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Contents

ARTICLES IN VOL. 20, No. 1, 2015

SHI'ISM IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: ITS MUSLIM WORLD POLICY <i>Wahabuddin Ra'ees</i> <i>Abdol Moghset Bani Kamal</i>	1
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PREACHING: THE POWER OF DIARIES <i>Rodrigue Fontaine</i>	27
THINKING FROM THE QUR'ĀNIC PERSPECTIVE <i>Mohd. Shuhaimi Ishak</i> <i>Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff</i>	53
A FORGOTTEN THEORETICAL CONNECTION OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS <i>Tazul Islam</i> <i>M. Y. Zulkifli</i>	87
HUKM SHAR'Ī AND THE RECIPROCAL IDENTIFICATION BETWEEN ITS DEFINITION AND SUBJECT MATTER: THE MISSING LINK <i>Saad Abu Elgasim</i> <i>Abdul Haseeb Ansari</i> <i>Mohamad bin Arifin</i>	119
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	153

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THINKING FROM THE QUR'ĀNIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Qur'ān is the main reference and source of knowledge for Muslims. It logically follows that understanding the concept of thinking should also be referred to the Qur'ān. Even though the word 'intellect' is mentioned 49 times in the Qur'ān, and there are hundreds of verses that urge Muslims to think, the theory of thinking from the Qur'ānic perspective has not been extensively explored to guide Muslim educators, curriculum designers and developers. Hence, this paper attempts to explore the concept of good thinking from the Qur'ānic perspective. It extensively examines verses of the Qur'ān pertaining to the intellect and thinking to come up with a theory of good thinking. From the analysis of the relevant Qur'ānic verses, the research found that the intellect is capable of rational and spiritual cognition as a result of applying critical, creative, ethical and spiritual thinking. Therefore, the research posits that good thinking from the Qur'ānic perspective is multi-dimensional; the dimensions are critical, creative, ethical and spiritual thinking. Furthermore, according to the Qur'ān, the aim of good thinking is to achieve wisdom. Hence, this paper also explicates the meaning of wisdom from the Qur'ānic perspective.

Key words: The intellect, thinking in the Qur'ān, good thinking, spiritual thinking, wisdom

Introduction

Muslim scholars such as Asād, al-Alwānī, Abūl Kalam Azad, Bennabi, Crow and Arslan, agree that the Muslim mind is influenced by blind imitation.¹ Blind imitation or *taqlīd* is a sickness that has

¹ Muḥammad Asād, *Islam at the crossroad* (Islamabad: Da'wah Academy,

infected Muslim minds which is unnatural for Muslims since the *Qur'ān* has repeatedly urged them to think critically before accepting any ideas as feasible solutions to the predicaments of the *ummah*. Al-Alwānī stresses that “increase in *taqlīd* has caused a growing belief in fatalism”.² It also has become a fertile breeding ground for rigid, narrow and superficial thinking -- the manifestations of the paralysis of the Muslim minds.³

While reading the *Qur'ān*, one will stumble upon hundreds of verses that keep reminding readers over and over again to use their intellect to think. These verses provoke the readers by questioning them in a negative form for not using their intellect and for not thinking. The fact that there are hundreds of verses that mention the intellect in action shows that thinking is necessary and strongly encouraged. The *Qur'ān* does not merely ask, but it provokes, challenges and appeals to readers to use their intellect. We conclude that the problem with thinking among Muslims stems from the lack of awareness and understanding of the Qur'ānic verses on the power of the intellect and thinking because of scarcity of literature on thinking from the Qur'ānic perspective. Therefore, this paper attempts to give awareness and to expose thinking from the Qur'ānic perspective. It also identifies Qur'ānic verses pertaining to thinking

International Islamic University, 1990); Al-Alwānī, Ṭaha Jābir, *Krisis Pemikiran Modern*. [Modern thought crisis] (Petaling Jaya: IIIT, 1995); Al-Alwānī, Ṭaha Jābir & 'Imād al-Din Khalīl, *The Qur'ān and the Sunnah: The time-space factor*, Herndon, International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991, 522; Abul Kalam Azad, *The opening chapter of the Qur'ān*, Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2001; Arslan, Amir Shakib, *Our decline: Its causes and remedies* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2004); Bennabi, Malik, *The question of ideas in the Muslim world* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2003; transl. el-Mesāwī, Mohamed el-Ṭāhir, original work published in 1970); Crow, Abdul Karim D, Reason, Physicalism, and Faith, 2003, retrieved on February 19, 2006, from <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rpf-kdc1.doc>

²Al-Alwānī, Ṭaha Jābir & 'Imād al-Din Khalīl, *ibid*, 522.

³Sardar, Ziauddin, Reformist ideas and Muslim intellectuals: The demand of the real world in Naseef, Abdullah Omar (ed.), *Today's problem tomorrow's solutions: The future structure of Muslim societies*, London, Mansell, 1988, 163-174; Bennabi, Malik, *Islam in history and society*, Kuala Lumpur, Berita Publishing, 1991; Al-Qarḍāwī, Yūsuf, *Fatwa masa kini*. [Fatwa of the present], Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Salam, 1991.

and attempts to interpret the meaning of those verses through the method of interpreting one verse by using another verse of the *Qur'ān* that deals with the same subject and through contemplation.⁴ Al-Alwānī and 'Imād al-Dīn explain that contemplation on the Qur'ānic verse:

... is reciting it, reviewing it, dwelling on its meanings in an attempt to know all the possible meanings it contains, and allowing one's thought to wander freely and unhampered through it in order to arrive at the hidden meanings that Allah reveals to certain people of intellect and understanding.⁵

Thinking in the *Qur'ān*

As early as verse 44 in the second chapter of the *Qur'ān*, readers are provoked by a negative question, *afalā ta'qilūn* (will you not use your intellect?). There are 13 verses which question readers in a negative form for not using their intellect including *afalā ta'qilūn* which means “Do you not think?”⁶ or “Have you no understanding?”⁷; or “Will you not use your reason?”⁸. Al-Qarḍāwī explains that Allah (swt) asks man in the negative form to motivate man to think of His signs in order to know Allah (swt) and to be convinced of the belief in Allah (swt). Another 11 verses are in the verb form of *ta'qilūn* which means “you would use your reason”⁹ or “You may think or you may understand”, which are used interchangeably by al-Qarḍāwī¹⁰ and Pickthall¹¹.

⁴Al-Alwānī, Ṭaha Jābir & 'Imād al-Din Khalil, *The Qur'ān and the Sunnah: The time-space factor*, 13.

⁵Ibid, 14.

⁶Al-Qarḍāwī, Yūsuf, *Al-'aql wa al-'ilm fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Bayrūt, Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2001, 13.

⁷Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke, *The meaning of the glorious Qur'ān*, Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2001.

⁸Muḥammad Asād, *The message of the Qur'ān: Translated and explained*, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Al-Qarḍāwī, Yūsuf, *ibid*, 13-16.

¹¹Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke. *Ibid*.

The word *ta'qilūn* which is mentioned 11 times in the *Qur'ān* comes after verses that present Allah's clear signs so that humans may think about those signs which are the Revelation in the Arabic language, Allah's creations and the history of human experiences to arrive at the truth with certainty:

So We said: Strike the (dead body) with part of the (Sacrificed cow), thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs so that you may understand.¹²

Thus doth Allah Make clear His Signs to you: In order that ye may understand.¹³

O ye who believe! Take not for intimates others than your own folk, who would spare no pains to ruin you; they love to hamper you. Hatred is revealed by (the utterance of) their mouths, but that which their breasts hide is greater. We have made plain for you the revelations if ye will understand.¹⁴

We have sent it down as an Arabic *Qur'ān*, in order that ye may understand.¹⁵

We sent not before thee (any messengers) save men whom We inspired from among the folk of the townships - Have they not traveled in the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? And verily the abode of the Hereafter, for those who ward off (evil), is best. Have ye then no sense?¹⁶

In addition to verses that motivate humans to think, the *Qur'ān* also contains verses that warn people who do not use their intellect.

