

The Search for Meaning of Life: Existentialism, Communication, and Islam

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ABSTRACT

Makna merupakan hal sangat penting dalam kehidupan manusia. Tanpa makna, kehidupan akan tanpa arah dan penuh kegelisahan. Makna hidup dapat dicari melalui nilai-nilai kreatif, nilai-nilai pengalaman, nilai-nilai cara bersikap, komunikasi dan partisipasi, pemahaman diri, dan pemahaman akan ajaran agama. Islam menawarkan aspek nomatif bagi pencapaian hidup bermakna lewat pembersihan diri, kontemplasi, serta komitmen pada keilmuan dan kemasyarakatan.

Introduction

We face our life every day. We sleep, wake up, eat, work, take part in communication, have a rest, and so on. Events come to us and we pay attention to them, even involve ourselves in them, or ignore them. In other cases, we need something, we seek it, we get it or not, then we feel happy or sad. It takes place automatically and routinely. We are as though in a circle of situation.

However in reality, life is not as simple as that. Each of us is not always involved passively in a flow of routine. We also deal with life actively. There is time when someone has a unique experience that causes him very happy. He creates a new situation, even cuts through a breakthrough in life radically, either succeeds or fails and then he is satisfied. But there is another time when a person can't enjoy what he encounters. He is bored with, for instance, a high rank of his occupation. All of he possesses doesn't give him happiness. His heart is empty. He is restless. He leads an aimless existence. In other words, he is in alienation. He questions whatever he has had or done. There is something else he is eager to get, and it is maybe clear or not.

Imam Ghazali, one of leading Muslim figures,

was ever upset deeply, while he had a good position and future. He needed something else, that was a high meaningful life, which could make him absolutely satisfied. He gave up all his position. Then, he was lost himself in a realm of mysticism (*tashawwuf*). In this world, he felt a highest satisfaction and a real significant life.

At first glance it seems difficult to understand why, for instance, someone is very interested in climbing up mountain, while another is pleased to contribute most of his possession to others and he chooses to lead an extremely sober life. Each man has a satisfaction of life in various ways and in different areas.

Such a circumstance of human life is different from that of animal life.

One of the differences between a human being and an animal is the fact that a human being doesn't only strive to gain biological and physical needs or follow a current of routine life. The struggle that the animal does is just to fulfill its biological and physical needs, so that its species can survive in the universe. Besides the struggle for survival, the human being also strives for more significant matters other than just to alive. That is the meaning of life.

This paper will describe the meaning of life in

the perspectives of existentialism, communication, and Islam. Existentialism will be elaborated much more than others. This paper also will explain how to get the meaning of life.

Existentialism

Existentialism is one of philosophy schools. The prominent figures who popularized existentialism were Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Soren Aabye Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Victor Emil Frankl, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, were also the existentialism figures who impressively developed this school of philosophy, although some of them denied to be categorized as existentialists.

Existentialism focuses on concrete man, that is man as an existence (Purwantana *et al.*, 1991:11). Human existence is described by existentialism in some topics, those are being and non-being, being-in-the-world, authentic and unauthentic existence, self-consciousness, freedom and responsibility, alienation, and death (Koswara, 1987:9-18; Corey, 1988). It's impossible to explain all of them here in a short description. So, here this philosophy will be described in a simple explanation.

Existence and Restlessness of Man

Existentialism elucidates human being as a unique creature that is fully aware of his existence. The way man exists is different from other creatures (Tafsir, 1990:192). The sun exists, the world exists, stones exist, coconut trees exist, cow exists, air exists; however, the inexistence is different from the existence of human beings. Man isn't like other creatures or matters that just exist or is alive in the world. Man *exists* in the world and *he encounters* the world as well. He realizes himself and objects that he deals with. He wants to understand everything he experiences and tries to recognize his environment. He is a subject and a center of his activity. He is both a player of life stage and a seeker of identity and meaning. Quality of man's existence depends on how he fulfills his life with any activities and the meaning he gets.

