

## ‘Aql and Noble Character: A Review from A Scholarly Perspective

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**Abstract:** The academic discussion on ‘aql from the Islamic perspective, refers to the spiritual ‘aql and not the mainstream understanding of what we know as the brain. The ‘aql is the ability to think that is innately found in man. It is spiritual in character and is related to the other spiritual elements of man such as ruh (spirit), qalb (heart) and nafs (desires). The discussion on ‘aql is inevitably correlated to the debate on character (akhlaq). This, therefore, means that the discussion on ‘aql is difficult to comprehend. Nonetheless classical Islamic scholars have initiated numerous discussions and have formed more than a few pathways which provided the foundation to the following generations of Islamic scholars to deliberate further and gain better understanding on ‘aql.

**Key words:** ‘Aql, man, spiritual, character, scholars, desires

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### INTRODUCTION

The ‘aql differentiates man from animal. The ‘aql is the place from where knowledge develops. It is the light which enabling and preparing man to receive knowledge. This is what makes it noble. The ‘aql of man is spiritual in nature. Thus, makes the discussion of it is difficult to discern. Many initiatives by scholars have taken place until now to impart the understanding of what is and how the ‘aql operates in its relation to human character.

### ‘AQL IN AL-QURAN

From the literal definition, ‘aql means to deter or prevent (al-Hijr). The person who has the ability to control oneself and his nafs is said to be a person with ‘aql. ‘Aql also means wisdom (al-Nuha) which is the opposite to weak thinking (al-Humq). ‘Aql can also refer to the spiritual heart (al-Qalb) and also understanding (al-Fahm). In addition, ‘aql is the element that differentiates man from animal. In al-Quran, the word ‘aql refer to man’s ability to think as mentioned in Chapter al-Rad verse 4 which bears the following interpretation:

And in the earth are neighbouring tracts and gardens of vines and fields sown with corn and palm trees, growing out two or three from a singlestem root or otherwise (one stem root for every palm) watered with the same water, yet some of them we make more excellent than others to eat. Verily in these things there are Ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs) for the people who understand

Chapter An-Nahl verse 12:

And He has subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon and the stars are subjected by His Command. Surely, in this are proofs for people who understand

Chapter Az-Zukhruf verse 3:

We verily, have made it a Quran in Arabic, that you may be able to understand (its meanings and its admonitions)

In line with man’s ability to think, the ‘aql bestowed on man gives him the ability to reflect (tafakkur). In al-Quran, the command for this act of tafakkur involves Allah’s creations including the creation of man himself as proof (ayat) on Allah’s might and wisdom. Chapter al-Tariq verse 5:

So let man see from what he is created

Chapter Maryam verse 67:

Does not man remember that We created him before while he was nothing?

Chapter al-Zariyat verses 20-21:

And on the earth are signs or those who have Faith with certainty And also in your ownelves. Will you not then see?

Another aspect that falls within the ambit of the ability of thinking is man’s potential to remember (dhikr). In al-Quran, there are instances that prompt man to remind one another to remember Allah and to remember man’s promise to Allah. Chapter al-Zariyat verse 55:

And remind (by preaching the Quran O Muhammad) for verily, reminding profits the believers

Chapter Maryam verse 39:

And warn them (O Muhammad) of the day of grief and regrets when the case has been decided while (now) they are in a state of carelessness and they believe not

Chapter al-Baqarah verse 152:

Therefore remember Me (by praying, glorifying, etc.). I will remember you and be grateful to Me (for my countless favours on you) and never be ungrateful to Me

Chapter al-A'raf verse 205:

And remember your Lord by your tongue and within yourself, humbly and with fear without loudness in words in the mornings and in the afternoons and be not of those who are neglectful

Chapter al-Araf verse 172:

And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins their seed (or from Adam's loin his offspring) and made them testify as to themselves (saying) Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We testify lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Verily we have been unaware of this