¹²Qur'ān, 2:73

¹³Qur'ān, 2:242

¹⁴Qur'ān, 3:118

¹⁵Qur'ān, 12:2

¹⁶Qur'ān, 12:109

The phrase *lā ya'qilūn* mentioned in the *Qur'ān* means literally “they do not use their intellect,” but Asād interprets the phrase as “they do not use their reason”.¹⁷ Yūsuf ‘Āli interprets *lā ya'qilūn* as “people without understanding”, “they lack wisdom” and “those who understand not”.¹⁸ The negative *lā ya'qilūn* is to convey Allah’s abomination on those who do not use their intellect to think.¹⁹

The parable of those who reject faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries: Deaf, dumb, and blind, they have no sense.²⁰

For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb, those who understand not.²¹

And there are those of them who hear you, but can you make the deaf to hear though they will not understand.²²

Besides the verses that are directly related to the use of the intellect, there are hundreds of verses in the *Qur'ān* that mention other activities comparable to the major function of the intellect that is thinking.²³ Such activities are *tafakkur* (deep thinking or contemplating), *tadabbur* (pondering or careful examination), *naẓar* (theoretical or abstract thinking), *tabāshur* (insight), *tazakkur* (remembering), *tafaqquh* (comprehensive understand), *i'tibār* (to learn lesson from the history of human experiences in order not to repeat their mistakes), *ta'aqqul* (correct application of the mind) and *tawassum* (reflective thinking). What follows are some of the

¹⁷Muḥammad Asād, *The message of the Qur'ān: Translated and explained*, 54, 85, 336.

¹⁸Yūsuf Ali, Abdullah, *The holy Qur'ān: Text, translation and commentary*, Brentwood, Amana Corp, 1983.

¹⁹Al-Qarḏāwī, Yūsuf, *Al-'aql wa al-'ilm fi al-Qur'ān al-Karim*, 17-18.

²⁰Qur'ān, 2:171

²¹Qur'ān, 8:22

²²Qur'ān, 10:42

²³Al-Sharḩāwī, Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh, *al-Ṣuḩfiyyah wa al-'aql: Dirāsah al-tahlīliyah muqāranah li al-Ghazālī wa ibn Rushd wa ibn 'Arābī*, Bayrūt, Dār al-Jil, 1995, 54.

Quranic verses on thinking:

Say (O Muḥammad, to the disbelievers): I say not unto you (that) I possess the treasures of Allah, nor that I have knowledge of the Unseen; and I say not unto you: Lo! I am an angel. I follow only that which is inspired in me. Say: Are the blind man and the seer equal? Will ye not then think?²⁴

And had We willed We could have raised him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his own lust. Therefore his likeness is as the likeness of a dog: if thou attackest him he panteth with his tongue out, and if thou leavest him he panteth with his tongue out. Such is the likeness of the people who deny Our revelations. Narrate unto them the history (of the men of old), that haply they may think.²⁵

Will they then not ponder on the *Qur'ān*, or are there locks on their hearts?²⁶

Have they not considered the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and what things Allah has created, and that it may be that their own term draw nigh? In what fact after this will they believe?²⁷

Say (O Prophet): this is my way; resting upon conscious insight accessible to reason, I am calling you all unto God, I and they who follow me.²⁸

His people argued with him. He said: Dispute ye with me concerning Allah when He hath guided me? I fear

²⁴Qur'ān, 6:50

²⁵Qur'ān, 7:176

²⁶Qur'ān, 47:24

²⁷Qur'ān, 7:185

²⁸Qur'ān, 12:108

not at all that which ye set up beside Him unless my Lord willeth aught. My Lord includeth all things in His knowledge. Will ye not then remember?²⁹

Behold how many facets We give these Messages, so that they might understand the truth.³⁰

Behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see.³¹

Lo! Therein verily are signs for those who read signs.³²

Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allah's Sovereignty) for people who use their intellect.³³

Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (With the thought): "Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire."³⁴

It is He Who sendeth the winds like heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy: when they have carried

²⁹Qur'ān, 6:80

³⁰Qur'ān, 6:65

³¹Qur'ān, 3:13

³²Qur'ān, 15:75

³³Qur'ān, 2:164

³⁴Qur'ān, 3:191

the heavy-laden clouds, We drive them to a land that is dead, make rain to descend thereon, and produce every kind of harvest therewith: thus shall We raise up the dead: perchance ye may remember.³⁵

If it had been Our will, We should have elevated him with Our signs; but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires. His similitude is that of a dog: if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue, or if you leave him alone, he (still) lolls out his tongue. That is the similitude of those who reject Our signs; So relate the story; perchance they may reflect.³⁶

The likeness of the life of the present is as the rain which We send down from the skies: by its mingling arises the produce of the earth- which provides food for men and animals: (It grows) till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out (in beauty): the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it: There reaches it Our command by night or by day, and We make it like a harvest clean-mown, as if it had not flourished only the day before! thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who reflect.³⁷

We sent not before thee (any messengers) save men whom We inspired from among the folk of the townships - Have they not travelled in the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? And verily the abode of the Hereafter, for those who ward off (evil), is best. Have ye then no sense?³⁸

He causes to grow for you thereby herbage, and the olives, and the palm trees, and the grapes, and of all the

³⁵ Qur'ān, 7:57

³⁶ Qur'ān, 7:176

³⁷ Qur'ān, 10:24

³⁸ Qur'ān, 12:109

fruits; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect.³⁹

Is it not a guidance for them (to know) how many a generation We destroyed before them, amid whose dwellings they walk? Lo! therein verily are signs for men of thought.⁴⁰

Analysis of the Qur'ānic Verses

From the verses related to thinking that we have indentified, we conclude that it is important to understand how the *Qur'ān* exposes the capability of the organ of thinking, which is *al-'aql* (the Intellect). From the analysis of the relevant Qur'ānic verses, the concept of good thinking is posited.

The Intellect

The intellect is a vital spiritual (immaterial) organ that is capable of conceptualizing and retaining meaning which enables humans to attain knowledge necessary for the success of their life in the ephemeral and eternal world. It has the potential for conceptual thinking⁴¹ and the intellect is the highest faculty of humans, which makes their capable of contemplating the Greatness of God. As they are endowed with intellect, they are made to carry the burden of being vicegerents on earth and made accountable for their actions. Compared to animals, humans are weaker for they have significantly less physical strengths and abilities than animals but the intellect or:

... rational soul in man abounds in marvels, both in knowledge and power. By means of it he masters arts and sciences, can pass in a flash from earth to heaven and back again, can map out the skies and measure the distance between them... can draw the fish from the sea and birds from the air, and can subdue to his services

³⁹Qur'ān, 16:11

⁴⁰Qur'ān, 20:128

⁴¹Muḥammad Asād, *The message of the Qur'ān: Translated and explained*.