Albert Camus describes human being as a Caligula story. Caligula climbed up the top of a

high tower at night. He was surrounded by an unlimited extreme darkness. The only one light was in the top of tower. Suddenly a bird got in that tower through one of its windows. The bird fluttered inside around the light. Soon afterwards, the bird went out through another window. The bird lost in the darkness.

The above description constitutes a metaphor of human life. We are like that bird. Human being comes from the darkness, makes a move around the light in the world, and then enters the darkness again. We did not exist before, suddenly we are here in the world without our agreement. Then, we have to finish all with death, and are swallowed by the non-existence. So, what is the meaning of life like that? What do we live here for? It is as if just our destiny to live in this universe. We were never asked to consult how, where, when we would be born before. We couldn't avoid it. In fact, we have been here, walking in a small hole of a huge universe. We are like a drop among wide ocean even far smaller than it. We also live in a very short range of time compared with the age of this universe. Before we were born there was a very long long time and after we are no more, there will be a very long long time, too. We are very small, we have no meaning, indeed.

According to existentialism, people are disturbed by their existence. Man often questions what for he is born and what the meaning of life is. Because of these questions, he is restless. If he finds a significant thing in his life, his restlessness will be less.

The question: "what is the meaning of life?" or "what do human beings live in the world for?", often troubles tranquility of our mind. This is an existential question. The trouble like this is a universal restlessness. For escaping from the restlessness, man strives to find an exact purpose in life and creates a value that will give a meaning to his life.

Freedom and Responsibility

We are forced to accept our lives in the world. Then, we are free. We have freedom. Sartre (1977:531) writes, "... I say that man is condemned

to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects he is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.” In connection with the opinion of Sartre, Frankl explains that the freedom of man, in any case, is limited. It’s impossible for man to extricate himself from biological, sociological, and historical conditions. He can’t avoid them. The freedom of man is not freedom *from* those conditions, but it is the freedom to take a stand and self-detachment. In other words, man has freedom to decide an attitude to any condition. He possesses freedom to surpass any determinant, so he can enter a new dimension of their lives (cf. Koeswara, 1992:47-48 and Bastaman, 1994:15). Someone is free to choose a kind of life whatever he wants, and he is not free not to choose. His life is his choice. We can not make someone to become a kind of man that’s not his choice because he fully owns himself (see Poduska, 1990:10). He himself is his choice. Escaping from freedom is also as one of the ways to realize freedom. He really exists as far as he can choose what he wants freely. Then, whatever he has decided requires his responsibility.

Man himself is defined by Sartre as freedom (Bertens, 1985:319). Freedom, which constitutes the highest value of existentialism, gives man an opportunity to make a creation. He has an open possibility. It means that he always has chances to choose a way of life, to pursue his ideas, or to enjoy a kind of life he wishes. According to Jaspers, the existence of man are a ceaseless open possibilities. The existence of man is also a full comprehension of total freedom (Bertens, 1981:133). To be parallel with this opinion of Jaspers’, Muhammad Iqbal stresses that human life is the only chance to open all the possibilities and develop all his potentials. How far this possibility and his potential are developed is a criterion of one’s quality to answer the existential question. In this case, that “man is nothing else but what he makes of himself,” according to Sartre, “is the first principle of existentialism” (p. 528). Therefore, “.... Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that fulfills himself; he is therefore,

nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life” (p. 533). Man is nothing other than the number of his activities. He is how to manage his life. Fromm (1988:38) says that there is no meaning for life except the meaning that man gives to his life by developing power and living productively. Man decides and develops his own existence (Muthahhari, 1993:60). Therefore, it’s imperative that someone has to find the meaningful life in activities. It is “sinful” for man who doesn’t develop his potential in a chance he has, and doesn’t perform on his life tasks as well as he can. This condition is called as “an existential sin” (see: Corey, 1988:55).

