

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE EXISTENCE OF SOUL AND ITS INFLUENCE IN HUMAN LEARNING

(A Philosophical Analysis of the Classical and Modern Learning Theories)

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Abstract

Islam believes in the existence of soul and its influence in human learning. Islam believes that human being consists of both body and soul, Islamic perspective on how a person learns from *insani* experience also differs compared to contemporary Western psychological perspective. This paper aims to provide a view Islam on the psychology of learning in terms of the two sides of the *Ilahiyyah* (Islam) and *Insaniyyah* (Psychology). This discussion will provide an overview of the concept of learning that Islam is divided into two sources: directly from Allah (*Ilahiyyah*) and through human experience (*insaniyyah*). Source God can be in the form of revelation, inspiration (*inspirasi*), and a true dream (*ru'ya sadiqah*). Human experience can be in the form of conditioning, observation, and cognition. Moreover, this discussion would like to see contemporary learning theory from the Islamic perspectives. The Islamic perspectives will include *Qur'anic* verses, Prophetic Hadiths, stories of the Prophets and Companions, and the work of early Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali using terms familiar to contemporary psychology.

Keywords: Education, Islam, Learning, Psychology, *Qur'an*

A. Introduction

Islam emphasizes on learning by observing a model. All these types of learning are considered a higher-level and can never be explained without believing the existence of the soul, and can never be obtained without the soul having a higher level of *iman*. Islam believes that the source of learning for human being can be *ilahi* or *insani*.¹ *Ilahi* source of learning means learning that occur directly from Allah such as *wahy* (revelation), *ilham* (inspiration), and *ru'ya sadiqah* (true dream). Whereas *insani* source of learning means learning that occur from human experience through conditioning, observations, cognitions, and others. Contemporary psychology defines learning as the process by which experience or practice results in a relatively permanent change in behavior or potential behavior.² Regardless of the sources of learning, Muslims believe that Allah is the ultimate reason of our learning or behavior

¹ Muhammad Utsman Najati, *Jiwa Manusia: Dalam Sorotan al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta: CV. Cendekia Sentra Muslim, 2001), p. 13-14

² See in S.B. Klein, *Learning: principles and applications*, (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002), and J.T. Walker, *The psychology of learning*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996).

changes. It is He who teaches us what we know not.³ And it is He who teaches us the Qur'an and ability to speak.⁴

Since contemporary Western psychology does not include soul as a subject matter of studies, the *ilahi* source receives no attention in psychology of learning textbooks. And since Islam believes that human being consists of both body and soul, Islamic perspective on how a person learn from *insani* experience also differs compared to contemporary Western psychological perspective. Many of the learning phenomena that cannot be explained by contemporary theories of learning (such as drastic change of behavior of those who had performed *hajj* or pilgrimage) can actually be explained if we believe on the existence of the soul. In short, Islam believes in the existence of soul and its influence in human learning. This is the single most important difference between Islamic concept of learning and contemporary Western concept of learning.

B. Principles of Learning in Islamic Applications

Since the beginning of Islam has placed a high premium on education and has enjoyed a long and rich intellectual tradition. Knowledge (*'ilm*) occupies a significant position within Islam, as evidenced by the more than 800 references to it in Islam's most revered book, the Qur'an. The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an with frequent injunctions, such as "*God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees*",⁵ "*O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge*",⁶ and "*As God has taught him, so let him write*".⁷ Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning.

Islamic education is very unique, different from other types of educational theory, because in Islam the concept is of Al-Qur'an. The Qur'an serves as a comprehensive blueprint for both the individual and society and as the primary source of knowledge. The advent of the Qur'an in the seventh century was quite revolutionary for the predominantly illiterate Arabian society. Arab society had enjoyed a rich oral tradition, but the Qur'an was considered the word of God and needed to be organically interacted with by means of reading and reciting its words. Hence, reading and writing for the purpose of

³ QS. Al-Alaq, 5

⁴ QS. Ar-Rahman: 2 and 4

⁵ QS. Al-Mujadilah: 11

⁶ QS. Thaaha: 114

⁷ QS. Al-Baqarah: 282

accessing the full blessings of the Qur`an was an aspiration for most Muslims. Thus, education in Islam unequivocally derived its origins from a symbiotic relationship with religious instruction.