animals, like elephant, camel and horse.⁴²

The word ‘the intellect’ or ‘*aql*’ as a noun is not present in the *Qur’ān*, but its derivatives appear 49 times in the *Qur’ān* in the present tense form *ta’qilūn* (24 times), *ya’qilūn* (22 times), *na’qilu* and *ya’qilu*, and one in the past tense form which is ‘*aqala*’. The use of ‘*aql*’ in the verb form conveys the message that the *Qur’ān* emphasizes on practising theoretical knowledge.⁴³ Literally, the Arabic word ‘*aql*’ means binding or withholding (*al-Mawrid al-Wasīf* Concise Arabic-English Dictionary, 1996). Haeri explains that the Arabic word *al-‘aql* is:

... derived from the root ‘*aqala*’ which means to be endowed with reason, to possess intelligence, to comprehend, to understand. The intellect, in its highest sense, is a sublime power which receives the unveilings of pure light. In its lowest sense, it is the power of ordinary reasoning.⁴⁴

Al-Attas defines ‘*aql*’ as “an innate property that binds and withholds the objects of knowledge by means of words.”⁴⁵ From the ethical perspective, ‘*aql*’ means binding or withholding people from following their base desires. When angels ask, “Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed Blood?” (*al-Baqarah*: 30), Allah (swt) responded by saying that, “He has taught Adam the names of all things”. This may mean that the ‘*aql*’ that Allah (swt) has given to humans is capable not only of retaining and conceptualizing meaning, but also capable of ethical thinking or arriving at ethical knowledge which could prevent them from engaging in immoral activities such as killing and murder.

⁴² Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the Heart*, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic BookTrust, 2007 (transl. W.J. Skellie), 8.

⁴³ Badī, Jamal & Tajdīn, Mustapha, *Creative thinking: An Islamic perspective*, Kuala Lumpur, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2004.

⁴⁴ Haeri, Shaykh Fadhlalla, *The journey of the self*, London: Element Books Limited, 1989, 51.

⁴⁵ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*, Kuala Lumpur, ISTAC, 1980, 14.

Al-Sharqawī agrees that 'aql withholds people from venturing beyond the ethical boundary to prevent them from destruction.⁴⁶ Moreover, Crow asserts that the main constituent in the meaning of 'aql is ethical spiritual intelligence which is the prerequisite for the achievement of wisdom.⁴⁷

'Aql (hereafter, the intellect is used for 'aql) is the source and fountainhead of knowledge as well as its foundation. Al-Ghazālī beautifully describes the relationship between knowledge and the intellect as fruits that spring from trees, light from the sun, and vision from the eyes⁴⁸. According to al-Isfahanī, the intellect is not only capable of rational perception, but also capable of spiritual perception.⁴⁹

Functions of the Intellect

The intellect has the potential for understanding meaning of and attaining knowledge from the data fed into it through sense perception. The data perceived and gathered through the senses are transferred to the intellect where they are retained and stored in memory. Sense perception is like input devices of a computer through which data are loaded into the computer's memory ready to be processed by the computer's central processing unit. Data perceived by the senses are retained in the retentive imagination. The thinking process starts when the perceived sets of data are matched to the sets of related data stored in the memory in order to recognize them. This set of related data is called information. The thinking process involved in order to recognize information perceived by the senses is recalling that which does not necessarily involve understanding. Information is useless until it is put into context and processed by the thinking faculty. Knowledge is thus the result of interpreting and understanding a body of information. Understanding

⁴⁶Al-Sharqawī, Muḥammad 'Abdullāh, *al-Ṣufiyyah wa al-'aql: Dirāsah al-tahlīliyah muqāranaḥ li al-Ghazālī wa ibn Rushd wa ibn 'Arābī*, 56.

⁴⁷Crow, Karim Douglas, "Between wisdom and reason: Aspects of 'aql (Mind-Cognition) in early Islam," *Islamica*, 3(1), 1999, 49-64.

⁴⁸Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1980, 140.

⁴⁹Mohamed, Yāsin, "Al-Raghīb al-Isfahanī's classical concept of the intellect (al-'aql)," *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 13(1), 1995, 52-40.

meaning of and attaining knowledge from the information perceived by the senses require thinking.

Rational Perception

Rational perception is the act of knowing and understanding meaning which requires thinking. Thinking starts with recalling concepts followed by understanding them. Understanding meaning involves critical analysis of the data or concepts stored in memory to find out its relationship with other concepts so that its place in a hierarchical order of creations is clarified and understood — its place in a classification system, which is ordered from the particular to the general. To understand what is and its place in relation to other beings and existence is to understand its purposes. All these involve skills such as making judgment, differentiating, discriminating, clarifying, analyzing, evaluating, justifying and using language to express ideas and meaning.⁵⁰ The understood data or concepts are synthesized and arranged together in a logical and coherent manner to form new understanding and knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is the third item of knowledge obtained through the synthesis of two related items of prior knowledge; intellectual knowledge is not gained through blind imitation, but through judgment made by the intellect.⁵¹ Thinking at the rational level also involves generating and synthesizing ideas in order to ethically offer solutions to problems.

Rational perception is done by the lower intellect⁵² or *'aqlī juz'ī'*⁵³ which is the faculty of discursive, analytical and creative thought. This means that the lower intellect is capable of rational thinking which comprises logical, critical, creative and ethical thinking. The process of rational thinking is done in the mental plane;

⁵⁰Al-Attas, Syed Mohammad Naquib, *Islam and secularism*, Kuala Lumpur, Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995, 14.

⁵¹Al-Ghazālī, *The alchemy of happiness*, Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2007 (transl. C. Field), 11.

⁵²Henzell-Thomas, J, "Mythical meaning, religion and soulful education: Reviving the original sense of intellect," Paper presented at Reason of the Heart Conference, Edinburgh, 2004.

⁵³Amjad, Naumana, "Psyche in Islamic gnostic and philosophical tradition," Ansari Zafar Afaq (ed.), *Qur'ānic concept of human psyche*, Islamabad, International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992, 39-56.

therefore, the locus of the lower intellect is in the brain.⁵⁴ Rational thinking thus involves critical, creative and ethical thinking.

Spiritual Perception

Based on an understanding of the Qur'ānic verses that the natural phenomena and the *Qur'ān* are signs which point towards the existence of God, we posit a meaning of spiritual perception as the act of knowing or perceiving the universe as the evidential signs and indications of the existence and greatness of God and His Attributes. It is the realization that the multiplicity of creations, the universe and human experience are the signs and manifestation of the Oneness of God and His Attributes. Al-Isfahanī asserts that through observation and reflection of the signs, man realizes particular attributes of God.⁵⁵ Allah (swt) says in the *Qur'ān* that there are signs of His sovereignty in the universe, but those signs cannot be known and understood except by those who use their intellect.⁵⁶ A person has to go through three stages of the thinking process before he can perceive the spiritual messages in the universe. The first stage is the collection of data from the universe via sense perception. The second stage is the interpreting and understanding of the collected data through rational thinking in order to attain knowledge. At this stage, the data are observed, investigated and experimented with in order to describe and explain scientifically and in detail to understand their nature and the benefits and harm they may bring to humans, the environment and other creatures. This empirical study is an “indispensable stage in” attaining spiritual perception.⁵⁷ The end results of this thinking process are philosophical and scientific knowledge, theories, laws and their applications.

The third stage is the stage of spiritual insight. At this stage,

⁵⁴Henzell-Thomas, J, *ibid*; Mohamed, Yāsin, “Reason and revelation in Al-Raghib al-Isfahanī.” *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 16 (1), 1998, 41-50.

⁵⁵Mohamed, Yāsin, “Al-Raghib al-Isfahanī’s classical concept of the intellect (al-‘aql),” *ibid*, 52-40.