At this freedom, man endeavors to be “fully-human”. Jaspers says, “To fail to be human would mean to slip into nothingness. What man is and can become is a fundamental question for man” (Levi, 1959:399). So, at any time man is in a “becoming” process. The freedom possessed by man surely doesn’t mean without risk. The way he has chosen will bring its consequences and implications. Freedom, on the one hand, can lead into a higher meaningful life level and on the other side it can cause man to be trapped in a narrow hole, enters a circumstances of reduced existence of human life from each possibility and openness. So, it depends on a “kind” of value that he uses as the basis for his life.

What is the suitable attitude for an existentialist undergoes this life? Maybe, the following utterances that Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana ever said is an example of a good existentialist’s attitude. He said, “I was born when there were millions of years and mankind before, and afterwards there will be millions of years and human beings, too. I have freedom of choice what I have to do. There is much suicide news in mass media caused by despair, lost the purpose in life, deadlock of thought. I thank God, I am avoided from this bad fate. Therefore, I will do the best as long as I have my life in the world” (*Ulumul Quran* No. 1, 1989:50).

Meaning of Life

Each of us always tries to answer the question “what is man alive for” consciously or un-

consciously. Someone can not get the meaningful life unless he finds out the answer. Such an answer is called as a struggle for life. For the true life, we have to get the meaning of life.

The meaning of life is something regarded as important, true; it gives someone a special value. If someone gets it, he will feel worth and happy as a side effect. In the meaning of life, there is purpose of life, that is has to achieve. It is difficult to differentiate the meaning of life from the purpose of life. So, for practical explanation, in this paper the two concepts will not be differed.

There are some characteristics of the meaning of life (Bastaman, 1996: 14-16):

Firstly, the meaning of life is unique and personal. It is unique for each man. The meaning of life is different from one's to another's, even from a moment to another moment. It can't be given by others, but it has to be found out. There are many ways to obtain a satisfaction and give a certain meaning of life for each man. Each person experiences the world, depending on his perception or interpretation of the environment he encounters. There is someone who has a purpose in life to possess a car. He puts it on most of his thought. So, the thing he pursues is how to get the car. By this effort, as a matter of fact, he tries to answer the basic question in his life, and then he hopes he will obtain the meaningful life and satisfaction or happiness. There is someone else who looks for the meaningful life by giving a contribution to others he loves. Or, maybe there is a person who gains the meaningful life in facing or doing something that has a big risk. When he is able to overcome that risk, he gets the meaning in his life and he feels happy.

The following is a story from Greece. A young man burnt a temple. Then, he was arrested. He confessed that he did it because he wanted his name to be written in history as the person who smashed the temple. He tried to find a meaning of his life with this action.

Secondly, the meaning of life is specific and concrete. It can be found in simple experiences and daily life, not only in ideal goals, high academical achievement, or philosophical reflection.

Looking sunshine in the morning, doing a job enthusiastically, giving a gift to friend, are the examples of simple events that can bring meaningful life.

Thirdly, the meaning of life gives the reference and direction for action to be done. It challenges and invites someone to fulfill it.

Frankl claims that *the will to meaning* is the basic striving of man to find and fulfill meaning and purpose (Bastaman, 1994:15). According to Frankl, there are three value systems related to search for and get a meaning of life: *creative values*, *experiential values*, and *attitudinal values*. (Schultz, 1995:155; Koeswara, 1992: 6168). Creative values are expressed in creative and productive activities. The meaning of life is achieved by giving something to life through an action by creating a useful thing at visible result or at invisible idea form, or serving others as an individual expression. Man does his job and other activities as well as possible.

Experiential values relate to acceptance of something from the world. The meaning of life is obtained by enjoying experience, for instance, listening to music, watching movies, even doing a negative action, intensively and fully. He endeavors to get something from the life.