Besides the aforementioned, indeed there are numerous verses from al-Quran that encourages man to think to ponder to watch and to study as well as to observe. All these concepts in actual fact are closely linked with the concept of tafakkur. ("Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but for just ends and for a term appointed, did Allah create the heavens and the earth and all between them: yet are there truly many among men who deny the meeting with their Lord (at the resurrection)" (al-Rum:8). "Men who celebrate the praises of 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" (al-Imran:191). "Say: See ye? If Allah were to make the day perpetual over you to the day of Judgment, what god is there other than Allah, who can give you a night in which ye can rest? Will ye not then see?" (al-Qasas:72). "(Here is) a

book which we have sent down unto thee, full of blessings that they may meditate on its Signs and that men of understanding may receive admonition" (Sad:29). "Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them flights of birds, striking them with stones of baked clay. Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw (of which the corn) has been eaten up" (al-Fil:1-5)).

### STATUS OF 'AQL

'Aql distinguishes man from animal. The gift of 'aql enables man to have diverse abilities that is not possessed by other creatures. This has elevated man's stature and standing in comparison to other beings. Nonetheless, there exist differences amongst men. This difference is attributable and dependable on how far man is able to utilize his 'aql.

'Aql is inherently dignified and with it man becomes dignified. If a knowledgeable man is considered noble thus 'aql as a medium to attain knowledge is also considered noble. Amongst the verses in al-Quran that state the nobility of a person endowed with knowledge are; Chapter al-Zumar verse 9:

Say: Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is only men of understanding who will remember Allah

Chapter al-Mujadilah verse 11:

Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe and those who have been granted knowledge

Chapter al-Fathir verse 28:

It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily Allah is All-Mighty Oft-Forgiving

Besides the verses from al-Quran that explains the superiority of one who is endowed with knowledge, there are numerous Hadith of Rasulullah (SAW) that provided similar emphasis pertaining to the importance of knowledge. Among them are:

The simile of guidance and knowledge that Allah sends me to convey is like the heavy rain that falls on the earth (until the end of the Hadith) (Riwayat Bukhari: Bab al-Ilm)

Whosoever Allah wills to receive piety, he will receive the understanding on matters pertaining to religion (until the end of the Hadith) (Riwayat Bukhari: Bab al-Ilm)

### **‘AQL ACCORDING TO EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHERS**

The discussions on ‘aql by early Greek philosophers is believed to be relevant to exhibit the continuity in the discussion of ‘aql in the civilization of man’s knowledge. The discussion on ‘aql by early Greek scholars such as Plato and Aristotle is usually associated to the deliberations on psyche or soul. Amongst them is in Republic, Plato (d.347 BC) which states that the soul is made up of three elements: rational, spiritual and appetitive. The aspect pertaining to the desires of the soul does not perceive things as good or bad rather its only concern is what satisfies it. This part of the soul sees things without further considerations. Secondly, the spiritual soul has two different tendencies. One is the tendency to violence and anger and the other involves reasons and reason-giving. If it is not properly trained, the spirited part might become harsh. On the other hand, if it is properly trained, it can be the source of strength. It is a helper to reason unless it is corrupted by evil nature. (Plato, 1963). Thus, this spiritual aspect shares features of both desire and reason. Lastly, the rational part of the soul is reasoning part its two major functions are to searching for the truth and to increase one’s knowledge base. It is the part the soul that wants to extend the knowledge of truth at the same time it finds pleasure in doing this. It seeks truth in both the practical and intellectual spheres. It also appears as the part by which we work out whether we have been wrongly made to suffer or are suffering justly. It is what urges us to both intelligent practical choice and the discovery of theorems. Reason, then, is the source of practical judgement about what is best for the person as a whole (Annas, 1989). In Phaedo, especially in 66c-67d, it is mentioned that the purification of the soul of ordinary desires and fears was a condition of its acquisition of wisdom which here means a clear-minded appreciation of what is truly valuable. However, this is only available to the philosopher (Rowe, 1993). Hence, Plato recognizes that the purification of the soul is necessary in order to receive wisdom (or guidance in Islamic teachings). However, these three elements of the soul is a later development of Plato’s doctrine. In Plato’s earlier works such as Phaedo, Plato asserts that the soul is indivisible (Plato and Hackforth, 1972). Another example is the discussion in Meno. Plato states that learning is actually a process of recollection (Plato, 1963). He holds that the human soul is born with the ability to recollect what is once learned in a previous existence (Kraut, 1992) Thus, a teacher who teaches his student is not teaching something new but rather to prompt the pupil to remember what is already found in his

mind (‘aql). In the meantime, a student’s role is to respond to the teacher’s efforts to stimulate his memory. So, differences may occur within a group of students, for each will differ in their ability to remember. Some will be able to remember much faster than the rest. Plato (1963) also states the same theory in his work .