⁵⁶Qur’ān, 2: 164 ; 2:242 ; 2: 266; Qur’ān, 3: 118; 3:190; Qur’ān, 6: 126; Qur’ān, 7: 26;

Qur’ān, 20: 20; 20:21; 20:22; 20:23; 20:24; 20:25.

⁵⁷Iqbal, Muḥammad, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, Kuala Lumpur, Master Piece Publication, 2006, 14.

man realizes and perceives that in the knowledge of the universe and human experiences there are messages and evidence of the existence and greatness of Allah (swt). The bridge between rational and spiritual perception is asking philosophical questions such as what are the purposes of existence, how am I to live, and can there be life after death?. Reflective thinking on these questions establishes a link between rational and spiritual thought.⁵⁸ Spiritual perception results from understanding through reflection and contemplation of the realities of creations by questioning their metaphysical, epistemological and ethical assumptions which leads to inevitable conclusion that the object contemplated contains messages from Allah (swt) that He exists and is powerful beyond imagination to make the objects studied so intricately beautiful, perfectly serving their purposes, and are harmonious with the rest of creation. At this level of cognition, man also realizes his limitations and recognizes the need for God to attain happiness which allows him to acknowledge God through right actions. In other words, through spiritual thinking a person perceives and concludes that his self, the universe, and human experiences are signs which point towards God which cause him to recognize and acknowledge God's existence and His Attributes. At the point where one realizes all existences are signs which signify the existence of God and His Attributes, reflective thinking (*fīkr*) is converted into contemplation (*zīkr*).⁵⁹ Ibn Qayyim reports that Hasan al-Baṣrī said that knowledgeable people consistently do *zīkr* (remembrance of God) through *fīkr* (thinking). Ibn Qayyim asserts that *fīkr* and *zīkr* are seeds of knowledge.⁶⁰

In summary, spiritual perception is the result of spiritual thinking. Some of the skills involved in spiritual thinking are questioning, pondering, reflective thinking, remembering (*zīkr*) and contemplating. The end result of these processes of thinking (from sense perception to rational and to spiritual perception) is the

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Al-Edrus, Syed Muḥammad Dawilah, *Islamic epistemology: An introduction to the theory of knowledge in al-Qur'ān*, Pulau Pinang, The Islamic Academy Cambridge, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1992, 2.

⁶⁰Ibn Qayyim, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'ādah wa manshūr wilāyah ahl al-'ilm wa al-irādah*, Bayrūt, Dār ibn Ḥazm, 2010, vol. 1, 520.

realization and acknowledgment of the existence of God and His Attributes. This conclusion is derived from the Qur'ānic verses mentioned earlier. The whole process is illustrated in Figure 1.

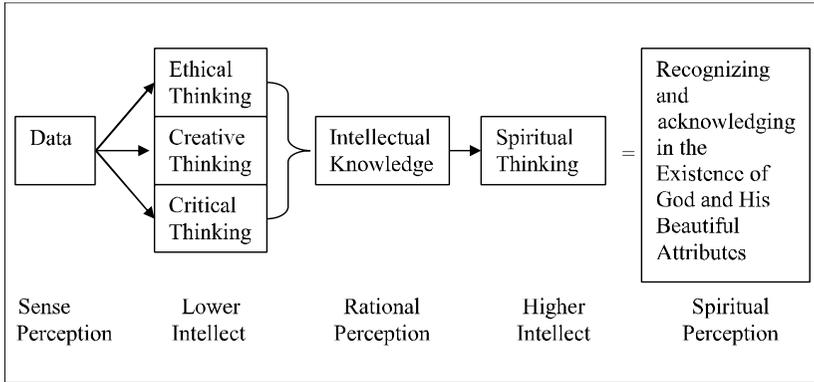


Figure 1 The Process of Rational and Spiritual Thinking by the Whole Intellect

The above Qur'ānic verses confirm that the intellect is capable of arriving at the Truth concerning the existence of God and some of His universal attributes. Mahmud argues that these Qur'ānic verses are among the evidence that the intellect is capable of arriving at the Truth by reflecting on Allah's creations because they are the indications of the existence of Allah (swt). He further claims that the inability to perceive the Truth is an indication of the weakness of the intellect).⁶¹ His view is shared by Lammens⁶² and Rodinson⁶³. After an analytical investigation of the *Qur'ān*, Lammens concludes that the *Qur'ān* is close to regarding "unbelief as an infirmity of the human mind"⁶⁴. In chapter Yūnus verse 100, Allah (swt) says, "It is not for any soul to believe saves by the permission of Allah, and it is He who hath set the evil of disbelief upon those who will not use

⁶¹Mahmud, Abdul Halim, *Islam dan akal* [al-Islam wa al-'aql], Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995 (transl. Mohd Fakhruddin Abd Mukti), 20.

⁶²Lang, Jeffrey, *Even angels ask*, Beltsville, Amana Publications, 1997, 21.

⁶³Rodinson, M, "The Western image and Western study of Islam," J. Schacht and C.E. Bosworth (eds.), *The legacy of Islam*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

⁶⁴Lang, Jeffrey, *ibid*, 25.

their intellect”. This verse is an assurance to man that he who uses his intellect to think well will have the belief in and guidance from Allah (swt).⁶⁵ From the Qur’ānic verses, we infer that those who do not perceive the universe and human experiences as signs of Allah (swt) are not using their intellect fully. A sign is supposed to direct man towards his destination, not to point towards itself. Man of intelligence and understanding read natural phenomena as signs which point towards the all Powerful, Merciful God, not towards themselves.⁶⁶ Furthermore, these verses also communicate that the universe is a great source of spiritual stimulation.

Spiritual insight is only possible through a higher intellect or ‘*aqlī-kullī*’.⁶⁷ Man has the potential to know spiritual truth, but only those who use both their lower and higher intellect will find Truth. Those who do not use their intelligence will receive grave punishment. The *Qur’ān* reports that in the hereafter, those in Hellfire regret not using their intellect; “Had we but listened or used our own reason (intellect), we would not be among the dwellers in the flames”.⁶⁸ From this verse, we can infer that there are two ways of knowing the Real Truth: first through instruction (listening) from people of authority in religious science (such as Prophets and religious teachers); second by using the intellect. The verses that we have presented in this paper verify that the human mind has the potential to perceive spiritual Truth through good thinking.

By means of the higher intellect also, man is capable of comprehending the highest source of knowledge, which is the Words of Allah (swt) revealed to man through the Prophets. Furthermore, the higher intellect is capable of intuition which is direct knowledge of Allah (swt) and direct understanding of wisdom. “This knowledge comes to some hearts through divine revelation (*ilhām*) by way of immediate disclosure (*mubāda’ah*) and unveiling (*mukāshafah*), and for some it is a thing to be learned and acquired”.⁶⁹ When a human’s

⁶⁵ Al-Qardāwī, Yūsuf, *Al-‘aql wa al-‘ilm fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 19.

⁶⁶ Izutsu, Toshihiko, *God and Man in the Qur’ān: Semantics of the Qurānic welstanschauung*, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2002.

⁶⁷ Amjad, Naumana, “Psyche in Islamic gnostic and philosophical tradition,” Ansari Zafar Afaq (ed.), *Qur’ānic concept of human psyche*, 39-56.

⁶⁸ Qur’ān, 67: 10.