The application part of learning will try to illustrate the change of behavior of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad SAW who were able to change their behavior of heavy drinking (alcoholism). This is to inspire modern Muslim psychologists to use the same principles in changing the bad behavior of contemporary Muslims such as alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking, etc. The application is inspired and adapted from the writing of Badri on "Islam and Alcoholism".⁸ The word alcohol used in this paper is referring to liquor, not the various types of alcohol that is sometimes used as cleaners or perfumes.

1. Physiological Perspective:

It is understandable that most Arab at that time were alcoholic because their forefathers had been alcoholics, and this had possibly provided genetic, neuronal, or hormonal potentials for the Companions to become alcoholics as well. But since the inception of Islam, some of the Islamic practices may have change the physiological potential to a more positive side. Practices such as *wudu`* (ablution), *salat* (prayer), *dhikr* (utterance and remembrance of Allah), *tilawah* (reading the Qur`an), and *sawm* (fasting) may have provided positive potential to prepare for abstinence from alcohol. Besides that, some worldly practices such as proper diet (semi-vegetarian), eating supplement (honey and *habbat al-sawda`* or black seeds), and exercises (preparing for Jihad) may also have provided positive potentials to change behavior. Supported with *tarbiyyah nafsiyyah* (souls education) in terms of *`aqidah*, *`ibadah*, and *akhlaq* during Makkah period and part of Madinah period, the potential to continue to become alcoholics had changed to potential to abstain from alcohols.

2. Psychodynamic and Humanistic perspectives:

According to Badri, one of the reasons that alcohols become rampant in ancient Arab society was the deep-rooted unconscious feelings of pride, insecurity, and romantic passion; which would be of interest to modern psychodynamic theories.⁹ But the coming of Islam has instilled the sense of pride for the true *`aqidah*, sense of security by Allah`'s power, and love and passion for

⁸ Malik B. Badri, *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*, (London, United Kingdom: MWH London Publishers, 1979), p. 34

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36

Allah. These psychodynamic variables, influenced by Islam, had provided the potential for the Companions to change any bad behavior in future, which in our case, heavy drinking.

From humanistic perspectives, individual differences also influence whether the Companions would be involved in alcoholism or not, before or after converting to Islam. For example, Badri mentioned that Utsman ibn al-`Affan RA never touch the alcohol even during pre-Islamic period despite having the physiological and psychodynamic potential to do so. Even after converting to Islam, not all people have the sensitivity or get the hint that alcohols are bad.¹⁰ Badri mentioned that `Umar ibn al-Khattab RA was already suspicious when the first verse that talk about alcohol is revealed¹¹ that subtly differentiate between strong drink and good nourishment.¹² Although the process of *tahrim khamr* (prohibition of alcohols) took a lengthy period and involve a few stages, individual differences showed that some of the Companions had already been abstaining 100% from alcohols from the very first stage, while other Companions postponed until the final stage of prohibition. But it is the *iman* in the souls of Companions that ultimately enable them to show mass abstinence of alcohol during the final stage.

3. Social Learning Perspective

It is understandable if observational learning contributed to alcoholism among the Arabs. The children and teenagers may have been following their fathers' habit. The adults, on the other hands, may have been following the habits of some significant or influential others. In fact, heavy drinking had become an Arab culture, models are everywhere for any new potential non-alcoholic to become one. But when the Prophet SAW migrated (*hijrah*) to Medina, he had first and foremost created brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) tied with the divine `aqidah so they become united and cohesive. This unity and cohesiveness had facilitated the compliance of the Companions to follow other fellow Companions who had been abstaining from alcohols. And of course, the Prophet SAW and a few Companions who had never touch alcohols and the Companions who had abstained from alcohol in the early stage of prohibition had provided a model that increase the number of followers or at least provide potential for future abstinence. And this social learning is based on *iman*, the belief that the Prophet SAW is the true guidance and the pleasure of following their brothers whom they love for the sake of Allah.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 40