Life is not always easy to undergo and to enjoy. Sometimes man faces unavoidable bad situation. However, according to Frankl, at this situation we can still attain meaning by developing attitudinal values. When we face that situation, in fact even unchangeable bad situation, the only rational way to respond it is to accept it patiently. The way of how we accept our destiny, our bravery to bear the torment, our attitudes we show to deal with a debacle, are a final measurement of our efforts to get meaning and fulfill ourselves as human beings.

According to Frankl, happiness is not the purpose of life, but it's as a side effect of achieving the meaning of life. If we don't find out the meaning of life, we feel restless (*existential frustration* or *existential vacuum*).

The meaning of life is in attempting to reach the purpose. Someone has consciousness of

meaningful life because he has a purpose that he believes it is worthwhile enough to be struggle for, with sacrifice if necessary. But, then, according to Madjid (1992:25), the value of meaning and purpose are not automatically positive, because whatever ideologies or ways of life have possibility to give someone a meaning and purpose of life. Some examples explained above indicate it. Therefore, for instance, it is possible that someone who becomes a beggar gets a meaningful life. Being a beggar, for him, may constitute a high sacrifice to achieve a certain meaning of life.

However, of course, we need the true meaning of life. Madjid (1992:28) says that the true meaning of life must have *cosmic dimension*, based on a view and consciousness that this life is part of “an encompassing cosmic design”, that is an absolute, universal, or ultimate meaning of life. We need a firm view that will guide our life. For atheistic people, the universe, ecosystem, or a certain philosophy or ideology, maybe will be become as source of meaning of life. For theistic ones, God and religion teachings are the source of meaning of life. In this case, the universe that has an order and the laws of nature, are just as elaboration of Almighty God.

Before we explain the firm view that we mean above, we will expound some types of human being first. The types are related to the kind of meaningful life that man wants to get.

Types of Human Being

Edwar Spranger divides human beings into six types based on values they hold (Rakhmat, 1990:109).

Firstly, *theoretical man*. The most significant thing for him is scientific truth. He will be proud of defending his opinion he believes as truth. He finds a meaningful thing if he has a keen of mind, ability to discuss a problem, dare to express his ideas. He likes doing research, investigating things, or testing theories.

Secondly, *economical man*. The most significant for him is the wealth. The meaning of his life is in ownership of riches. Life is valued as getting possession. If he is forced to give a con-

tribution to others not caused by possessing solidarity anymore, but the focus is to get more profits economically.

Thirdly, *aesthetic man*. He regards a beauty is a meaningful life. He looks for satisfaction in form and harmony. He doesn't object to spend much money for what he considers as an aesthetic thing.

Fourthly, *political man*. The most valuable for this man is authority, power, position. The important principle of his life is: don't let others lead me; I have to be a leader of them. The meaning of his life is in his ability to lead, to control, to dominate, to influence, or to make others surrender to him. The higher he can influence on others, the more significant his life he feels.

Fifthly, *social man*. Values of love and friendship dominate him. He is delighted to be loved and to love others. He is afraid of being isolated in social intercourse, being avoided, or losing a warmth of interpersonal relation. He can't bear to live alone.

Sixthly, *religious man*. The most important for this man is a fidelity of performing religion teachings he believes. There is no highest happiness but surrender all his life to God. He is sad when he is against religious obligation.

Aside from the types of human being explained by Edwar Spranger above, Soren Kierkegaard categorizes man into three levels, gradually from the lowest to the highest level: aesthetic, ethical, and religious (Weij, 1988:141). At the aesthetic level, man is in pleasure principles, and led by sensory perception. He is a hedonist. At a certain time, he will be bored. Boredom enables him to enter the next level: ethical level. At the second level, man lives in a certain norm. Nevertheless, then, he feels dissatisfied. He is against the ethical order. At this tragical situation, he still has the other possibility, that is to go to religious level. At this level, he contributes all of his life for sake of God. This way of life is a possibility of meaning of man's existence.