⁶⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *The alchemy of happiness* [al-kimiya al-saadah], 25.

heart 67: 10. Receives the light from Allah (swt), it is capable of direct apprehension of realities written on the Preserved Tablet.⁷⁰

Al-Ghazālī describes two methods of using the intellect to perceive truth: (1) through scientific investigation to describe the phenomena of the universe combined with reflective thinking to understand the wisdom behind these phenomena; and (2) through cleansing of the heart-mind from spiritual diseases such as envy, hatred, arrogance, and so forth; and remembering Allah (swt), that is, linking spirituality to values and morality. He asserts that the first method is the way of scientists and philosophers and the second method is the way of the Prophets and *sufīs*.⁷¹

From the above discussion, we conclude that spiritual thinking is the process of reflecting and contemplating to understand the purpose of and wisdom underpinning the visible world and human experiences; and the remembrance of Allah (swt) and purification of the heart. From the analysis of the Qur'ānic verses, we also conclude that profundity and strength of contemplation can be achieved through the synthesis of the two methods mentioned by al-Ghazālī since the *Qur'ān* emphasizes on observing the seen universe in order to understand the unseen. Badri explains that the depth and intensity of contemplating the Greatness of Allah (swt) depends upon the contemplator's knowledge of the object contemplated.⁷² For example, those who have knowledge on astronomy certainly could reflect deeply with the feeling of awe when they look up at the sky. Some people may even reflect on abstract concepts such as the soul like al-Ghazālī who wrote a book on the "*Wonders of the Heart*" as a result of reflective thinking and intuition.⁷³ Therefore, both scientific investigations and philosophical knowledge help greatly in contemplating the universe in an effort to know with conviction the existence of Allah (swt) and His Attributes and to purify the heart. This also means that spiritual insight is the result of intellectual journey; for without intellectual knowledge of the universe and

⁷⁰Al-Ghazālī. (2007a). *Wonders of the heart*, 21.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Badri, Malik, *Contemplation: An Islamic psychospiritual study*, Kuala Lumpur, Medeena Books, 2000.

⁷³Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the heart*, 21.

human experience, spirituality is only superficial.⁷⁴

Thus, spiritual perception can be achieved by reflecting and pondering on the signs of Allah (swt) and human experiences in order to attain wisdom and direct knowledge through intuition and unveiling; and through which a human can also enhance his spiritual understanding and knowledge.⁷⁵ Thinking at both rational and spiritual levels is the movement from the known to the unknown.⁷⁶ This spiritual cognition is done in the inner layer of the soul which is the spiritual heart (*qalb*).⁷⁷ The locus of the higher intellect is the *qalb*. This means that the function of the heart is not only to pump blood to the entire body, but also as an organ of spiritual cognition.⁷⁸

However, Acikgenc argues that the spiritual heart is not an organ of spiritual cognition, that is the thinking itself is not done in the spiritual heart, but it is the internal perceptive faculty which receives information of the unseen world through revelation or unveiling and transmits the data to the intellect to be understood.⁷⁹ He infers to this particular meaning since the *Qur'ān* compares the spiritual heart to the external organs of sense perception which are the ears and eyes⁸⁰ (al-Baqarah: 7; al-A'rāf: 100-101; an-Nūr: 37). Therefore, he posits that there is a dynamic dialectical relationship between the spiritual heart and the intellect. His interpretation is approved by Musa al-Ash'arī.⁸¹ Further discussion on the locus of spiritual cognition and the relationship between the spiritual heart

⁷⁴Wahiduddin Khan, Maulana, *God Arises: Evidence of God in nature and in science*, New Delhi, Goodword Books, 2001.

⁷⁵Badri, Malik, *Contemplation: An Islamic psychospiritual study*; Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the heart*, 21.

⁷⁶Al-Ghazālī, *ibid*; Al-Ghazālī, *The alchemy of happiness*, 22-23.

⁷⁷Qur'ān, 7: 179.

⁷⁸*Ibid*; Mohamed, Yāsin, "Reason and revelation in Al-Raghīb al-Isfahānī.," *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 16(1), 41-50; Al-Attas, Syed Mohammad Naquib, *The nature of man and the psychology of the human soul*, Kuala Lumpur, Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1990.

⁷⁹Acikgenc, Alparslan, *Islamic science: Towards a definition*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996.

⁸⁰Qur'ān, 2: 7, Qur'ān, 7: 100-101, Qur'ān, an Nur 37.

⁸¹Musa al-Ash'arī, *Filsafat Islam: Sunnah Nabi dalam berpikir* (Islamic Philosophy: Prophetic Tradition in Thinking, Yogyakarta: Lembaga Studi Filsafat Islam (LESFI), 1999.

and the intellect is investigated elsewhere for it is beyond the scope of this study. For the purpose of the present paper, the emphasis is solely on the intellect in action, that is, on the thinking function of the intellect to achieve both rational and spiritual understanding.

From the analysis of the Qur'ānic verses and views presented by Muslim scholars, it can be concluded that the authentic functions of the intellect are not only confined to the ability of rational thinking to understand the universe and the Revelation, but also the ability of spiritual thinking and intuition to perceive and acknowledge the existence of God and His Beautiful Attributes as disclosed by Him by means of the Revelation and the universe⁸² (Lings, 2008; Haeri, 1989; al-Attas, 1990; Mohamed, 1998a; Henzel-Thomas, 2004; al-Ghazālī, 2007a, 2007b).

Theory of Good Thinking in Islam

From the above discussion, it is understood that the intellect has the potential of rational and spiritual perception. In order to perceive rationally, one has to first think rationally. One cannot perceive or understand data and information before thinking. For example, our vision reports that a spoon in a glass of water is bent, but our mind says that the spoon is straight. This is what scholars like al-Ghazālī and al-Isfahanī mean by referring to the intellect as light through which man can see or perceive data and information fed into it through the senses. Rational perception is the result of rational thinking which is explained by critical, creative and ethical thinking.

Similarly, spiritual perception or insight is the result of spiritual thinking. One could not see existence as signs of God if one does not use spiritual thinking even though the person has high mental intelligence. This means that to perceive spiritually, one has to think spiritually. Al-Ghazālī explains in his book *Wonders of the*

⁸²Lings, Martin, *What is Sufism?* Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2008; Haeri, Shaykh Fadhlalla, *The journey of the self*, London: Element Books Limited, 1989; Al-Attas, Syed Mohammad Naquib, *The nature of man and the psychology of the human soul*; Mohamed, Yasien, "Reason and revelation in Al-Raghib al-Isfahani," *Muslim Education Quarterly*: 41-50; Henzell-Thomas, J, Mythical meaning, religion and soulful education: Reviving the original sense of intellect; Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the heart*, 34.

Heart that even though a person may possess a bright and clear mind like a polished mirror, if the mirror is not put in front of an object, it will not reflect that object.⁸³ Therefore, spiritual perception can be achieved through spiritual thinking which is done through questioning, abstraction, contemplation, reflective thinking and *zikr* (remembrance of Allah (swt)).

Good thinking is the application of both rational and spiritual thinking; the application of critical, creative, ethical and spiritual thinking when making a decision to believe or to act. Therefore, it is multi-dimensional. All dimensions of good thinking must be applied in the process of solving problems or making decisions. The result of good thinking is wise judgment and the practice of that wise judgment produces wisdom. Before the theory of good thinking in Islam is presented, it is important to understand what wisdom is since it is the final aim of good thinking. The theory of good thinking in Islam is based on our own understanding of the interpretation of the *Qur'ān* through the method posited by al-Alwānī.⁸⁴

Wisdom

Wisdom is the conclusion of a good thinking process and also the ultimate aim of human development. In order to understand what wisdom is, we refer to the *Qur'ān* as the main source. The Arabic word for wisdom is *ḥikmah* which appears 20 times in 19 verses of the *Qur'ān*. Some commentators of the *Qur'ān* also interpret the word *ḥukmā* and *ḥakīm* as wisdom (refer to Table 1).

