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Preface

Our world is covered by uncertainty almost in all aspects. Climate change, deforestation, drained natural sources, economic unprecedented revolution, social injustice and discrimination, global poverty, poor health and pandemic issue, conflicts and wars. Such issues has directly and indirect influenced not only business opportunity, but also human life as whole.

In one side, industrialization has brought about tremendous economic growth as it successfully lowered global poverty. But in another side, economic development seems to be a curse for environment. Deforestation for instance, has caused haze, climate change and even put a lot of extinct flora and fauna in threat.

Industrialization has left significant natural damage. Since its beginning, Information Technology quickly creates and eliminates professions and re-shapes business patterns from villages to foreign countries. Some countries gain profits from innovation, while others lag far behind due to prolonged conflict and are unable to anticipate change.

Why in only a short period of time, natural resources are almost drained, while it obviously always met our ancestor's need? If development is the reason, then what kind of development that cause massive damage? Trillions

of dollars are generated every year by global businesses, but why is the face of modern civilization still characterized by poverty? What's wrong with human who live in the so called modern time?

To find the truth, humans must re-code education. Does it work as a main element, as Plato described, to form a just society? Has it successfully nurtured the imprinted knowledge, virtue and piety, as Comenius explained? Is it useful enough to meet the challenges faced by humanity, as Al Farabi argued? After all, has education lifted humans out of individualism and materialism, As Ki Hadjar Dewantara taught?

“If a man is to be produced, it is necessary that he be formed by education”.

- John Amos Comenius

“Education is not to put knowledge into the soul, but to put the right desires into the soul—to fill the soul with a lust for truth, so that it desires to move past the visible world, into the intelligible, ultimately to the Form of the Good”.

- Plato

“Education generally bears the meaning of the effort to advance the growth of character, mind, and the child's body. In the sense that Taman Siswa must not separate these parts, so as they can improve the perfection of their life in harmony with their world. The three elements, namely attitude, mind, and body cannot be separated because each is connected. It is called “character building” as the first task in defining education. The thing that must be prioritized in education”.

- Ki Hadjar Dewantara

“The purpose of knowledge is to apply it. The highest stage lies in its being transformed into action, ‘Whatever by its nature should be known and practiced, its perfection lies in it actually being practiced’.

- Abu Nashr Al Farabi

What is wisdom? Why it matters? What are its significance in the Holy Quran? What do the Fathers of Education talk about wisdom? This book is written to answer those questions as the start of further discussion with the readers.

Section 1 Wisdom at Glance

- The Nature of Wisdom
- The Foundation of Wisdom
- The Characteristic of Wise Person
- Wisdom in Islam



Image: Beautiful Nature by Boris Goldstein, link source:

<https://www.deviantart.com/borisgoldstein/art/Boris-Goldstein-Beautiful-Nature-564759064>

If anyone applies his mind to the study of wisdom he will find no end; for the more a man knows, the more he realizes his ignorance. Rightly did Solomon say that the eye could not grow tired of seeing or the ear of hearing.

- The Great Didacta

Plato began his greatest work 'the Republic' by elaborating the nature of justice through dialogue between Socrates and his companions. The ideal society, he believed, should be laid on justice. And justice requires harmonious cooperation between members of society. At glance, the 4th BC work seems to inspire dystopian science fiction entitled the Divergent, produced in 2014.

The movie described a futuristic city of dystopian Chicago, where the society is divided into five factions: Abnegation (the selfless), Amity (the peaceful), Candor (the honest), Dauntless (the brave), and Erudite (the intellectual). When children reach the age of 16, they undergo a serum-induced psychological aptitude test which indicates their best-suited faction, though they are allowed to choose any faction as their permanent group at the subsequent Choosing Ceremony. Such tradition is created to create stability so as human race can be defended.

As summarized by sparknotes.com, an ideal society, depicted in the Republic, consists of three main classes of people -producers (craftsmen, farmers, artisans, etc.), auxiliaries (warriors), and guardians (rulers); a society is just when relations between these three classes are right. Each group must perform its appropriate function, and only that function, and each must be in the right position of

power in relation to the others. Rulers must rule, auxiliaries must uphold rulers' convictions, and producers must limit themselves to exercising whatever skills nature granted them (farming, blacksmithing, painting, etc.) Justice, according to Plato is a principle of specialization: a principle that requires that each person fulfill the societal role to which nature fitted him and not interfere in any other business.