Aristotle (d.322 BC) in discussing on psyche states that there are different levels of life. Intellect is one besides sensation, nutrition and motion are all forms of being alive. Aristotle implicitly provided a theory of the mind which in fact arises from his arguments on the nature of the human psyche. Hence, Aristotle is not confined to the discussion of the human mind or soul only, rather he is concerned with all forms of psyche meaning all that distinguishes living creatures including man from inanimate objects. Aristotle’s types of soul can be recognized as a classification of the kinds of living organism. But, man is distinguished by the faculty of reason. According to Aristotle, all organisms have souls but there are different kinds of soul just as all bodies have shape but there are different kinds of shapes.

The learning activity is related to the soul because thinking is considered as one of the faculties of man’s soul (Irwin, 1989). As such a man’s behaviour will exhibit the characteristics of his soul. Aristotle is also of the belief that ‘aql has the divine element (Barnes, 1982). Aristotle divides thought into two: active and passive intellect. Active intellect (the highest element in the human soul) is permanent. In the meantime, the passive intellect is temporary. According to Aristotle, the soul of a man is man’s reality and that the potential to think is part of it. There are two powers within man’s mind: the receptive (potential) faculty and the active (actual) faculty. The receptive faculty is ready with something essential and the active faculty will display or emanate the thing. This is similar to the process of giving colour to a particular object by the sun’s ray. As such, the process of learning will only be effective if the active faculty is understood. Although, the active intellect is permanent in characteristic it is not imbibed with innate knowledge (Allan, 1970).

### **THE ‘AQL ACCORDING TO MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS**

In the history of the development of Islamic thoughts, there are a number of discussions on the ‘aql by the Muslim scholars. The discussion is nonetheless associated with the spirit, soul or desires (nafs). According to al-Farabi (d. 339H), the ‘aql is the element that completes a man and emanates from the spirit/soul. The ‘aql helps the operation of thinking. Furthermore, he stated that it is the rational faculty that controls the other

faculties of the soul. (The first faculty that will emerge upon man's birth is the nutritive faculty (quwwah ghadhiyah). Followed by the sense perception faculty (quwwah hassah) and together with it the appetite faculty (quwwah nuzuiyyah) which will like or dislike the perceptive object. The representation faculty (quwwah mutakhayyilah) will emerge and with it the said perception information that is stored in the soul. At this level, the appetite faculty relates to the representation objects. Lastly, the rational faculty (quwwah natiqah) emerges and with it man has the ability to differentiate between good and bad and are able to identify the intelligibles).

However, al-Farabi stated that the soul is dependent on the physical situation of the body that is throughout man's life in this world. Al-Farabi was also of the opinion that the 'aql is the connecting factor between the celestial world and the sublunary (Netton, 1989). Only the intellect from the spiritual/soul that is immortal in character. As such, the 'aql in the al-Farabi's cosmology has a special position.

According to Ibn Sina (d. 428H), man's rational soul can be divided into two faculties: practical and theoretical and that both of these faculties represent the 'aql. The practical faculty is the source to man's behaviour. On the other hand, the theoretical faculty relates to knowledge of the truth. Ibn Sina associated the spiritual or the intellectual aspects with the immortal part of man (Goodman, 1992). According to him, the activity of man's soul is something most noble. As such, its role is to think and be awed of Allah's creation. Besides, the other faculties of the soul (Among the other faculties of the soul that was discussed by Ibn Sina was regarding the animal appetitive faculty and the animal imagination faculty (Rahman, 1952) the activity of the rational soul that involves the learning and realization process is the most unique (Goodman, 1992)).