⁸³Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the heart*, 42.

⁸⁴Al-Alwānī, Ṭaha Jābir, "Taqlīd and stagnation of the Muslim mind," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 8(3), 1999, 513-524.

Table 1
Verses of the *Qur'ān* that Mention the Word *ḥikmah*

Word	Frequency	Chapters and Verses	Meaning
<i>ḥikmah</i>	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • al-Baqarah: 129, 151, 231, 251, 269 • 'Āli 'Imrān: 48, 81, 161 • al-Nisā': 54, 113 • al-Mā'idah: 110 • al-Nahl: 125 • Banī Isrā'īl: 39 • Luqmān: 12 • al-Aḥzab: 34 • Šād: 20 • al-Zukhrūf: 63 • al-Qamar: 5 • al-Jumu'ah: 2 	Wisdom (agreed by all Quranic interpreters who were referred to)
<i>ḥukmā</i>	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Āli 'Imrān: 79 • al-An'ām: 89 • Yūsuf: 22 • Maryam: 12 • al-Anbiyā': 74, 79 • al-Shu'arā': 21, 83 • al-Jathiyah: 16 	Wisdom (Yūsuf Ali, 1983; Pickthall, 2001) Sound judgment (Asād, 1980; al-Hilali & Khān, 1419 H)
<i>hakim</i>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yūnus: 1 • Luqmān: 2 • Yāsīn: 2 • al-Zukhrūf: 4 	Wisdom (Yūsuf Ali, 1983; Asād, 1980; al-Hilali & Khān, 1419 H) Wise (Pickthall, 2001)

Allah (swt) says in the *Qur'ān* that, “He granted wisdom to whom He pleases and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given great good and none, but men of understanding mind.”⁸⁵ Since Allah (swt) has promised that people who possess wisdom are given tremendous benefit, many have strived to identify wisdom in order to

⁸⁵Qur'ān, 2: 269.

attain it. *Hikmah* has been claimed synonymously to theology by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, jurisprudence by jurists, and philosophy by philosophers.⁸⁶ Etymologically, the word *ḥikmah* means, according to the Arabic-Malay *Dewan* Dictionary, intelligence, knowledge of understanding and intelligence, justice, and reason underpinning Islamic law and existence.⁸⁷ Ibn Manẓūr defines *ḥikmah* in *Lisān al-‘Arab* as “to know the best of things by way of the best of sciences. And the one who excels in the knowledge of the details of various things is referred to as one who is *ḥākīm*.”⁸⁸

In order to have a better understanding of the meaning of wisdom, we examine the following verses of the *Qur’ān*:

Even as We have sent unto you an Apostle from among yourselves to convey unto you Our communications and to cause you to grow in purity, and to impart to you *the Book and the wisdom* and teaches you that which you did not know: so remember Me, and I shall remember you, and be grateful to Me, and deny me not.⁸⁹

And do not take Allah's communications for a mockery, and remember the blessing with which Allah has graced you, and that which He has revealed to you of *the Book and the wisdom*, which He has bestowed on you from on high in order to admonish you thereby; and remain conscious of Allah, and know that Allah is the Knower of all things.⁹⁰

And He will impart thy son *the Book and the wisdom* and the *Tawrat* and the *Injil* and will make him an

⁸⁶Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2006, 23.

⁸⁷Osman Khalid, *Kamus besar Arab-Melayu Dewan (Dewan Comprehensive Arabic-Malay Dictionary)*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2006, 32.

⁸⁸Al-‘Umar, Nāṣir Sulaymān., *Al-ḥikmah*, Jakarta, 1995, (trans. Amir Hamzah Fachruddin), 19.

⁸⁹Qur’ān, 2:151.

⁹⁰Qur’ān, 2:231.

apostle unto the children of Israel.⁹¹

It is not conceivable that a human unto whom Allah has granted *the Book and the wisdom and prophethood*, should thereafter have said unto people: “Worship me besides God”, but rather (he would say): Become men of God by spreading the knowledge of the divine writ, and by your own deep study [thereof].⁹²

And lo, God accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge [from the follower of the earlier revelation]: “If after all the *Book and wisdom* which I have vouchsafed unto you, there comes unto an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must believe him and succor him. Do you” – Said He – “acknowledge and accept my bond on this condition?” They answered: “We do acknowledge it”. Said He: “Then bear witness [thereto], and I shall be your witness”.⁹³

Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace? But indeed We have given to Ibrahim's children *the Book and the wisdom*, and We have given them a grand kingdom.⁹⁴

And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy a party of them had certainly designed to bring you to perdition and they do not bring (aught) to perdition but their own souls, and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you *the Book and the wisdom*, and He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah's grace on you is very great.⁹⁵

⁹¹Qur'ān, 3:48.

⁹²Qur'ān, 3:79.

⁹³Qur'ān, 3:81.

⁹⁴Qur'ān, 4:54.

⁹⁵Qur'ān, 4:113.

It was to them that We gave *the book and the wisdom and the prophethood*. And now although the unbelievers may choose to deny this truth, [know that] We have entrusted them to people who will never refuse to acknowledge them.⁹⁶

And when he had attained his maturity, We gave him *wisdom and knowledge*: and thus do We reward those who do good.⁹⁷

And (as for) Lot, We gave him *wisdom and knowledge*, and We delivered him from the town which wrought abominations; surely they were an evil people, transgressors.⁹⁸

So We made Sulayman to understand it; and to each one We gave *wisdom and knowledge*; and We made the mountains, and the birds to celebrate Our praise with Dawud; and We were the doers⁹⁹

And certainly We gave *wisdom* to Luqmān, saying: Be grateful to Allah. And whoever is grateful, he is only grateful for his own soul; and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, Praised.¹⁰⁰

I swear by the Qur'ān full of wisdom.¹⁰¹

And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom.¹⁰² (al-Zukhrūf: 4).

From the analysis of the above verses, we conclude that

⁹⁶Qur'ān, 6:89.

⁹⁷Qur'ān, 12:22.

⁹⁸Qur'ān, 21:74 .

⁹⁹Qur'ān, 21:79.

¹⁰⁰Qur'ān, 31:12.

¹⁰¹Qur'ān, 36:2.

¹⁰²Qur'ān, 43:4.

wisdom is a type of knowledge. This type of knowledge can be found in the *Qur'ān* which is full of wisdom (Yāsīn: 2; Yūnus: 1; al-Zukhrūf: 4) and in the personality characteristics of the Prophets and Luqmān.¹⁰³ However, wisdom is not synonymous with knowledge for the word 'and' in Surah Yūsuf verse 22 and Surah al-Anbiyā' verses 74 and 79 indicates that wisdom is distinct from knowledge. According to Miskawayh, wisdom is "knowledge of things divine and human" which influences the person who possesses this knowledge to understand what he should or should not do, which in turn affects him to act in conformity with that knowledge.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, wisdom is more than knowledge; it is knowledge followed by action. Similarly, al-Attas defines wisdom as God given knowledge "by which the recipient is able to effect correct judgments as to the proper places of things"¹⁰⁵ such that he recognizes and acknowledges his station in the hierarchical order of existence and Being.

