which lack criticism and selection of the correct theory in this field.

The influences of the country of origin on the culture of consumer ethnocentrism actually reflect the perception and desire of the consumer to buy goods that are either produced alone or in cooperation with that country (Orth & Firbasova, 2003, p. 137). The effects of the country of origin on consumer ethnocentrism depend on the consumer behavior towards foreign goods. If there is hostility, the effect will also be negative. If attention is paid to quality, this relationship will have a positive effect regardless of other variables. The effects of the country of origin on consumer ethnocentrism as a factor, is not independent, and it depends on the impact of other variables on consumer behavior.

In the pathology of research in this field, it should be said: Despite the existence of numerous studies on the effects of the country of origin on consumer attitudes toward the purchase of goods, these studies are inconsistent and cannot be generalized (Samiee, 1994, p. 580). Different causes have been mentioned for these inconsistencies in research. For example, some researchers believe that the origin of such defects is due to the use of student samples, the use of dependent contexts, and neglect of the importance of influencing factors in this attitude (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995, p. 892).

5-1-2. Religion

Religiosity as a way of life of the believer, plays an influential role in all aspects of the believer's life, including his decision to buy foreign goods, paying attention to the commands and prohibitions of religion in business,

indicating not to use foreign goods as much as possible, especially when its similar is produced domestically.

Studies such as Katz (1992, p. 336) suggest a link between consumer ethnocentrism and religiosity. Of course, studies such as Hooghe (2008) indicate that there is no relationship between religion and ethnocentrism, and he claims that there is a consensus in this regard, which is not true according to the studies that indicate the existence of such a relationship; including several studies that have discussed the role of religion in ethnocentrism and its mechanism of influence in terms of domestic goods and not buying foreign goods, such as Ahmad et al. (2013, p. 554) and Rose et al. (2008, p. 168), The channel of influence of religion in not buying foreign goods has been considered through hostility (which will be discussed in the next section), while regardless of hostility and attention to the commands of the Shari'ah, there is a clear evidence that any kind of the believers' favor with the infidels that would cause their domination over the believers is forbidden in Islamic sources.

As a result, what can be said about religion shows its positive impact on consumer ethnocentrism.

5-1-3. Hostility

Klein et al. (1998) first introduced the concept of hostility and enmity and its conceptual framework for the purchase of foreign goods in an article entitled "The Model of Hostility to the Purchase of Foreign Goods: An Experimental Test for the Peoples' of the Republic of China". Hostility, defined in this article as signs of disgust associated with current or past economic, political, and military events, is devoted to evaluating Japanese-made goods sold in China. This study introduces a model that predicts that the mentality of consumer hostility towards the country of production of imported goods can have a negative impact on the purchase of those goods. The results of this study indicate that consumers' sense of hostility towards foreign goods, in addition to the significant effects it has on consumer ethnocentrism, also significantly affects the consumer's decision to buy foreign goods.

This research was again developed by Klein and Ettensen (1999) but this time in relation to American consumers. In another study, Klein (2002, p. 353) tested this model for Japanese consumers, this time with the purchase of domestic and foreign goods, namely American and Korean, with implications for their very low preferences for American goods compared with Korean goods. In addition, many researchers emphasize that there is a strong association between hostility towards the country of production and the occurrence of consumer behaviors towards the purchase of goods in that country (Ahmad et al., 2013, p. 554).

In the continuation of this research, several other works in the field of completing and developing this model are presented by Klein et al. (1998); some of these works, such as Nijssen and Douglas (2004) in the Netherlands, Russel and Russel (2006) in the United States and France, Nakos and Haji Dimitriou (2007) in Greece, Torres and Gutierrez (2007) and Bahaee and Pisani (2009) with three studies related to Iran, Jimenez and Martin (2010) in Spain, have studied this model specifically in these countries.

One of the implications of this hostility to foreign goods in consumer behavior is the Attribution Theory (Ang et al., 2004, p. 192). The consumer seeks the cause of his country's economic problems at home, and this feeling is formed towards the domestic authorities. If we analyze consumer behavior from this perspective, it can have a negative impact on the purchase of domestic goods and a positive impact on foreign goods.

One of the weaknesses of these studies, which they themselves have sometimes pointed out, is the lack of attention to cultural relations and the reciprocal effects of ethnocentrism and hostility among the countries studied in relation to the purchase of foreign goods, because in these countries domestic goods usually have lower quality and more restrictions compared with the goods of developed countries, As a result, the effects of hostility towards domestic goods are greater than foreign goods; and not paying attention to this important issue can lead to misinterpretation of the results.

5-2. Personality Factors

5-2-1. Brand

One of the things that can neutralize the negative effects of ethnocentrism on the purchase of foreign goods and have a reciprocal effect is the consumer's attention to the brand of products from other countries. As a result of this phenomenon, according to some researchers such as Malefyt (2009, p. 202), annually more than three thousands of brands of new products are exposed to the consumer, and can lead the consumer to the same imported product, regardless of the same or higher quality of the domestically produced products.