¹¹ QS. An-Nahl: 67

¹² Malik B. Badri, *The Dilemma...*, p. 41

4. Behaviorism

The stages of prohibition of alcoholic had some striking similarities with modern behavior therapy called systematic desensitization but in a larger scale. The stages involved four stages:¹³ (1) subtly making no association between strong drink and good nourishment,¹⁴ (2) directly but cautiously associating alcohols with greater sin compared to their usefulness without prohibiting it,¹⁵ (3) restricting alcoholic drinking by not associating it with the most important divine practice i.e. *salat* (prayer) forcing them to abstain from alcohol at five different times in a day,¹⁶ and (4) direct prohibition and associating alcohols with filthy things and devils.¹⁷ These associations are what modern psychology refers to as classical conditioning. The very concepts of rewards and sins that were well-known even during Makkah period may also have influenced the behavioral change in a gradual manner which has striking similarity with shaping technique introduced by operant conditioning theory. At each of this prohibition stage, and while Prophet Muhammad SAW education on *ʿaqidah*, *ʿibadah*, and *akhlaq* continues, some of the Companions may have totally abstain from alcohols, some of them may have reduced themselves to social drinking only, some of them may have felt guilt, and some of them just getting ready for the next stage to stop drinking. In other words, an effective combination of classical and operant conditioning principles may have contributed to mass abstinence of alcohols. In addition to cognitive factors that Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali had mentioned earlier, the soul factors also play an important role in all the behavioral changes.

5. Cognitive-spiritual Perspective

ʿUmar al-Khattab RA is one of those Companions who were gifted with inspirations as mentioned before. It is this ʿUmar who had been very suspicious about the evil nature of alcohol even during the first subtle stage of alcohols prohibitions. And it is this very ʿUmar who, after the third stage, met Prophet Muhammad SAW to ask Allah to give a clear statement about the status of alcohols in Islam. And as mentioned by Badri, some of the Companions already knew that alcohol is bad and somewhat just waiting for the time of clear

¹³ Ibid., p. 43

¹⁴ QS. An-Nahl: 67

¹⁵ QS. Al-Baqarah: 219

¹⁶ QS. An-Nisaa: 43

¹⁷ QS. Al-Maaidah: 90-91

prohibition before they stopped drinking.¹⁸ This can be explained by another type of modern cognitive theory of learning called latent learning.¹⁹

6. Religious Perspective

This perspective postulates, in general sense, a Muslim should enjoin the *wajib* (obligatory), *mandub* (desirable) and *halal* (permissible) behaviors and avoid the *haram* (forbidden) and *makruh* (undesirable) behaviors. When the Qur'an stated clearly that alcohol is *haram*,²⁰ a mass behavioral change took place. Badri described the situation by reporting that Muslims in Medina "threw away the remaining drinks in their cups and broke the large baked clay pots in which other drinks were being fermented".²¹ Some of them, after hearing the call 'Surely alcohol has been forbidden' broke and emptied the "large clay pots and skins full of fermented date-palm, honey, and grape till the streets of Medina ran with little rivers of *al-khamr* (alcohol) as a testimony to the greatest anti-alcoholism movement that humanity has ever witnessed".²² Naturally, as Muslims the *shari`ah* rulings such as *haram* should be powerful enough as a variable to change their behaviors. Actually, as we can see from contemporary Muslims' a behavior, this variable is moderated by the souls and their level of iman.

According to Badri, the real reason for the success this behavioral change started many years before the prohibition of alcohols, specifically since the inception of Islam.²³ During the early stage of Islam during Makkah period, instead of attacking alcoholism, Islam first attacked the false *`aqidah* (belief), ignorance, and values that are based on that belief. It is this ignorance that had become the roots of all evil behavior. That is why the first thirteen year after prophet hood was spent focusing on establishing the new belief emphasizing faith to the oneness of Allah, the unseen angels, the hereafter (including paradise and hellfire), the revealed books, and various prophets. Changing the souls of the Companions had changed them as persons in terms of mental processes (*`aqidah*) and behavior (*`ibadah and akhlaq*). The classical conditioning, operant conditioning, or observational learning that came years later were only symptomatic treatment that witnessed this unbelievably mass-scale of behavioral changes made easier by the change of the souls years before. Treating symptoms

¹⁸ Malik B. Badri, *Are contributions of early Muslim scholars relevant to modern psychotherapists?* Paper presented at the International Seminar on Counseling and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Perspective, at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1997.