We may argue not to accept such social caste literally, but Plato's thought on human souls which manifest in such division cannot be denied. As a complex whole, human soul as cited by Aristotle's teacher has three parts: appetite (wealth-loving or gain loving element), spirit (honor seeking element) and philosophic (highest form of the soul: truth embracing). In our daily life, each dominant character has suitable post in society, as mentioned earlier. Imagine we have a wealth-seeking law enforcers, right or wrong won't matter again when money talks. Imagine we have honor seeking leader who can brutally bulldoze someone he regarded trammeling his ambition. The reason is quite obvious why the king should be a philosopher, someone who is embracing wisdom to dedicate his/her life for truth.

The Nature of Wisdom¹

Wisdom is defined as a situation or an attribute that is made through the distinction between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, coupled with a fair judgment and insight, wisdom is the ability to learn and to pronounce wise words and to act accordingly.

Wisdom also expresses knowledge acquired by the individuals due to the experiences and experiments they have passed. It is possible to distinguish between intelligence and wisdom, in that intelligence expresses knowledge of the thing, but wisdom expresses the ability to judge whether the object is acceptable for good reason or not. The nature of intelligence is further discussed in Al Farabi's section.

In addition to that, wisdom uses intelligence, experience and knowledge to achieve good, thereby achieving a balance between the self and personal relationships and adapting to the surrounding environment, in addition to achieving personal interests that do not cause harm to others and to identify and engage in new environments.

¹ This section is adapted, translated and elaborated from its original article in Arabic entitled "*Maa ma'na el hikma?*" written by Basma Kamal Otaebi. Des. 2017

The Foundations of Wisdom

Wisdom is characterized by a mixture of knowledge, experience, and deep understanding of tolerance and balance. In response to the random possibilities, tendency and doubts in life, wisdom is characterized by being comprehensive of all human experiences that have been identified since ancient times, but despite this not all experiences are granting wisdom, because wisdom is the result of all the cognitive, emotional, social, and scientific processes (in one's self) that contribute to and enhance the process of transforming experience into wisdom itself. As we understand that the word does not mean, but we mean it.

The Characteristics of Wise Person

A wise person has several excellent characteristics that distinguish him from his peers, which may not be visible to people, but they appear through his actions, interactions and special thoughts, where the wise person is characterized by his ability to be optimistic about life, his ability to solve the problems, his ability to uphold justice and possesses a great deal of calm especially in passing through difficult and crucial situation, and having the ability to see the big picture of things, and thus the ability

to explain what is going on around it through deep contemplation.

Wisdom in Islam²

Wisdom has a great position in Islam. It is paired with the revealed books, in numerous places in Holy Quran, as we find it in Surah Ali Imran verse 48, "And He will teach him writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel".

Every single words and deeds, if they are driven by the wisdom, have a value and regarded as alms in broader sense, and if they are far from wisdom, they deserve vilification and are described as frivolity, indiscretion and foolishness; Therefore, we find the old and the young, the man and the woman, the ruler and the ruled attribute himself to it, and rejoices most joy if it is described as wise in his words and actions.

Wisdom springs from the intellect and understanding (fiqh) of God's religion. It blossoms from deep mastery of knowledge and work that all matters are only valid with

² This section is adapted, translated and elaborated from its original article in Arabic entitled "*E Hikma?*" written by Dr Saeed Abdel Azeem. Aug, 2005.

wisdom, which is to place things in their places and to return matters where they belong to properly, and to proceed or avoid things based on situation and conditions.

Wisdom does not require prophecy, but rather more general than it, and it is the highest prophecy and message. We should learn from Noah, Moses, Abraham, Jesus, Muhammad peace be upon them all and other prophet's biography as the inspiring model of wisdom. Every passage of prophet's life guides mankind to the light of wisdom.

The Almighty said: "He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding." [The Cow: 269].

It highlights our earlier discussion that wisdom does not give birth by itself as our experience won't teach us if we do not take lessons contained therein. Word does not mean, we mean it.

The fact that existing natural resources in our planet is going to be drained within few decades will be significant consideration only if business owners and policy makers embracing wisdom in every decision they make.

Allah said in surah Luqman: 12 "we bestowed (in the past) Wisdom on Luqman: "Show (thy) gratitude to Allah." Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul: but if any is ungrateful, verily Allah is free of all wants, Worthy of all praise."

Wisdom is believed to be source of happiness. Because those who dew themself by wisdom will keep them away from evil and sorrow. It is said that someone who knows Allah and is able to eliminate suspicion away from his/her heart, will say that everything happens with wisdom. So wisdom is reflected by gratefulness.

And it is said in the context of gratitude to Joseph, peace be upon him: (And when he had attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge: and thus do We reward those who do good.) [Joseph: 22].

If we bear the sufferings just like what experienced by Joseph when he was thrown into a well by his brothers, we might take revenge, even more so when we hold power. But Joseph peace be upon him, did not only forgive them, instead he give them present and ask them to come again and bring along the beloved father to him. Joseph has attained maturity, enlightened by knowledge and has shown wisdom in his words and deeds.

