



THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN GOVERNANCE AND THE UNDERSTANDING ON MAN

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Abstract—The philosophy of human governance is believed to be the pathway to integrity. Different than the conventional outside-in approach, human governance employs an inside-out approach to promote compliance. It highlights the difference between being human and human being. Being human is the focus of the philosophy while governance is seen as the consequence. Therefore, it is relevant to explore the use of the philosophy of human governance to be the mechanism to curb non-compliance. Oneness, wholeness, and excellence are the elements of human governance and understanding on the concept of man is fundamental. Malaysia is a multicultural country with its people allowed to practice the religion that they believe in freely. This paper explores the understanding on the concept of man based on the belief in ancient time and religious perspective that is fundamental in the philosophy of human governance.

Keywords: Being Human, Concept of Man, Human Governance

INTRODUCTION

Sapuan et al. (2020) highlights that the many serious issues faced in the world and the high number of corrupt behaviours happening around us are due to the failure of recognising human governance as the foundation of virtues. Introduced in 2008 by Salleh and Aziuddin, human governance involves an internal mechanism to navigate one's actions and differentiates between a human *being* and being human (Salleh & Ahmad, 2008). Human governance is "the principle or philosophy or the approach that humans can take in living life according to the meaning of being human that one subscribes to" (Human Governance Institute Inc, 2023).

In dealing with corrupt behaviours and integrity, previous researchers suggest that human governance is the pathway to increase one's integrity and is effective in counteracting corruption (Ramli et al., 2021; Salleh & Anis, 2019; Hanapiyah et al., 2016). When human governance is embedded in the hearts of people and they practice the principles of oneness, wholeness and excellence, the nation will move towards becoming a more virtuous nation. This in return aids in addressing the corruptible section of the society which then will bring positive impacts to our country (Salleh & Anis, 2019). The fundamental part of human governance is addressing human as a creation of God that is made up of the physical and spiritual dimensions; with the unseen part acknowledged to be the component that makes a person human (Ramli et al., 2019). Therefore, this paper aims to explore the different views of man that is an essential the foundation of the philosophy of human governance.

HUMAN GOVERNANCE

Being human or human being, despite similarity in words usage, the difference is indeed vast. The philosophy of human governance puts a lot of focus on being human and the human soul as the essence of man (Salleh & Ahmad, 2008). The idea of oneness is central in the philosophy as it said to refer to the interconnectedness and dependent of organisations, societies, and environment (Salleh et al., 2009; Salleh & Ahmad, 2008). It is important to state that human governance is not about governance, and instead, the philosophy focuses on the fundamental of being humans. It goes beyond boundaries and is vital in one's personal development towards becoming better human (Salleh, 2015).



According to Ramli et al. (2021), the human soul, the nucleus of the human physique is the component that encompasses consciousness, values and ethical behaviour is located. Thomas Aquinas, Imam Al-Ghazali and Miskawayh are amongst prominent philosophers who emphasises on the importance of soul in ensuring good ethics. In dealing with unethical behaviour and corrupt practices, as stated by Muhamad et al. (2019), human governance approach extends the definition of accountability and integrity by putting focus on values, moral and responsible behaviour.

According to Salleh (2015), the philosophical bedrock or elements of the human governance philosophy consist of oneness, wholeness, and excellence. Oneness deals with the notion that our actions impact others as humans are part of a larger whole and are interconnected to all things. This is the reason as to why humans need to always be always mindful of their action. Next is wholeness. This refers to the idea that the human model is viewed as ternary (body, mind, and spirit). Hence, it is important for human to take good care of their physical, mental as well as spiritual wellbeing. Excellence deals with the pursuit of the highest possible good. It involves the journey where humans strive to be the best that they can, both individually and collectively. When oneness, wholeness and excellence is practiced in our lives, we are more likely to make ethical decisions and behave in a way that not only benefit ourselves, but also those around us.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF MAN

Despite the topic on the concept of man has long been discussed, this paper explores the understanding on the concept of man based on ancient and religious view.

Ancient Understanding on Man

In ancient time, the question that natural philosophers are intrigued with include the question of “what an object is, why it exists, and what purpose it serves for humanity” while the contemporary scientists are more focused on understanding a certain object whilst excluding the human interaction part with the object itself (Stone, 2013). The problem regarding selfhood that ancient philosophers are concerned with deals with metaphysics and ontology (theory of being) with the hope of finding the position of the self among the basic entities of reality (Remes & Sihvola, 2008). Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of nature is developed when the philosophers combine the physical dimension of nature and the incorporeal forces to come up with their view on things.

Plato and Aristotle are amongst the first philosophers in the classical days that have made prominent contribution to the field by introducing amongst the first systematic theories (Noonan, 2002). Both believe that the soul is what gives life to every living thing in nature and is in fact, immortal (Stone, 2013). However, this teacher and student duo have a slight difference in view. Plato believed that the concept of reason (intellect) is the true self of man which constitutes their soul and may be separated from the body while Aristotle holds the view that man is composed of body and soul at-once and cannot be separated (Remes & Sihvola, 2008). Plato believes in the divine origin of the soul and argues that the soul is imprisoned in the body, asserting the concept of dualism.