¹⁹ See in S.B. Klein, *Learning: principles and applications*, (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002), and J.T. Walker, *The psychology of learning*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996).

²⁰ QS. Al-Maaidah: 90-91

²¹ Malik B. Badri, *The AIDS crisis: a natural product of modernity's sexual revolution*, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Medeena Books, 2000), p. 3

²² Ibid., p. 4

²³ Ibid., p. 5-10

of observable behavior only without looking at the deep-rooted cause would not have caused a massive behavioral change.

The above application shows the importance of educating current young Muslims, new Muslims, or Muslims who have just realized the importance of going back to his/her root in Islam in terms of correct interpretation of *`aqidah*, *`ibadah*, and *akhlaq* first, so that all behavioral intervention programmer either in the form behavior therapy, behavior modification, or even modeling will be more effective and successful.

C. Islamic Perspective on the Contemporary Learning Theory

1. The Theory of Classical Conditioning an Islamic Perspective

It should be noted that even in psychology syllabus at A level, students are aware of scientific criticisms towards classical conditioning.²⁴ This scientific evaluation of Western theories of psychology should be highlighted by teachers in order to prevent students from blindly accepting whatever theories originated from the West. Classical conditioning involves giving a (conditioned) response to a neutral stimulus (which has become a conditioned stimulus) that has been associated with another unconditioned stimulus.²⁵ Classical conditioning cannot explain all types of learned behavior. Sometimes a response may not be elicited as a result of association between two stimuli as postulated by classical conditioning principles but more as a result of neural communication that occurs in the brain.²⁶ This neural activities can be triggered by variables such as memory, emotion, and motives; variables which are considered unscientific in Pavlovian and Watsonian classical conditioning. By adding the element of the soul, it is possible to explore the possibility that iman-based activities such as *dhikr* (utterance and remembrance of Allah's name) will influence the memory, emotion, motives, or even the excitation or inhibition of neural activities.

In general, according to the Islamic perspective, classical conditioning which is the backbone of early behaviorism can be an atheistic *madhhab* in terms of *`aqidah*. Badri (2000) quoted J. B. Watson (the father of classical conditioning) to show how Watson dislike treating human as animal "with something else in addition" because this something else is a trouble to science. Included in this "something else," according to Watson, are religion (*din*), hereafter (*akhirah*), moral (*akhlaq*), and love which are major *`aqidah* issues in Islam!

²⁴ M. W. Eysenck & C. Flanagan, *Psychology for A2 level*. East Sussex, England: Psychology Press Ltd., 2001, p. 50

²⁵ See in J.A. Omrod, *Human learning* (3rd ed.), (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), and J.T. Walker, *The psychology of learning*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996).

²⁶ S.B. Klein, *Learning: principles and applications*, (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002), p. 175

Believing totally in the philosophy of classical conditioning is like converting to another religion with Pavlov and Watson as prophets! Students should be made aware of this underlying assumption about human nature that is against Islamic *ʿaqidah* and *shariʿah*.

Based on the argument above, readers may assume that we should abandon talking about classical conditioning altogether when teaching psychology of learning. However, that may not be a good strategy for at least two reasons. First, if we do not teach our students about classical conditioning and the works of Pavlov and Watson, they will read it somewhere else and be influenced by it.²⁷ It is the teachers' job to explain the atheistic aspects of classical conditioning and make the students immune to them. Second, the atheistic aspects only involve the philosophical aspect of classical conditioning, not the principles or the applications. Not all principles of classical conditioning are unIslamic.²⁸ In fact, some of the principles have been introduced long ago by our early Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali. The difference is our early Muslim scholars do not subscribe to the mechanistic principles of current classical conditioning principles.²⁹

Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali both believe in the importance of association between stimuli to elicit a conditioned response. The main difference between their ideas and contemporary classical conditioning is, they include the cognitive aspects (e.g. memory and imagination) that moderate the stimulus-response relationship which is absent in contemporary "mechanical" classical conditioning perspective. Ibn Sina believes that the association between unconditioned and neutral stimulus must be kept in *memory* before it can become a conditioned stimulus.³⁰ He gave examples of how seeing food (without even eating it) is pleasurable and seeing sticks (without even been beaten by it) is painful. Ibn Sina also suggested that a person can feel disgusted (a conditioned response) with yellow honey (a conditioned stimulus) if he associates its colors with yellow bile (neutral stimulus).

Al-Ghazali went a step further by giving example of what is now known as Pavlovian "stimulus generalization" when he observed that a person who was bitten by a snake is

²⁷ Malik B. Badri, *The dilemma...*, p. 64

²⁸ Tabrani. ZA, Islamic Studies dalam Pendekatan Multidisipliner, (*Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 2(2), 2014), p. 211-234.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See in Malik B. Badri, *Are contributions of early Muslim scholars relevant to modern psychotherapists?* Paper presented at the International Seminar on Counseling and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Perspective, at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1997; Muhammad Utsman Najati, *Al-dirasat al-nafsaniyyah ʿinda al-ʿulamaʿ al-Muslimin*, (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1993); Z. B. Taha, *ʿIlm al-nafs fi al-turath al-ʿarabiyy al-Islamiyy*, (Khartoum, Sudan: Matbaʿah Jamiʿah al-Khartoum, 1995); Tabrani. ZA, Isu-isu kritis dalam Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Pedagogik Kritis. (*Islam Futura*, 13(2), 2014); and Tabrani. ZA, Islamic Studies dalam Pendekatan Multidisipliner. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 2(2), 2014).

momentarily phobic of a colorful rope. He also went another step further, much earlier than Pavlov, by using salivation as his example. Al-Ghazali said that observing a person eating an acidic fruit, or even *imagining* such scene, can make the observer (or the imaginer) salivates. Not only it is an advanced theory at that time, it is also add to the current deficient theory by introducing the cognitive aspect of learning such as imagination. All these examples above are mentioned in much more details by Badri (1997), Najati (1993), Tabrani. ZA (2015) and Taha (1995).

Finally, although the philosophical aspects of classical conditioning can be dangerous to our *iman* (faith), its principles can be accepted with some modifications, which include physiological and cognitive factors. In addition to that, we believe that the susceptibility of a person to be conditioned to a certain stimulus also depends on the soul's level of *iman* in such a way that he or she will never give a response that is unIslamic in terms of *`aqidah, shari`ah, or akhlaq*.

2. The Theory of Operant Conditioning an Islamic Perspective

Similar to classical conditioning, operant conditioning philosophy is also atheistic from an Islamic perspective. Operant conditioning, which is the backbone of later behaviorism, is introduced by Skinner. Skinner, as quoted by Badri, said that behavior we called right or wrong (which Muslims believe as *halal* and *haram*) are nothing more than contingencies of responses towards immediate and tangible rewards and punishments, and have nothing to do with the concepts of good and bad. In other words, our *akhlaq*, our *`ibadah*, and even our *tawhid* are just illusions!³¹

According to operant conditioning, a response followed by a reinforcer (favorable stimulus) is strengthened and is therefore, more likely to occur.³² The opposite effect can be said when a response is followed by a punisher (aversive stimulus). Similar to classical conditioning, operant conditioning too has been scientifically criticized as early as in an A-level psychology textbook.³³ Operant conditioning is not sufficient to explain most of human behaviors. Some, like Klein contended that the power of reinforcement is not absolute in explaining all behaviors.³⁴ Some criminals who were punished repeatedly for their crimes continued involving in their crime actions. In some instances, the criminal actions increase in

³¹ Malik B. Badri, *The dilemma...*, p. 72

³² J.A. Omrod, *Human learning* (3rd ed.), (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), p. 128

³³ M. W. Eysenck & C. Flanagan, *Psychology for...*, p. 52

³⁴ S.B. Klein, *Learning: principles and...*, p. 178

frequency as well as severity!³⁵ Variables such as self-awareness and empathy have been suggested to correlate with regulation of anger. Perhaps that is why rehabilitation intervention programmers in the prison have taken into account psychological growth with the aim to decrease the probability of repeated offending.³⁶ However, the idea of psychological growth as an independent variable should take into account the moderating influence of soul. A strong soul may decrease the likelihood that behavior is repeated after a punishment is given.