Atheistic versus Theistic Existentialism

Atheistic existentialism teaches us that the

meaning of life can only be obtained with our own ability. It is impossible to find the answers of all problems to a transcendent matter (that's God). Human is the owner of all his existence and simultaneously he has to be responsible for that. In other cases, Albert Camus regards this world is absurd. The world can't be understood even it is useless. According to Camus, it is true that the world is beautiful, that the universe is interesting, that the life has comfortable circumstances. However, behind them, there are many people suffering, they can't enjoy the beauty of the universe. At the end, they have to say goodbye to all his life tragically when unavoidable death picks them up. So, to Camus, it is useless to think the past and the future. The important thing is what we do now! Man has to find the meaning of life in an absurdity. Prodikos, an ancient Greek figure, said that the only one solution to human miseries is death. However, Camus ever said, "A life can have meaning even if the world does not" (see: Camus, 1977:643-651).

Furthermore, Sartre says that the freedom of man is firmly absolute. There is no God. Sartre clarifies that if there is God, who knows everything, man is not free anymore, because God will annihilate the freedom of man. But, Sartre says, it doesn't mean that man is allowed to do everything he wants. Aside from freedom, he has also responsibility. I have freedom to do an action, then I myself have responsibility. And then, that I am the one who is responsible for my own action that leads into anxiety. The anxiety is a consciousness that all of my future depends on myself. However, according to Sartre, the anxiety seldom appears because of our daily activities. The anxiety will appear if man is totally conscious that his behavior depends on himself, and that he is the only source of all values and meanings. Man has to solve it by himself.

Nietzsche, a philosopher whom Camus admires, dares to announce that Allah is dead. According to him, only a lazy man that relied on—what is called as—Allah. Believing in God is claimed to give psychologically canalization of difficulty and solves problems, but it is an inap-

propriate solution. Man has to overcome his problems with his own efforts. It is useless to ask help from God. Nietzsche divides moral into two kinds. There are "master moral" and "slave moral" (Bertens, 1991:88). Durant (1961:315) calls the terms as a morality of masters and a morality of the herds. Master moral is the moral which is possessed by the man who has a great bravery to face various risks of life, is delighted to pursue great ideas, is eager to embody his hopes, dared to master the world. For him life is the arena where he has to fight challenges. Life is the thing that he has to be conquered. So, life is very dynamic.

In contrary, slave moral is the moral which is possessed by the man who is full of peaceful, gentle, love. He is always obedient to prevailing law. He maintains status quo. Life is regarded as a tranquility.

Nietzsche advises us in order to be a man that has the "master moral". We are not allowed to be a person who possesses the "slave moral". Being a man of master moral enables us to be a very strong man. Being a man of slave moral makes us become a very weak man. Look a sailor who dares to fight big waves of the ocean! He has strong hand and has no fear. But, look a man who is always interested in sitting at a beach, looking wave of coconut's leaps blown by breeze. He considers life is just full of peace. He will not have strong body. According to Nietzsche, performing religion brings about slave moral man.

Sartre, Camus, and Nietzsche are some of atheistic existentialists. Some of their opinions are positive because they teach us to undergo this life with a great courage and dare to encounter risks. But, others are not in accordance with religion because the basic of his thoughts is atheism.

One of the major characteristics of atheistic existentialist's effort is to stress on materialistic interests instead of transcendental one.

The opposite of the atheistic existentialism is theistic existentialism. Some of the theistic existentialists are Jaspers and Kierkegaard.