However, this knowledge about wisdom is not accessible except to those who have sound judgment. Sound judgment is given by God to Prophets and chosen people such as Luqmān.¹⁰⁶ Sound judgment can be a quality of a person and also a result of a thinking process. A person who is highly intelligent (possesses sound judgment) uses his intelligence to think hard and deep about something and the result is sound conclusion or argument (which can also be called sound judgment). Therefore, sound judgment can be both a means and an end. Miskawayh argues that "the preparation for the acquisition of wisdom is intelligence, retention, rationality, quickness and soundness of understanding, clarity of mind, and capacity for learning easily".¹⁰⁷ This means that by virtue of having a rational and a discerning soul (sound judgment), a person is able to make sound judgments. Miskawayh's stand is supported by al-Ghazālī who asserts that wisdom is the cognitive ability of a

¹⁰³ Qur'ān, 36: 2; Qur'ān, 10: 1; Qur'ān, 43:4.

¹⁰⁴ Miskawayh, *The refinement of character*, Bayrūt, The American University of Beirut, 1968 (trans. C. K. Zurayk), 16.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Attas, Syed Muḥammad Naquib, *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Qur'ān, 3:79; Qur'ān, 6: 89; Qur'ān, 31:12.

¹⁰⁷ Miskawayh, *ibid*, 17.

person.¹⁰⁸ A wise person is a person who can make careful and sound judgments, has excellent discernment, penetration of ideas and has sound opinions.

We have stated earlier that wisdom is knowledge followed by action in conformity with that knowledge. This means that a person who practises certain knowledge over time will become habituated in that knowledge, that is, that knowledge is now his personality characteristics. This means that wisdom can also be interpreted as a quality of a person which is epitomized in the personality of Prophets and some chosen people. In conclusion, wisdom is a combination of cognitive ability, knowledge and personality characteristics (personality characteristic is an indication that knowledge is being practiced). Table 2 shows various meanings of wisdom posited by scholars.

Table 2
Various Meanings of Wisdom

Author	Book Title	Meaning of Wisdom
al-Asma'i (1901)	<i>al-Sihah</i>	“One who is <i>muḥakkam</i> is an old man with experience, and such a person has <i>ḥikmah</i> ascribed to him”.
Ibn Manẓūr (1988)	<i>Tāj al-'Arus</i>	“ <i>Ḥikmah</i> is justice in judging, and it is knowledge of the reality of things according to how they really are, and it has also been described as the established strength of knowledge-based logic. It has also been defined as reaching the truth with knowledge and action ... and when it is said ' <i>aḥkāmahu</i> ,' this means that one has been prevented from committing evil”.
Al-Fayyūmī (1926)	<i>al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr</i>	“A <i>ḥikmah</i> is a silver saddle that weighs down a riding beast, and it is called this because it humbles the animal for the one who will ride it, preventing it from going wild, etc.”.

¹⁰⁸ Sherif, Moḥamed Ahmed, *Al-Ghazali's theory of virtue*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1975, 11.

<p>‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa’dī (1999)</p>	<p><i>Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān</i></p>	<p>“<i>Ḥikmah</i> consists of the beneficial sciences, knowledge of correct facts, firm logic, composed spirit, and being accurate in speech and action. And all of these affairs are not rectified except by <i>ḥikmah</i>, which is to put things in their proper places, assigning them to their proper status, being forthcoming when it is appropriate to do so, and refraining when it is proper to do so”.</p>
<p>Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (2000)</p>	<p><i>Tafsīr ar-Rāzī</i></p>	<p>“What is meant by <i>ḥikmah</i> is either knowledge or doing that which is correct”.</p>
<p>Ibn ‘Āshūr (1984)</p>	<p><i>al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr</i></p>	<p>“<i>Ḥikmah</i> has been explained as knowing things for what they really are, as much as is possible. In other words, it is such that one is not confused by various doubtful possibilities mixed together, and is not mistaken as to why certain things have occurred”.</p>
<p>Sayyid Quṭb (1994)</p>	<p><i>Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān</i></p>	<p>“It is accuracy and justice, and realization of reasons and goals, and lightened insight that guides one to that which is correct and accurate in his movements and actions”.</p>
<p>Ibn Ḥajar (1993)</p>	<p><i>Fath al-Bārī</i></p>	<p>“With regards to the <i>ḥadīth</i> of Ibn ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah said: “O Allah! Teach him the <i>ḥikmah</i>!” “And there is a difference of opinion with regards to the meaning of <i>ḥikmah</i> here. So, it was said that it is: correctness in speech; understanding of Allah; that whose correctness is confirmed by logic; the light that distinguishes between inspiration and devilish whispers; quickness in answering correctly; and some of them explained <i>ḥikmah</i> here to mean the <i>Qur’ān</i>”.</p>

<p>Ibn al-Qayyim (1998)</p>	<p><i>Madārīj as-Sālikīn</i></p>	<p>“<i>Hikmah</i> is of two types: that which is related to knowledge and that which is related to action. So, that which is related to knowledge is to realize the essence of things, and to understand the connection between cause and effect – in regards to the Creation, occurrence of events, fate, and legislation. As for the action-based <i>hikmah</i>, it is to put things in their proper places”.</p>
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Adapted from a book titled ‘*al- hikmah*’ by Nasir bin Sulaiman al-‘Umar (1995).

When we analyze the definitions of wisdom presented by these scholars, we conclude that they also agree that wisdom is attained when one practises knowledge which is the result of using sound judgment to think well. Sound judgment is the intellect at its highest potential. The intellect at its highest potential is the intellect which perceives rationally and spiritually. In order to have rational and spiritual perception, the intellect has to think critically, creatively, ethically and spiritually. Therefore, we posit that good thinking is multi-dimensional which consists of critical, creative, ethical and spiritual thinking.

Model of Good Thinking

Good thinking is the use of critical, creative, ethical and spiritual thinking to arrive at sound judgment, which is intellectual knowledge – not mere blind imitation, which is acted upon in order to get wisdom. The theory of good thinking is summarized in Figure 2 below.

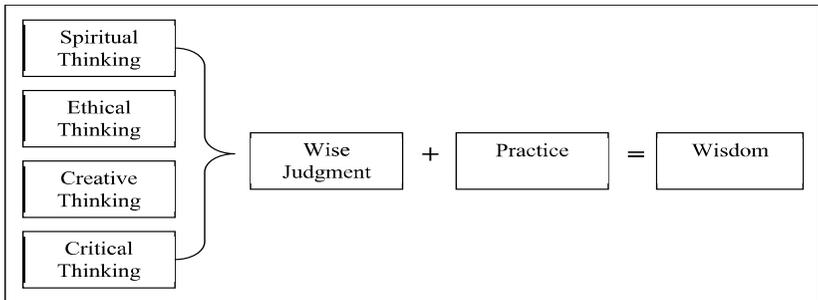


Figure 2 Theory of Good Thinking in Islam

Wisdom cannot be achieved if any of the dimensions of good thinking is left out in the process of making decision. If ethical thinking is not applied in problem-solving and decision-making processes, the results could be intelligent and creative solutions which may destroy the world. History informs us that some evil people were very intelligent and creative. They used their thinking ability to obliterate the world. Even though ethical thinking is applied together with critical and creative thinking when making decisions, it still cannot produce wise judgment for it is only concerned with the relationship between man and man, and man and the universe while ignoring the relationship between man and God.