The concept of learning or training through conditioning itself is not alien in Islam. Al-Qur'an mentions how ancient Arabs conditioned dogs and falcons in order to train the animals to hunt for them.³⁷ Prophet Muhammad SAW also had mentioned how a person's response is influenced by its consequences by saying that "A *Mu'min* will never fall in the same hole twice".³⁸ Badri reported that Al-Ghazali believes that ethical and emotional habits can be learned and trained.³⁹ On a broader perspective, the concept of *jannah* (paradise) and *nar* (hell-fire) is based on rewards and punishment principle. This is because, it is in human nature to try to seek pleasant feelings and avoid unpleasant stimuli. To a very pious Muslim, even receiving Allah's pleasure is rewarding enough and receiving Allah's displeasure is punishing enough. The major differences between operant conditioning and Islamic concepts of rewards and punishment are, in Islam, the stimuli are intangible and delayed (as late as after death or even after Judgment Day!). Not only cognitive factor plays a role here, but also the soul factor, i.e. the level of *iman*, can influence whether Islamic stimuli are rewarding or punishing enough.

Contemporary Western psychology advocates that punishment is less effective than reinforcement.⁴⁰ This concept is not alien in Islam based on a *Hadith Qudsi*: "When Allah decreed the Creation He pledged Himself by writing in His book which is laid down with Him: My *mercy* prevails over my *wrath*". That is also why a Muslim will receive 10 rewards for doing 1 good deed but only 1 sin for doing one bad deed. Even better than that, a Muslim who have the *niyyah* (intention) to do good deed will receive rewards whereas a Muslim who have intention to do bad deed will not

³⁵ B.B. Benda, Theoretical Model with Reciprocal Effects of Youthful Crime and Drug Use. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 25(1-2), 1999, p. 77-108.

³⁶ M.L. Bourke & V.B. Van Hasselt, Social problem-solving skills training for incarcerated offenders: a treatment manual. *Behavior Modification*, 25(2), 2001, p. 163-188.

³⁷ QS. Al-Maaidah: 4.

³⁸ Narrated by Al-Shaykhan, Abu Dawud, and al-Shaybani

³⁹ Malik B. Badri, *Are contributions of early Muslim scholars relevant to modern psychotherapists?* Paper presented at the International Seminar on Counseling and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Perspective, at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1997.

⁴⁰ J.A. Omrod, *Human learning* (3rd ed.), (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), p. 128

receive sin before he or she actually do it. There is also a *da`wah* principle that *al-tarhib* (making people feel good) should be prioritized before *al-tarhib* (making people feel fear) when promoting Islam which is in line with psychological concept to prioritize reinforcement over punishment.⁴¹ Even when punishments are practiced in Islamic tradition, they are usually administered to those who really understand his or her wrongdoings. For example beating the children who do not perform prayer is only allowed when they are ten years old, *only* after educating them about the importance of prayer *three years before that*.⁴²

In other words, understanding the reason of punishment is a pre-requisite before administering it which is similar to what Western psychology has said. The story of Ka`ab bin Malik who refused to be exempted from punishment (social isolation) for being absent during the War of Tabuk also shows his understanding of his wrongdoing. A careful reading of *hadith* literature and the biography of the prophet will show that new Muslims, simple-minded Bedouin, and *Munafiqin* (hypocrites) were rarely punished. Muslims whose souls have higher level of *iman* usually voluntarily asked for worldly punishment in order to avoid the punishment in the hereafter.