Al-Ghazali (d. 505H) discussed about the 'aql amongst others in kitab al-Ilm (Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Kitab al-Ilm in Ihya Ulum al-Din. 'Aql is dignified to al-Ghazali because it is the place where knowledge grows. It is the 'aql that differentiates between man and animal. The 'aql is likened a light that is placed in man's heart. The 'aql allows and prepares man's heart to receive knowledge. Generally in kitab ilm al-Ghazali's the discussion regarding 'aql is given four definitions:

- Refers to the quality that differentiates between man and animal that with it man has the ability to understand knowledge
- Refers to the knowledge (of which babies can also possess) that discusses and differentiates matters that are possible or impossible such as the improbability of a person being at two different places at the same time

- Refers to knowledge that is based on experience and
- Refers to the ability to forecast the end of a matter and also to enable man to control his desires

From the earlier four definitions, it can be understood that the first definition of 'aql operates as the foundation to other three definitions. The second definition operates as the branch to the first, the third signifies the combination of the first and the second and the fourth is the product and the ultimate objective.

In another discussion, al-Ghazali gave two definitions of 'aql which he also related to the discussion on the purity of the heart. Firstly, 'aql refers to the knowledge on the reality of a thing. In this case, the 'aql portrays the state of affairs of the knowledge that is in man's heart. In other words, it refers to the knowledge of the reality of a thing that is placed in the heart. Secondly, 'aql is the one that gets and recognize knowledge in this matter and also refers to the purity of the heart or man's spirituality.

Regarding the Hadith of Rasulullah (SAW), the first thing that Allah created was the 'aql (Hadith al-Tibrani in al-Awsat from Abu Umamah dan, Abu Naim from Aishah with isnad dhaif, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, kitab al-Ilm Ihya). Al-Ghazali is of the view that the hadith brought forth the definition that each man is endowed with knowledge that is man's innate characteristics. Al-Ghazali refers this as al-Sifat ghair al-Mausuf (characteristics that has no quality). As such, 'aql provides the meaning of quality or one's intelligence that is imbued with knowledge or the ability to receive knowledge itself that possesses the said quality. Besides discussing on the 'aql al-Ghazali also related the definitions of heart (qalb) spiritual (ruh) and desires (nafs) with the spiritual meaning as the power that is inherent in man that enables a person to receive and understand knowledge. As an example, al-Ghazali associated the purity of the heart with man's cognitive faculty. He also mentioned that the heart is the place for knowledge. As such to receive knowledge with ease man's heart must be purified.

The opinion of Ibn Khaldun (d. 808H) is also not much different from the other scholars. According to Ibn Khaldun, 'aql is the basic spiritual potential in the process of receiving knowledge. The 'aql is the mother to all deeds (Ummahat al-Amal). Ibn Khaldun also agreed that the 'aql (quwwah natiqah) that differentiates between man and other creatures. It is the gift of 'aql that enabled man to shoulder responsibilities and to function as a vicegerent (khalifah) (From the literal sense khalifah means the most exalted leader).

In explaining the definition of 'aql Ibn Khaldun also referred to the term fuad (afidat) that is mentioned in al-Quran which can be referred to as the heart or the emotions as stated in Chapter al-Mulk verse 23 which bears the following meaning:

Say It is He Who has created you (and made you grow) and made for you the faculties of hearing, seeing and understanding little thanks it is ye give

Ibn Khaldun is of the view that the epicenter of the 'aql is the heart. In other words, the ability to think and to receive knowledge is very closely related to the heart (in the spiritual sense) (This view is similar with al-Ghazali's view). Ibn Khaldun also discussed on the stages of 'aql that is al-'Aql tamyiz (the 'aql that assesses), al-'Aql al-Tajribi (the 'aql that tests), al-'Aql al-Nazari (the 'aql that guesses) and al-'Aql al-Mazid (the 'aql that has added value). These four potentials will operate in stages and is dependent on one another. Based on the 'aql's ability, man has the capability to experiment to examine and to ponder on the effect and the relationship between one thing with another thing, to anticipate an event through experience and ultimately to make accurate decision in choosing the best.