Besides, what is ethical in a certain society may not be ethical in a different society. Even in a single society there can be conflicting and competing values. Therefore, it is hard to define what common good is for all involved. Absolute value from divine sources is thus needed. That is why spiritual thinking is essential in the process of making decisions and solving problems. Spiritual thinking takes into account the relationship between man and God. A person cannot be spiritual without intelligent and imaginative thinking, for spirituality is an intellectual journey.¹⁰⁹ It requires a person to examine and scrutinize signs of God in the physical world before he can appreciate the Omnipotent Being of the metaphysical world. One can be ethical, creative and intelligent, but one may not be spiritual for spirituality requires recognition and acknowledgement of God. One also cannot be creative, critical and spiritual without being ethical for spirituality requires the practice of ethics. This means that a spiritual person is a person who is intelligent, creative and ethical.

To better understand the significance of using all dimensions of good thinking, let us consider the following example. If one reads the *Qur'ān* with critical and creative thinking only, one may doubt or question the true value of the *Qur'ān*. Instead of finding God in the reading of the *Qur'ān*, one finds the genius of Muhammad (saw) and glorified Prophet Muhammad (saw) without acknowledging God. The book entitled “*100 Muslim Terkemuka*” (*100 Famous Muslims*)

¹⁰⁹Wahiduddīn Khan, Maulana, *God Arises: Evidence of God in nature and in science*, 10.

by Jamil Ahmad illustrates Prophet Muhammad (saw) as a genius yet downplays any involvement of God.¹¹⁰ There are those who read the *Qur'ān* only to find fault in it and to discredit the *Qur'ān* as Words of God. Even Muslims who read the *Qur'ān* using only creative and critical thinking may posit interpretations of the *Qur'ān* which are very creative and unconventional.

Some Muslims read the *Qur'ān* without spiritual thinking. They study the *Qur'ān* for academic purposes and for the purpose of defending their position to win a debate or as a polemic ... since they know that Muslims will never doubt the true value of the *Qur'ān*. They may be trustworthy in reporting the truth about the *Qur'ān* and even though they may be respectful of the *Qur'ān*, they do not see it as a sign of God which speaks to them directly so that they may understand and use the *Qur'ān* as guidance for their life. That is why we see so many well-educated Muslims in religious sciences, but their “lived reality”¹¹¹ is in stark contrast to Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, some non-Muslims read the *Qur'ān* for the purpose of getting knowledge and even practising some of its teachings, but never perceive God during the reading.

There are many authors who study and write about Islam. They are very ethical in reporting their findings truthfully. They have helped many people to embrace Islam, but they themselves never acknowledge Islam. They are like diamond miners who work hard to find diamonds. After finding loads of beautiful diamonds, they lay the diamonds down to be picked up by others. They only search for the diamonds for the purpose of finding them, not to get benefit from them. Similarly, there are Muslims who graduated in Islamic and Qur'ānic studies with excellent results, but their knowledge is never manifested in their actions. These researchers learn about Islam just for the purpose of describing it, not to practise it. If this is the case, then they will never get wisdom since wisdom requires practice. In order to get wisdom, it is necessary to think by using all dimensions of good thinking.

¹¹⁰Jamil Ahmad, *100 Muslim terkemuka* (100 famous Muslim), Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2000.

¹¹¹Kazmi, Yedullah, The role of critical thinking in Islam. *Hamdard Islamicus*, 23 (1), 2000, 25-36.

Hence, to arrive at the correct understanding of the *Qur'ān*, readers of the *Qur'ān* must use all dimensions of good thinking. The inclusion of spiritual thinking makes one perceive spiritual messages in the *Qur'ān* and in the universe in the form of the natural world and human experiences. Al-Ghazālī says that one cannot perceive spiritual messages if one does not think spiritually.¹¹² Embedded in spiritual insight is the practice of knowledge gained in the process of thinking. A person who perceives spiritually is the person who not only knows but practises. This means that people who use spiritual thinking practise the knowledge gained. This conclusion is based on our understanding of the Qur'ānic verse 10 in Surah al-Mulk which means “Had we but *listened or used our own reason (intellect)*, we would not be among the dwellers in the flames.” It is not that the dwellers in the flames were deaf; they actually listened with their physical ears, but they did not acknowledge what they have heard. Ibn Qayyim elaborates that these people were not deaf for they heard the teaching of Islam, but they refused to acknowledge and instead rejected the teaching of Islam because of hatred and various other reasons.¹¹³ Thus, they have not listened for listening requires acknowledgment. Similarly, embedded in the meaning of using the intellect is practice. Ibn Qayyim states that people who do not use their intellect are the people who refuse to practise their knowledge.¹¹⁴ Thus, a person who uses his intellect is a person who practises his knowledge. Wisdom can only be achieved if spiritual thinking is applied in the thinking process.

In conclusion, good thinking is an essential tool to transform data and information into knowledge which affects the recipient of that knowledge to act in accordance with it, which in turn produces wisdom. This means that wisdom is the purpose of knowledge. The process of good thinking is the process of arranging, synthesizing and associating data and information into meaningful knowledge that is practised to produce wisdom. The process of good thinking is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

¹¹²Al-Ghazālī, *Wonders of the heart*, 164.

¹¹³Ibn Qayyim, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'ādah wa manshūr wilāyah ahl al-'ilm wa al-irādah*, 223.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 222.

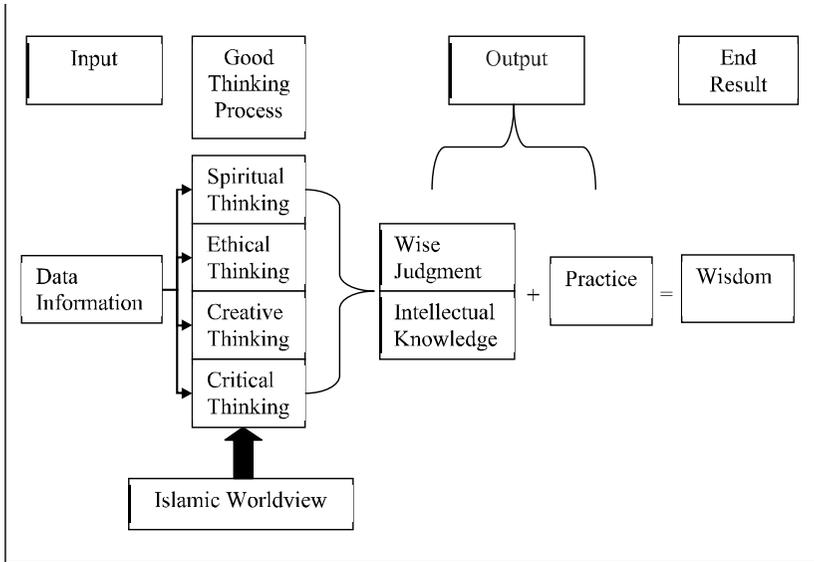


Figure 3 The Processing of Data and Information via Good Thinking to Produce Wisdom

Conclusion

There can be no miracle greater than the Qur’ān. What more miracle or documentary proof greater than that is required by knowledgeable man to know Allah, the Sole Creator, who has bestowed man with conscience so that he can choose between right and wrong and create him as an intelligent and responsible living person with the sense of thinking? By analysing and linking the metaphysics of the Qur’ān and the physical universe, man feels the absolute certainty of the existence of the Creator Allah.

The facts and similarities show the portents and tokens of Allah and prove His act of creation and His existence. The similarity of the sense and substance of the Qur’ān with the recent discovered and the established facts of science clearly indicates that there is a definite and absolute link between the Qur’ān and the realities of the physical creations discovered by man through the knowledge of sciences via thinking. The faith in Islam is connected with transcendent intelligence, that is good thinking with the use of

critical, creative, ethical and spiritual thinking which implies that not only should our thinking be correct on purely religious questions, but on the whole gamut of human life as well.