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ETHICS



Edited by Mohammad Ali Shomali

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Mohammad Ali Shomali

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of God,

the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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Preface

Ethics or morality plays an important role in every religion, to the extent that, according to some, religion is nothing but ethics. It can be argued that, in Islam, moral values are considered extremely significant and at the very least constitute the most central part of the religion. To begin a discussion on this topic, the verses of the Holy Qur'an that detail the philosophy behind sending the Holy Prophet of Islam (s) as a messenger will be considered. Chapter 62, verse 2 reads:

هو الذی بعث فی الامیین رسولا منهم یتلوا علیهم آیاته و یزکیهم و یعلمهم الکتاب و الحکمه و ان کانوا من قبل لفی ضلال مبین

"It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error."

According to this verse, the Holy Prophet (s)'s main tasks are reciting the verses of the Holy Book, purifying people and teaching them. The same thing is expressed in two other verses:

لقد من الله علی المومنین اذ بعث فیهم رسولا من انفسهم یتلوا علیهم آیاته و یزکیهم و یعلمهم الکتاب و الحکمه و ان کانوا من قبل لفی ضلال مبین

"Allah certainly favoured the faithful when He raised up among them an Apostle from among themselves to recite to them His signs and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error." (3:164)

كما ارسلنا فيكم رسولاً منكم يتلوا عليكم آياتنا و يزكيكم و يعلمكم الكتاب و الحكمه و يعلمكم ما لم تكونوا تعلمون

"As We sent to you an Apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know.. (2:151)

Muslim exegetes of the Holy Qur'an have argued that these two verses are a response to the prayer of Prophet Abraham (a). When he and his son Ishmael (a) were occupied in raising the walls of the Ka'ba they supplicated to Allah (swt) with the words:

ربنا و ابعث فيهم رسولا منهم يتلوا عليهم آياتک و يعلمهم الكتاب والحكمه و يزكيهم انک انت العزيز الحكيم

"Our Lord, raise amongst them an Apostle from among them, who should recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed You are the Almighty, the All-Wise." (2:129)

Comparing this verse with the above-mentioned verses, a slight but meaningful difference comes to light. In the prayer of Prophet Abraham (a) and his son, purification occupies the final position amongst the three concepts, whilst in Allah (swt)'s response, purification has been regarded as more important than teaching. This illustrates the significance of morality in Islam.

In Prophetic narrations as well, great emphasis has been placed on moral values. Based on a well-known tradition, the Holy Prophet of Islam (a) has stated:

بعثت لاتمم مكارم الاخلاق

> "I have been sent by God to complete noble traits of character." (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 67, p. 372 and vol. 68, p. 373)

Deliberating on the wording of this narration leads to two conclusions. Firstly, "noble characters" (or *makārim al-akhlāq*) is different from "good characters" (or *mahāsin al-akhlāq*). The former is actually regarded as a more advanced stage than the latter. For example, to give charity is a good characteristic but to give charity to a person who has wronged you, is a noble characteristic. In the same way, visiting people is a good characteristic but visiting someone who has rejected or abandoned you is a noble characteristic.

Secondly, the words "*to complete*" indicate the fact that previous Prophets (a) had already commenced this task and the Holy Prophet (s)'s duty was to complete it.

Reflecting on the Qur'anic account of the lives of the Prophets (a), it can be concluded that the moral values of the Prophets (a) have received great attention in the Holy Qur'an. The best feature of every Prophet (a) introduced in the Qur'an is morality and even those Prophets (a) not mentioned in the Qur'an possess this quality. When addressing the Holy Prophet of Islam (s), Allah (swt) expresses admiration for his noble traits of character:

و انک لعلی خلق عظیم

> *"And indeed you possess a great character."* (68:4)

From the above-mentioned verses, it is apparent that many attributes of the Holy Prophet (s) are mentioned in the Qur'an and that most of them are moral values such as submission to Allah (swt), gentleness towards people, fearing Allah (swt), being a mercy for the whole world, being trustworthy and so on. Even with regards to Prophet Abraham (a), many attributes are referred to in the Holy Book. Once more, most of these attributes are ethical ones, such as being a benefactor, being patient, obedient, grateful, truthful and so on. The same is true of the other Prophets (a) as well.