#### **THE 'AQL AND MAN**

Man's creation is divided into two elements that is spiritual and physical. There are numerous verses in al-Quran that narrate about the creation of man. A Muslim must negate all other theories regarding the creation of man that is not based on al-Quran. From the physical aspects there are verses pertaining to the element of water (al-Furkan 25:54); from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape (al-Hijr 15:28); from sticky clay (al-Saffat 37:11); from sounding clay like unto pottery (al-Rahman 55:14) and was brought forth from the earth (al-Najm 53:32). On the other hand, from the spiritual aspects, it is mentioned in al-Quran pertaining to the spirit as found in Chapter Hijr verse 29 which brings forth the following understanding:

When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit fall ye down in obeisance unto him

Nonetheless the reality of the spirit is only known thereto by Allah (SWT) as is mentioned in Chapter al-Isra verse 85 which bears the following explanation:

They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you (O men)

This, therefore, follows that innately man has two needs that is the physical needs and the spiritual needs. The responsibility to meet these needs must be balanced. Balance here refers to the priority given to the spiritual aspects without neglecting the physical needs. Islam advocates spiritual perfection as the ultimate aim. However, the spiritual needs cannot be elevated when the physical need is neglected and abandoned. This

corresponds very much to the creation of man itself. In al-Quran there are numerous admonitions that man does not give too much due importance to this temporal world at the expense of the preparation for the here after. Amongst the Quranic injunctions are found in Chapter Hud verses 15-16 which gives the following interpretation:

Those who desire the life of the present and its glitter to them, We shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein, without diminution. They are those for whom there is nothing in the hereafter but the fire: vain are the designs they frame therein and of no effect are the deeds that they do! can they be (like) those who accept a clear (Sign) from their Lord and whom a witness from Himself doth teach as did the Book of Moses before, it a guide and a mercy? They believe therein; but those of the sects that reject it the fire will be their promised meeting place. Be not then in doubt thereon: for it is the truth from thy Lord: yet many among men do not believe

Man is also created with the inborn ability or natural tendency (fitrah) and tawhidic faith. Referring to Allah's firman which gives the following comprehension in Chapter al-Rum verse 30:

So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the faith (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah: that is the standard Religion but most among mankind understand not

And in Chapter al-Araf verse 172:

When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)? They said: Yea! we do testify! (this), lest ye should say on the day of Judgment: of this we were never

On a Hadith of Rasulullah (SAW) which brings the following meaning:

It is narrated from Abu Hurairah (RA) who said: Rasulullah (SAW) said: No child is born but having the faith of Islam but the child's parents turn the child into Jew, Christian or Magan (Riwayat al-Bukhari)

The understanding on 'aql, its function, its place and its role cannot be segregated from the understanding on human being or man. As mentioned before, the discussion on 'aql cannot be separated from the discussion on the spiritual aspects of man and other elements and man's fitrah. It is the 'aql that distinguishes man from other creatures. It is the 'aql that enabled man to represent other

creatures in managing and administering this earth. The 'aql is also the medium to receive and understand knowledge. Although, there are myriads of definitions pertaining to the 'aql in terms of its division and relativity to man's other spiritual elements nonetheless the 'aql is still involved in the function of receiving knowledge. Through the medium of 'aql that enabled man to attain knowledge, man's stature is dignified above all other creatures. Although, through the gift of 'aql man thus become dignified, however the praiseworthy akhlaq (moral) is so closely dependant on whether the use of the 'aql is as provided by the tenets of Islam. Man that has failed to use his gift of the 'aql according to the tenets of Islam will eventually be disgraced. This is because man's creation is not without purpose. The ultimate purpose behind man's creation is to serve Allah as mentioned in Chapter al-Zariyat verse 56 which bears the following interpretation:

I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me

When man forgets this ultimate purpose of his creation then man will eventually fall into the pit of hopelessness. This is of course bearing mind man's variety of weaknesses such as forgetfulness and carelessness. This is supported by Chapter al-Araf verse 179 in al-Quran which provides the following interpretation:

Many are the jinns and men We have made for Hell: they have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle nay more misguided for they are heedless (of warning)

and in Chapter al-Kahfi verse 57 which gives the following understanding:

And who doth more wrong than one who is reminded of the signs of his Lord but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands have sent forth? Verily We have set veils over their hearts lest they should understand this and over their ears, deafness. If thou callest them to guidance even then will they never accept guidance

In fact, in the literal sense, the word insan (man) gives the meaning that it is mans innate nature to be forgetful. As such to ensure that the gift of the 'aql is at all times the most distinctive characteristics of man and remains to play a role as the medium where by knowledge is received, a continuous effort has to be carried out. In seeing the relationship of 'aql with the other spiritual elements of man such as ruh, qalb and nafs then the continuous effort to ensure the right balance of all these elements are very crucial to achieve this objective. In this context, the approach to be taken as envisaged in Islam is the process

of tazkiyah al-Nafs. The spiritual balance of these elements can be attained through this process. The term tazkiyah refers to the cleansing of the soul whereas the term nafs which al-Ghazali tried to simplify means:

- All the strength of anger and desires that are found in man which represent all despicable characteristics found in man
- The reality of man himself and the elements that make man

As such tazkiyah al-Nafs brings forth the meaning the cleansing of man's self or man's desires that is the cause of all despicable characteristics found in man. Tazkiyah al-Nafs is necessary in the forming of an individual's personality (A cleansed soul will in turn make the individual of praiseworthy akhlaq (moral)) and represent one of the main tasks of delivering the message to the call of Islam by the prophets). This is supported by a verse in al-Quran in Chapter al-Baqarah verse 129 which brings forth the following interpretation:

Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom and purify them for Thou art the Exalted in Might the Wise

The process of tazkiyah al-Nafs is utmost important in ensuring the function of the 'aql as the medium to receive knowledge takes place. It involves two main dimensions that are takhalli and tahalli. Through the process of tazkiyah al-Nafs that aims to discard all the despicable characteristics (takhalli) and replacing with all the admirable characteristics (tahalli), the spiritual balance can be attained. These efforts can be achieved through the following two actions that is the accomplishing of all that is ordained to be done and to leave all that is forbidden in totality. The cleansed spiritual signifies the presence of belief in the tawhidic concept (It refers to which entails Muslims to obey Allah and acknowledge that Allah is the only one worthy of worship. It also entails Muslims to obey Allah out of fear and love and hence work hard to avoid displeasing Allah. It is the centre from which the rest of Islam radiates). A cleansed and balanced spiritual element will permit the receipt of knowledge.

#### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL STABILITY AND NOBLE CHARACTER WITH 'AQL**

The presence of a balance spiritual elements resulted from a continuous process of tazkiyah al-Nafs will lead to the formation of praiseworthy akhlaq (mahmudah). According to al-Ghazali, there are four main characters (ummahat al-Akhlak) that from whence branch out all other characters. The four main characters are:

- Wisdom (hikmah)
- Courage (syujaah)
- Self-preservation (iffah)
- Equilibrium (adalah)

Wisdom will entail man to distinguish between the truth and the fictitious whether in beliefs words or actions. Allah states in al-Quran through Chapter al-Baqarah verse 269 which provides the following interpretation:

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

When man is endowed with hikmah (wisdom) then he is able to place the syujaah (courage) according to the situation, time and place. In other words, an individual can control his courage with his 'aql. With iffah, it gives the meaning of self preservation when all the self's desires have been disciplined by the 'aql and the steadfastness to the din (way of life) of Islam. Adalah is the ability to place the appropriate deliberation on anger and desire based on the guidance of hikmah. The equilibrium in these four main principles will result in a stable soul followed by noble character and thereafter thinking skills that are based on a sound 'aql. The ability such as husn tadbir (attentive to details and considerations), jawdat al-Dhihn (expertise), thaqabat al-Ray (sharp thinking skills) and isabat al-Zann (precise prediction) will be attained. If all of these four main principles are not in equilibrium then there will emanate therefrom all sorts of mazmumah (despicable) characteristics such as stupidity, snobbish, short-temperedness and self-pride.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussions pertaining to the main aspects of man's 'aql through the thoughts of selected scholars above, it can be construed that it is 'aql that raised man's dignity and thus make him dignified. 'Aql has an elevated status in man. The nobility of a man is dependent on his high level of knowledge based on the utilization of his 'aql. 'Aql is also one of the spiritual elements of man. As such understanding the other spiritual elements is vital in the effort to identify the role and function of 'aql. The creation of man can be segregated from the gift of 'aql because it is 'aql that differentiates and distinguishes man with other creatures. The difference amongst men is the level of ability of a man's 'aql. This is in turn very much dependent on the effort to maximize the ability of the 'aql through the

cleansing of the soul process to ensure spiritual stability. It is the 'aql that determines man's actions and it is very much intertwined with the spirit (ruh) or soul that enlivens a man. In the civilization of mankind, there has been no end to the discussion for a thorough comprehension of 'aql. The continuity of man's civilization is very much dependable on the role and function of the 'aql. It also exhibits the relationship of 'aql and praiseworthy akhlaq. A civilization will continue to flourish if the society is of praiseworthy akhlaq.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Steps to take to strengthen the 'aql in todays context:** The understanding regarding 'aql and its relationship with other spiritual elements of man and its role and function in enabling man to fulfill his mission as a vicegerent in this earth is indeed important. This realization needs to be identified to ensure progress that is well balanced and in accordance to the tenets of Islam can be sustained. As such various efforts and steps need to consciously be taken continuously to strengthen the 'aql. Based on the foregoing discussions highlighted in this study amongst the steps that can be taken to restore the role and functions of 'aql in today's concept are as follow. There is a constant and consistent need to delve further into the understanding pertaining to the characteristics and functions of the 'aql. Although, the past scholars have paved the way in regards to their thoughts pertaining to 'aql nonetheless their thoughts and ideas need to be made a basis and provide the platform for future researchers' continuity on this matter. This is important because man's spiritual element are always affected with the way he lives which includes his faith, deeds, acts of worship, psychological and the environmental factors. The understanding pertaining to 'aql must be understood from the spiritual context which cannot be achieved through empirical methods alone because the natural tendency of 'aql is spiritual.

The spiritual aspects of man need to be comprehended in the context of epistemological basis of Islam and that is al-Quran and authentic Sunnah. Based on the spiritual characteristics of 'aql thus in providing the efforts to strengthen the function of 'aql the emphasis on the spiritual approach must take cognizance. There needs to be a conscientious understanding of the function of 'aql as a medium to receive knowledge. A knowledgeable man is dignified. The nobility of a man is due to his noble character. The evaluation on the high aptitude of the 'aql must be seen from the effect it has on the man and that is noble character. Thus, in forming the thinking skills, good manners must be emphasized. A

two-way effort need to be carried out. The strengthening of the 'aql and the inculcation of good manners must be approached from the spiritual aspects.

The spiritual aspects of the man is his self and that which forms his personality. If the 'aql is amongst the spiritual element of man then it has to be formed in the best degree because the 'aql also represents man's personality. The understanding of the 'aql must be in accordance with the understanding of man's inborn ability or natural tendency (fitrah). As man's inborn ability is to recognize Allah, as such an 'aql that is on the guided path in accordance to Islamic tenets is the 'aql that recognizes and submit to Allah. As such, in the effort to strengthen the 'aql, there need to be efforts directed to recognize and know Allah and thereafter the understanding man's role and function. To produce a systematic and correct understanding on 'aql, its role and function as well as the methods to strengthen, 'aql must be executed in line with Islamic tenets and can never be otherwise to ensure, it is in accordance to the inborn ability found in creating man. This is because the creation of 'aql in itself is the creation of man. Only with such understanding of 'aql will provide the much needed progress to the society.

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