Studies on the effects of the brand on consumer ethnocentrism behavior such as Kim and Pysarchik (2000, p. 285) on Japanese-made camcorders used in South Korea show that the brand has been able to influence ethnocentrism.

In justifying the reasons for the brand's influence on consumer ethnocentrism and neutralizing its effects on the purchase of foreign goods, Wang and Chen (2004, p. 394) argue that the consumer tends to display his luxury goods, including foreign brands.

5-2-2. Conspicuous

Conspicuous is a social and public phenomenon, in which the consumer tends to expose his consumption to the public (Piron, 2000, p. 309); in fact, such a consumer likes to show the ability he affords for goods quality and structure, spend a lot of money, and have an impact on people (Wang and Chen, 2004, p. 393). This analysis is the same as the brand's analysis in that the ownership of luxury goods and the brand can offset the effects of ethnocentrism on not buying foreign goods, although some research suggests that luxury is more community-inspired than utility economics of commodities (Mason, 1981).

Consumer ethnocentrism implies the use of domestic goods and the unacceptability of the use of foreign goods. On the other hand, consumerist luxury behavior tends to buy foreign goods, which in a study conducted by Marcoux et al. (1997, p. 22) confirms the content.

Thus, in contrast to consumer ethnocentrism and the tendency to luxury, if the tendency to luxury in a country's consumers is stronger than their consumer ethnocentrism, the tendency to buy imported goods in those countries is much higher than in those countries whose consumers have stronger consumer ethnocentrism tendencies.

5-2-3. Education

Numerous studies on the effects of consumer education on the prevalence of domestic production show that increasing the level of education is inversely related to consumer ethnocentrism (Wall and Heslop, 1989, p. 345); (Klein and Ettensen, 1999, p. 10). Also, McLain and Sternquist (1991, p. 50) have shown that high tendencies of consumer ethnocentrism are higher in consumers with low levels of education. However, the results of a study conducted by Min Han (1990, p. 33) show that there is no significant relationship between the level of education and consumer ethnocentrism.

It is important to note that our main emphasis on the negative impact of education levels on consumer ethnocentrism is that it usually leads consumers to Western-made goods and not necessarily to the goods of other countries. Given this fact, it seems that, as some studies have implicitly pointed out, increasing consumer education is associated with increased sensitivity to the quality of goods, so it seems that the spirit of most educational institutions corresponds with Western education system. This process plays a destructive role in the formation of ethnocentrism spirit in consumers with higher education, which raises the need for more attention of responsible institutions in this field in the refinement of these sciences, especially the humanities.

5-3. Price Factors

5-3-1. Income

Numerous studies indicate that consumers with high-income levels have a lower ethnocentrism spirit (Acikdilli et al., 2017, p. 4); (Bruning, 1997, p. 67); (Sharma et al., 1995, p. 33). In fact, increasing income levels provides more opportunities for consumers to travel and buy foreign goods (Shankarmahesh, 2004, p. 165). In addition, Han (1990, p. 29) in a study of the level of income of American consumers shows that there is no significant relationship between different income levels and consumer ethnocentrism. Similarly, a study by McLain and Sternquist (1991, p. 51) confirms these results. However, research conducted by (Tan & Farley, 1987, pp. 541-542) on Singaporean consumers shows that increasing consumer income levels is associated with increasing consumer ethnocentrism.