According to Melé & Cantón (2014a), the focus “on the spirituality of the soul is a noble attempt at human elevation toward the absolute and transcendent.” Plato opines that there are three parts of the soul which are appetite, spirit, and reason. According to Dahlsgaard et al. (2005), reason deals with wisdom, spirited deals with courage and appetite deals with self-restraint. Plato also illustrated the contradicting aspect of the appetite and reason using the analogy of a charioteer being pulled by two winged horses. The white and pure horse is honourable and does not need whipping whilst the other dark, prideful, and difficult to handle horse desperately needs a ruler to control it. Stone (2013) states that the dark horse represents appetite that will cause havoc if not controlled while the white horse (spirit), relies on reason to steer it to glory. Irrational behaviour will be observed when appetite is not handled well and emotional responses such as anger will surface when the spirit is let loose. It is the duty of the charioteer to bring the horses to the



“ridges of heaven”. Nasir Omar (2018) states that in Plato’s view, a virtuous man is a person who puts the irrational parts of his soul (spirit and appetite) under the rightful command of the reason faculty so that the person attain “self-mastery and order and lives on good terms with himself”.

Compared to his teacher, Aristotle believes that human being is made up of two parts, body and soul which are inseparable. According to Noonan (2002), Aristotle is the first to systematically link the idea of good life to the realisation of human nature. The Greek philosopher believes that the soul belongs to the body and if the body cease to exist, the soul departs with it. Stone (2013) adds that according to Aristotle, the soul is physically embodied by the body of man and is the principle for the body. In other word, soul is seen as the form of all living things. Aristotle also believe that “the best life for a human being is a life of maximum activity, a life in which all the potentialities in the human soul are cultivated and developed as fully as possible” (Noonan, 2002). Aristotle posits that in this world, there are beings that are alive, and these beings have its functions of soul as the basis of all its activities. Plants possess a vegetative soul while animals comprise of both a vegetative and sensitive soul, and humans are made up of three powers, which are vegetative, sensitive, and rational being (Józef Bremer, 2017). He explains that vegetative refers to the capabilities to reproduce and grow, sensitive refers to ability to move and feel sensations, and rational refers to the ability to think and reflect. Hence, man is known to be rational animals and according to al-Attas, ‘rational’ refers to the faculty that involves the formulation of meaning.

It is known that our belief system also shape how we think and what we believe in, hence, in discussing the topic of man, it is relevant for us to also discuss on the view of man according to religion.

RELIGION AND THE CONCEPT OF MAN

According to Nath (2015), apart from the reason aspect in humans, religion is another important feature that distinguishes man from animals. Pecorino (2000) as cited in Oppong (2013) believes that in order for the word “religion” to be properly defined, it needs to fulfil several requirements such as “ involvement of the totality of life; is open to all kinds of people; deals with issues naturally in widely different activities; deals with issues in widely different notions and beliefs; exists and is practiced in both private and social milieus; is open to various opinions as to the veracity or otherwise its beliefs; and has repercussions perceived to be either harmful or beneficial to persons and groups.” With that, Pecorino (2000) opines that religion is the most thorough and extensive method of valuing human experience. The understanding on the concept of human in Malaysia is heavily influenced by the major religions practiced in the country, which are Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

Islam

In Islam, Prophet Adam, the first man ever created was formed with care from clay that is taken from the physical realm and breathed into him, a soul. The word *bashar* refers to the corporeal frame made from clay before the spirit of God is breathed into man and the new creation formed after is known as *insan*. This new creation is a human possessing consciousness that exists at once, spiritual, and corporeal (Quran, 23:14, 15:29 & 38:72). Hence, an *insan* is metaphysical in essence with a physical body being fused together with the soul for him to live in the physical world (Anis, 2019).

The main purpose of the creation of man by Allah is based on two prominent roles that are bestowed upon humans, to act as the caliphate of Allah and serve as His servant. In fact, according to Mustafa@Busu et al. (2022), the title held by human is of the highest status and the man who is worthy to carry the title of a caliph is a person who “implements the concept of self-servitude to Allah s.w.t. and practices the concept of surrender to Allah s.w.t. in faith, morality, worship and shari’a”.

Even though Aristotle said that humans are rational animals, Al-Attas clarified in a lecture that the animal or *anima* that Aristotle was referring to does not carry the same meaning as the sense of *binatang* in Malay (Al-Attas, 1990). Rather, the meaning is parallel to the definition of al-*insān*



hayawān al- Nāṭiq by early Muslim thinkers which refers that man is a living being that speaks (Borannuddin, 2013). Islam puts more emphasis on the spiritual aspect of human, which is the soul as the essence of man and Al-Attas (1990) states that there are four terms to express the soul in Arabic that according to Al-Ghazali signifies a spiritual entity which are qalb (heart), ruh (soul/spirit), nafs (desire/nature) and aql (intellect/reason).