According to the theistic existentialism, the existing great number of unintelligible life problems doesn't mean that life is absurd, but it indi-

cates that the adventure of human ability is limited. The “free” existence of human being faces the “limit” which can’t be cut through. The condition of limitedness is named as “limited situation” (*German: grenzsituation*). Restlessness, torment, impasse, according to Jaspers, are forms of “limited situation” that human beings experience (Bertens, 1981, 134). The most dramatic “limit situation” is death. Consciousness of limitedness, besides leads into restless, simultaneously insists on having an authentic life. Awareness of death has a significant value for human’s life because it brings about him to realize that he has an exactly limited time to actualize his potentials, and it will motivate to have bravery, honesty, and to hold high moral value. If we are immortal, we can delay each action for long time, in fact even forever, because each action is always good whether we do it now, tomorrow, or ten years next. Since we are faced with death as an absolute finality, we are demanded to use the time as well as possible. So, temporality is obviously our meaning factor in our lives (Koeswara, 1992: 68-69).

To an atheistic existentialist, everything remains have to be returned to human himself when he is in facing “limit situation”, regardless of the hardship; but to a theistic existentialist, “limit situation” will cause realization of presence of transcendental matter.

Theistic existentialism considers that man must possess suitable basis where he undergoes his life and deals with changing values. What is meant by the suitable basis here is religion. Religion is a reference that must become as a basic motive underlying all actions. Religion with its “transcendental values” gives man the way to get the meaning of life and the world. At “limited situation”, religion becomes as a kind of ventilation psychologically. However, the real religion is more than as medium of cathartic expression. Human suffering is solved not only by human himself, let alone by suicide; but also it’s simultaneously overcome through existential leap into faith (cf. Kierkegaard, 1977). Kierkegaard believed in God, and he ever said, “God is the only one who does not grow tired of listening to men” (Hassan, 1992: 26).

The faithful of Allah has always the way to solve life problems, how difficult. To theistic existentialist, full comprehension of Allah will be strengthened with the existing problems he faces. If suffering of atheistic existentialist causes pessimistic, but of theistic existentialist will be ended at optimistic.

Meaning of Life and Communication

Basically, someone must be in relation with others. If only he meets and communicates with each other, he can find a possibility to get a meaning of life (cf. Delfagaauw, 2001: 145). There is an opinion that meaning can be gotten by looking to ourselves. But, according to Naylor, Willimon, and Naylor (1996: 21), although self-actualization is important as prerequisite for getting meaning, such a thing is not enough. We need love from others. The search for meaning, however, will involve others’ help, beside looking to ourselves. We need to meet with friends, teachers, neighbors, parents, family, colleagues, or others to fulfill one or more of our interests, as part of ways to get meaning. Without them, we will be alienated physically and psychologically. In this context, we have to be aware that there are others; we are not alone; we have to communicate with them; we share something with them. Living together in social life through participation and communication will make someone has a self-awareness and a full-life (cf. Hariyadi, 1994). Togetherness is an arena where we can elaborate our potentiality, so we can achieve a meaningful life. In other words, communication enables us to understand others and ourselves, and simultaneously to be understood by others. Then, we can accept the existence of ourselves and others (see: Supratiknya, 1995: 84-86). Actually, communication itself is a medium of catharsis. By communication, we exclude our feelings.

First of all, we communicate with ourselves. We try to understand who we are. Then, we communicate with others, even universe. We learn to understand ourselves among them. We also try to make reflection beyond the universe, and then we “touch” God.

Islam: from Ta'lim to Ishlah

Formulating an aim of life means to decide a choice of life (what we must pursue), so that we get a satisfactory experience and a meaningful thing. Generally, people describe the aim of their life by looking for the relationship of nature and objective world with its surroundings: wealth, power, pleasure, prestigious symbols. It's confessed that it is the most "realistic" because it's more concrete and can be experienced directly or immediately. But., what really does human being intend with all? The fact often shows that it's obviously a speed of hope is faster than the ability to conquer the objective world he needs. "*Faaina tadzhabuun?*" asked Quran (81:26). "Then whither go ye?" or "What do you have to do?"