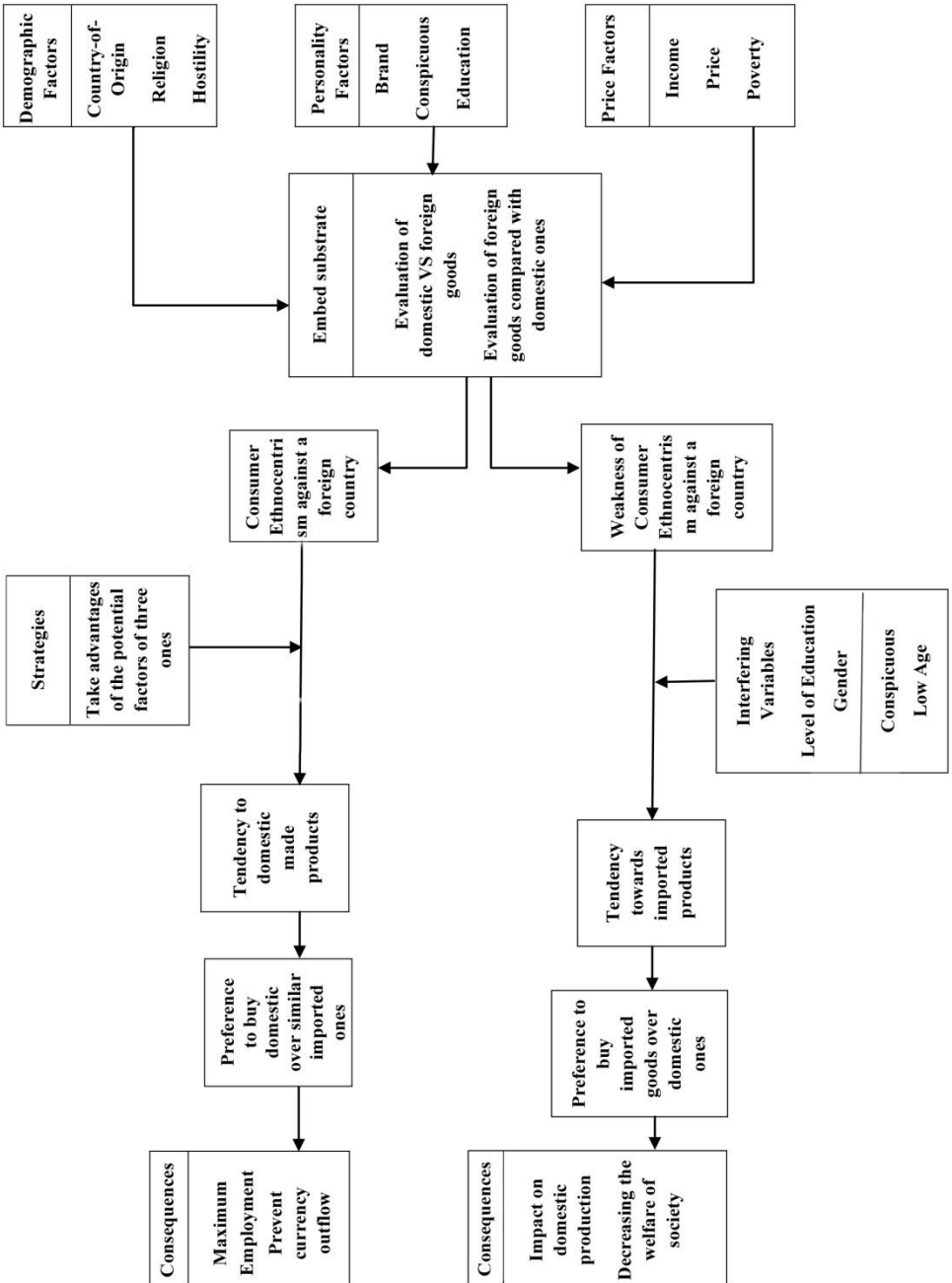
The negative effects of income level differences on consumer ethnocentrism are more apparent in developing countries. It seems that the main reasons for this are related to the structural and systemic weakness of these countries in competing with imported goods, and as a result they are cheaper than domestic products.

5-3-2. Price

Almost the only case that seems to have been met with unanimity by scholars in the field of ethnocentrism is related to the negative effects of price levels on consumer ethnocentrism. Examples include research by Lau and Yau (1985) and Herrman and Beik (1968).

An important point about the mechanism of influence of this variable is that the price variable through two brand channels and increasing the class gap (poverty), affects consumer ethnocentrism. In this context, the income variable, which has already been examined, can also appear as an amplifier of this variable.

Figure 2- Final Model of the Study



Source: Author's Findings

6. Conclusion and Implications

Drawing numerous and macro factors affecting marketing and ethnocentrism and expressing the challenges and capacities of each variable in strengthening both factors as much as possible, the present study provided a model through which one can easily understand the macro variables affecting ethnocentrism and marketing, policies in the context of a model appropriate to the consumer culture of the Iranian people. I used the method of analysis, critical comparative method to achieve these goals.

The results of the present study show that the macro variables affecting ethnocentrism are divided into three categories: personality factors, demographic factors and price factors. These factors, which are among the novel divisions of the present study, show various variables on consumer behavior towards foreign goods. Some of these factors, such as the effects of the country of origin, do not act independently and their effectiveness depends on the influence of other variables. Factors such as the level of consumer education have a negative relationship with ethnocentrism.

In the process of implementing strategies affecting marketing and ethnocentrism and their maximum impact, paying attention to the capacities of each of the three categories of factors - that are described in detail in each section - can be effective, including encouraging domestic producers to increase product quality. Domestic production is on par with similar foreign goods, in addition to variables such as national media advertising, branding of domestic production, use of consumer religiosity capacities, paying attention to the income level of consumers in different areas and pricing commensurate with product income, avoiding manufacturer rhetoric in advertising their product.

In the policy-making process of completing and implementing strategies affecting marketing and ethnocentrism, it should be noted that intervening variables, such as: the low age of consumers, their gender, the higher education level of consumers, luxury, culturalism, low quality of products, consumer

hostility towards domestic production can reduce or even stop the effects of these programs.

Successful and efficient implementation of supportive policies for ethnocentrism can increase employment and domestic production, increase the share of the country's export basket, prevent foreign exchange outflow, increase public welfare and reform the consumption pattern as one of the strategic policies of the resistive economy.

To further strengthen the culture of ethnocentrism and marketing, it is suggested that future research focus on the capacities of each of the three categories of factors to strengthen the behavior of consumer toward consuming domestic goods, which were briefly discussed in this study.

Endnotes

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