Christianity

In Christianity, humans are believed to be essentially created when God combines the dust of the Earth and breath of life, referred to as *ruach* or *neshama*. According to Clauson (2015), the Bible preaches the dominion of humans over the nature to make it a better place for the glorification of the lord. It is also stated that humans are made in the image of God and authority is given to man to subdue the Earth besides from acting as dominion (rādāh) (Isaacs, 2013). Melé and Cantón (2014a) highlights that the imitation of God is a big part in the faith and this imitation is done “through” Jesus.

The Bible, the holy scripture for Christians preaches that man are a trichotomy made up of body, soul, and spirit where the body connects man with the physical world, spirit connects man with its Creator with soul as its essence. This can be seen from the verse from the Holy book for the Christians which states that:

“May your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Despite that, there are some Christians who believe that instead of a three-part being, humans consist of two parts, body, and soul/spirit (Smith, 2000), implying that the soul and spirit aspect of man are referring to the same thing. Smith (2000) adds that the Scripture uses the terms interchangeably but, although the distinction of spirit and soul is not overly precise, man is described as a complex being.

The purpose of man on Earth that is seen as having dominion over other creations makes it a must for man to image God’s loving dominion. Therefore, human beings must carry out their daily lives with respect to other creatures as we cannot survive and be fully human if we fail to practice good stewardship. Essentially, Hyneman (2013) states that with the proper exercise of dominion, it will bring people back to God. Having to shoulder the responsibility of being a good steward, human has a purpose of to “care” or in Hebrew, called *shamar*, which means to ‘watch, guard, protect’ everything that God has entrusted us with (Hyneman, 2013). Borannuddin (2013) argues that even though the religion acknowledges the presence of the soul aspect of man as well as other spiritual matters, Al-Attas critics that the Bible, Gospels and the Jewish interpretation of the holy scriptures fail to explain it in detail.

Hinduism

In the teaching of Hinduism, human is viewed as a perfectible creature. The religion “assumes the existence of a spiritual soul in human beings, open to transcendence and called to attain spiritual union with the absolute” (Melé & Cantón, 2014b). It is added that Hindus see human as creatures with the capacity for moral behaviour and highlights the importance of good values such as truthfulness and generosity. The concept of reincarnation or *samsara* involves the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth of souls (atman) until the ultimate release is achieved. Rebirthings shows the nature of the soul which is believed to be eternal and immortal and is linked to the concept or *karma*, that deals with the actions that man makes that will eventually determine his state in the coming rebirth and death cycle (Melé & Cantón, 2014a).

The purpose of life or goals that Hindus hold is called Puruṣārthas. The four Puruṣārthas in Hinduism are “Dharma (righteousness), Artha (prosperity), Kāma (pleasure, love) and Moksha (liberation)” (Howladar, 2017). These four major goals act like a weapon to be used to control themselves, it is an object of human pursuit and are enough for man to lead a happy life. Artha and Kāma represents physical and psychological goal while Dharma represents one’s moral goals, and Moksha represents



the spiritual goal of oneself (Mishra, 2013). It is explained by Howladar (2017) that the true liberation or Moksha happens when the soul of man recognises itself with the source of all phenomenal existence that is called Brahman and the soul is finally freed from *samsara*.

Buddhism

Nichols et al. (2018) states that in Buddhism, self is viewed to be not persistent, and this is held to be the reason as to why people should not fear death. In Buddhism, the word “self” or “inner self” is referred to as *atman* and it refers to the core of an individual’s identity. Buddhism has several parallel concepts that are introduced in Hinduism such as karma and *samsara* since Buddhism was born within a Hindu context. Melé and Cantón (2014a) notes that people are in pursuit of happiness, but it can only be achieved when they renounce their desires and restrict themselves to elemental needs. According to Tablan (2019), Buddhism, like Aristotle, preaches that humans can reach perfection through the act of self-development, but instead of reaching telos (final end), Buddhist chases after Nirvana. Nirvana is seen as the purpose of man or the final goal by its followers.

Nirvana “is the realization of both the highest morality and unconditioned reality” (Tablan, 2019) and is achieved by practising the Eightfold Noble Path as laid out by Gautama Buddha with the aim of ending the suffering. Nnanavamsa and Krishnasamy (2014) mentions on the three sections of the Eightfold Noble Path which are: morality or ethical conduct (*Sila*), mental development (*Sammâdhi*), and wisdom (*Paññâ*). The Eightfold Noble Path includes a right view, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

CONCLUSION


It can be seen based on the explanation on the concept of human governance and the concept of man that overall, the major religions practiced in Malaysia as well as the ancient belief share similarities in the sense that the spiritual side of man is acknowledged. Human governance is a philosophy that puts a lot of focus on the non-physical aspect of man to aid compliance. The elements of human governance; oneness, wholeness and excellence are fundamental in human governance. It deals with the idea that humans are interconnected with all things. By holding on to the philosophy, humans are more prone to making ethical decisions and perform actions that not only benefit them, but also others. This allows human to find meaning and purpose in the lives of the people.

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