"*Faaina tadzhabuun?*" is a kind of an existential question from Quran. At first glance this question is very simple, but it really has deep meaning. That is similar to Latin words: "*Quo vadis?*". We usually use these Latin words to express our wonderment to a deviant from the norm or to know the exact direction of walking way of ours.

All of us are in a "journey". We have to decide where we should go. Quran gives the appropriate answer as Ibrahim a.s. ever said: "*I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me*" (QS.37:99).

We may gather with a group who is going to Allah or with other groups who are not, depending on our choice. The result is that we will be gathered with our group that we select in the world.

Inability to answer the above question causes emptiness of life. We have answered it satisfactorily if we feel meaningful in our activities we do. That's true that human being has freedom of choice to form his life, but he can't master fully all the ways of his life (Madjid, 1987). People are capable of getting the meaningful life absolutely on condition that they ask the help to guidance of Allah. So, religion is a way of life system that offers the true and good meaning and aim of life (Madjid, 1992:26). According to religion, the purpose of life is to face God, and the meaning of life is reached in our efforts to get God's favor. This is the firm

view, which has cosmic dimension, that will guide us more perfectly.

What do we have to do as Muslims to get the meaningful life? As simply, there are at least four principles of fight to get the absolutely meaningful life as expressed in Quran and has been undergone by Muhammad saw. Those are *ta'lim*, *tazkiyah*, *tilawah*, and *ishlah* (QS 7:157; 3:164; 62:2) (Rakhmat, 1986:117-119).

Ta'lim means that a Muslim has to concern himself with science or knowledge. He uses his time to learn or to search for knowledge and useful information, and then to share them with others. "Pursue knowledge although in China," says the Prophet Muhammad saw. There is much knowledge and there are many sciences in the world, but our life is short. Therefore, we must not study all sciences or get all knowledge. We must study them as far as they are needed to do the truth (Al Hujwiri, 1992:23).

Tazkiyah is to purify both our soul and body from all diseases or dirty matters, either individually or socially. A Muslim is obliged to increase the quality of himself and his social environment to a better level. Purification of body and soul must be conducted simultaneously (Al Hujwiri, 1992:263). We purify our matters of the inner self and the outer world, too. "Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!" (QS 91:9-10).

Tilawah is to read the signs of greatness of Allah from both the Holy Book and the universe, to implant the Sacred Name of Almighty God into heart. A Muslim is fond of doing contemplation.

Ishlah is to improve social circumstances. A Muslim activates his potential not just for himself but for environment of society, too. His heart concerns itself with others' torment. He is called to help socially weak groups of society. His life grows in social intercourse. He is interested in activities of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*.

Epilogue

The meaning of life obviously is not the same for each person. The meaningful life is obtained

with many kinds of ways. A man can get the meaningful life just through following routine life, but another gets it through working hard, conquering challenges, actualizing his potential as high as he can. There are different factors that make man's life significant, ideology that is believed, school of thought he holds, interests he has, and other values that influence him to make a decision in his life. All ideologies or ways of life have potential to the formulation of the meaning and purpose of life.

The next problem is that the value of meaning and purpose of life may be positive or negative. When we choose the positive value of meaning and purpose, then we have to evaluate whether the meaning and purpose derive from a view based on a *cosmic* dimension or a *terrestrial* dimension. The view based on the cosmic dimension gives a strong basis of conducting action in terrestrial dimension. Loss of the cosmic dimension in life will cause the terrestrial dimension of the meaning and purpose shaky, so that all of the meaning and purpose of life will be lost. Religion is the view based on the cosmic dimension, while all aims we decide and all meanings we get in doing daily work are the terrestrial meaning and purpose of life.

For Muslims, the purpose of all their life is to get bliss based on God's favor, and the meaning their of his life is reached by directing all their action to get God's favor. To achieve it, Islam offers Muslims to make *ta'lim*, *tazkiyah*, *tilawah*, and *ishlah* as a basic frame of reference in their life.

What makes your life meaningful? **M**

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