Famous examples can be seen in the only two punishments of *hudud zina* (penalty for adultery) ever conducted during the Prophet era where both of them gave self-confession and voluntarily asked to be punished (the case of Ma`iz ibn Malik and the lady of *al-Ghamidiyyah*). Based on the above-mentioned examples, perhaps it can be assumed that, the reason punishment really work in those cases because, ironically, the punishment is indirectly rewarding! All the examples of operant conditioning so far show that soul can play the moderating factor in influencing the stimulus-response relationship.

It is clear that contemporary operant conditioning theory of reinforcement cannot be applied to Muslims with high level of *iman*. For a Muslim, just by having faith that he or she will receive rewards, *jannah* (paradise), or Allah pleasure can be a positive reinforced. Similarly, just by having faith that he or she will receive sins, *nar* (hellfire), or Allah's displeasure can be a punishment to a Muslim. In addition to that, a Muslim who has faith that Allah will always accept *tawbah* (repentance) for His servant (if he or she asks for it seriously and sincerely) it can act as a negative reinforcer (alleviating the feel of guilt that can lead to anxiety and depression) for Allah is Most Merciful and Most Compassionate.

The concept of rewards and sins in Islam can be explained from the perspective of schedules of reinforcement (continuous and partial). Although the concepts of rewards and sins in Islam are based on continuous schedule (awarded each time after we perform good or bad

⁴¹ Abdul Aziz, *Fiqh dakwah*, (Solo: Intermedia, 1997), p. 69

⁴² Based on a hadith narrated by Ahmad

deed), there is an element of variability in terms of interval and ratio because the rewards and sins are unobservable. Therefore, they can become powerful motivators for Muslims who have *iman* in practicing *ma`ruf* (good) and avoiding *munkar* (evil). It is appropriate, however, to administer observable rewards to non-believers who are kind to Islam or new Muslims. This is the underlying reason for giving *zakat* money to *mu'allafah qulubuhum*. This is also the reason why Prophet Muhammad SAW gave the war booty to the *Tulaqa'* (new Muslims from Makkah) after the War of Hunayn instead of giving it to the highly committed Ansar Muslims from Madinah. Although, initially the Ansar were not satisfied, eventually, *iman* prevailed over the needs for worldly rewards. Since the soul (with its various level of *iman*) can influence the relationship between reinforcement and response, observable rewards can be used to motivate, not only non-Muslims and new Muslims, but also Muslims with weak *iman* or even children whose *iman* is not yet fully developed. For Muslims who want to maintain his souls in the state of *iman*, reading al-Qur'an regularly and understanding its meaning is suggested to receive regular "spiritual" and "cognitive" rewards and/or punishments by reading Allah's personal praises and warning directed to each individual reader.

On a more specific perspective on the concept of reinforcement schedules, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), with inspirations from Allah, had been using variable partial or intermittent reinforcement schedule to motivate consistent rate of response from Muslims. The two examples concern the time of *al-istijabah* when Allah will grant whatever His servants wish for during an unspecified time at night (based on a *hadith* narrated by Muslim) and during an unspecified time on Friday.⁴³

D. Conclusion

Reviews on various theories mentioned above shows that every theory has some truth and is supported by Islam but has its own limitation in giving a full picture of human learning. Psychology should take into consideration all these theories and incorporate Islamic perspectives of learning in order to give an alternative, more comprehensive look of human learning. Since contemporary Western psychology does not include soul as a subject matter of studies, the *ilahi* source receives no attention in psychology of learning textbooks. And since Islam believes that human being consists of both body and soul, Islamic perspective on how a person learn from *insani* experience also differs compared to contemporary Western psychological perspective. Many of the learning phenomena that cannot be explained by contemporary theories of learning (such as drastic change of behavior of those who had performed *hajj* or pilgrimage) can actually

⁴³ Based on a *hadith* narrated by al-Shaykhan, Malik, and Nasa'i.

be explained if we believe on the existence of the soul. In short, Islam believes in the existence of soul and its influence in human learning. This is the single most important difference between Islamic concept of learning and contemporary Western concept of learning.

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