He said in the description of David, peace be upon him: (So they routed them by Allah's leave and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of that which He willeth. And if Allah had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is a Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures.) [The Cow: 251].

Kingdom, to illustrate power and authority, and wisdom are an ideal couple to create peaceful and prosperous society. As Plato provokes that 'king must be a philosopher' meaning that leader should be someone who has a great appetite for truth, someone who leads by knowledge and justice. Prophet David peace be upon him was granted God's blessing to possess both kingdom and wisdom and passed down the same quality to his son Prophet Solomon, peace be upon him.

The Holy Qur'an, with its pearls of miracles, wonders of secrets and every single part therein, is all about wisdom. The Almighty said: (Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.) [The Bee: 125].

Wisdom may come in the sense of prophecy and the message: (And He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel) [the Family of Imran: 48], (We strengthened his kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgment in speech and decision.) [Shad: 20]. Thus, we can understand wisdom in broader sense.

Narrated by Bukhari that Ibn Abbas has said: The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, lean me in his chest and said: "Oh God, teach him wisdom". Ibn Hajar said: people differed on understanding wisdom here. It was said: The correct words in sayings. It was said: Understanding about the God' law. It was said: the intellectual capacity. It was said: A light that distinguishes between inspiration and obsession. It was said: The correct and quick answer. And some of them interpreted wisdom as the Holy Quran itself.

The Prophet, peace be upon him said, "Envy is permitted only in two cases: A man whom Allah gives wealth, and he disposes of it rightfully, and a man to whom Allah gives wisdom (knowledge) which he applies and teaches it."

Narrated by Al Bukhari, on authority of Ubay Bin Kaab that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said: "There is wisdom within (part of) poetry". In other words, there are

part of poetry containing true statement in conformity with the truth. In the hadith: “Faith is a right, and wisdom is a right.” [Bukhari and Muslim].

Two Kinds of Wisdom

Ibn al-Qayyim said: Wisdom has two kinds: theoretical and practical wisdom. the theoretical one covers in-depth knowledge to the interior of things, and capacity to understand the association of causes and effects, as the matter of nature and legal consequences, and the practical wisdom - as cited by Abu Ismail Al Huri in his renowned *Al Manazel* - is to put the thing into its proper place. He said: It is on three levels: The first level is to give everything its right, and not to violate its limit, nor to rush it from its time, and not delay it. We find it also in the first book of Plato's the *Republic* upon the meaning of justice that symbolized simply by paying the debt on time, justice is honesty. Unity in word and deeds.

The second level: to witness God's consideration upon his promise, know His justice upon his judgment, and notice His righteousness in preventing things from others. Ruler and those who grasps authority should at least attain this level, otherwise he or she might be a tyrant.

The third level of wisdom is to attain in your reasoning acuity, in your guidance the truth, and in your instructions the purpose. Wisdom avoids someone from futility and wastefulness, as narrated by Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, "Part of someone's being a good Muslim, is his leaving alone that which does not concern him".

Then a misunderstanding of the meanings of wisdom excessively and negligently may lead some to appease the unjust and the loss of the right and silence on falsehood in the name of wisdom. On the other hand, some positions and actions were characterized by recklessness and impulsivity, such as assassinations and engaging in confrontations or burning places of criminality, and such actions took place usually triggered by distrusts toward law enforcer.

Barriers into Wisdom

Desire and impartiality (injustice Behavior) are among the greatest barrier into wisdom. The Almighty said: ((And it was said unto him): O David! Lo! We have set thee as a viceroy in the earth; therefor judge aright between mankind, and follow not desire that it beguile thee from the way of Allah. Lo! Those who wander from the way of Allah have an awful doom, forasmuch as they forgot the Day of

Reckoning.) [Shad: 26]. (And if the Truth had followed their desires, verily the heavens and the earth and whosoever is therein had been corrupted. Nay, We have brought them their Reminder, but from their Reminder they now turn away.) [The Believers: 71].

And in the hadith: “If you see greediness obeyed, carnality followed, and the admiration of everyone who has an opinion, then you must keep yourself away (from public affairs)” [Narrated by Ibn Majah]. As lust, or carnality makes us blind and deaf, ulemas said.

Truth is not attained by commonality or even global consensus. People may argue to legalize same-sex marriage by the name of human right, but the truth is that kind of behavior can bring about disease and social disorder, even human race will come to an end if it becomes common practice for we never see pregnant man.

From religious perspective, marriage is a holy ties that last not only here in the world but also hereafter. Marriage is sacred institution containing father as a guardian and mother as partner who is bearing function as the first ever school for her children, even when they still in the form of foetus (cloth of blood). Sexual desire is a part, not a whole