A further point that confirms the high position of morality in Islam is the fact that most of the supplications and requests made to their Lord by the Infallibles (a), involve moral values. One can hardly find a supplication in which obtaining a moral trait of character or removing a bad trait has not been prayed for.

Bearing all these facts in mind, one can infer that morality is a very, if not the most, important aspect of the mission of the Holy Prophet (s). Thus, from the advent of Islam, Muslim scholars have made every endeavour to elucidate the moral dimensions of Islam.

The papers which are included in this volume address different aspects of Islamic ethics. In addition to divine life, created life, in both its physical and spiritual forms, is discussed. Most of the papers included here have been translated from Farsi or Arabic specifically for this volume and are being published for the first time in English. This will give readers the opportunity to become familiar with a number of contemporary thinkers in the Muslim world and to get acquainted with their scholarship.

The first essay is entitled "A Glance at the History of the Shi'ite Ethics." In this paper, Dr. Mohsen Javadi seeks to provide a historical account of the development of the science of ethics in Islam. This paper was first published in *Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue:*

Ethics in Today's Society (London: Melisende, 2008 & 2011) and now, with slight changes, is published here.

The second paper is entitled "A General Scheme of Ethics in Shi'i Islam." In this paper, Hujjat al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin Abdolhossein Moezzi presents an overview of Islamic ethics along with some of its doctrinal foundations. This paper was first published in *Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue: Ethics in Today's Society* (London: Melisende, 2008 & 2011) and now, with slight changes, is published here.

The third paper is entitled "Moral System of Islam." In this paper, I have divided Islamic teachings about morality into four categories, based on the four types of relationship that one has, i.e. one's relationship with God (swt), one's relationship with oneself, one's relationship with other human beings and with the environment. This paper was first published in *Islam: Doctrines, Practices and Morals* (London: Islamic Centre of England, 2007).

The fourth paper is entitled "Major Values in the Qur'an." In this paper, Hujjat al-Islam Dr Sayyidd Ahmad Rahnamaei reflects on some of the major values in Islamic ethics. This paper is published here for the first time.

The fifth paper is entitled "The Concept of Love in Islam." In this paper, Mahnaz Heydarpoor elaborates on the place of love in Islam in general and in Islamic ethics in particular. This paper was first published in *Love in Christianity and Islam* (London: New City, 2002 and 2005). It has also been published separately as *Perspectives on the Concept of Love in Islam* (London: 2001 & 2006; Qum: 2001). This paper, with slight changes, is now published here.

The sixth paper is entitled "Self-Interest in Islamic Ethics." In this paper, Hujjat al-Islam Dr Ali Jaberi tries to give an account of the basis of values in Islamic ethics and explain how the

problem of self-interestedness is viewed in Islam. This paper is published here for the first time.

The seventh paper is entitled "Theocentric Ethics in Islam: From Spiritual Consciousness to Moral Conscience." In this paper, Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi tries to offer a brief sketch of the spiritual and 'aesthetic' foundations of moral praxis in the metaphysical, mystical and visionary traditions of Islam. This paper was first published in *A Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Reason and Faith in Theory and Practice* (London: Melisende, 2006 & 2011) and now, with slight changes, is published here.

The eighth paper is entitled "The Relation between Religion and Ethics." In this paper, Hujjat al-Islam Dr Abolfazl Sajedi examines the relationship between religion and ethics. Explaining what is meant by "religion" and "ethics," the author argues that there are two levels for ethics. The lower level of ethics does not depend on religion, since it can be understood and accepted without a specific religion. But the upper level of ethics can be only accessed through religion. This paper is published here in English for the first time.

The ninth and final paper is entitled "Faith and Morality in Islam and Christianity." In this paper, Dr Mohammad Fanaei Eshkevari argues that in both Islam and Christianity, the combination of faith and praxis or contemplation and action exists. In both religions, and indeed in all Abrahamic religions, faith and praxis, a pure heart and righteous deeds, and worshiping God (swt) and serving people are required. This paper was first published in *A Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Reason and Faith in Theory and Practice* (London: Melisende, 2006 & 2011) and now, with slight changes, is published here.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors of this volume and pray for their success in both their personal and academic lives. I would also like to thank Saajida Rhemtulla for editing the entire volume and making valuable comments. In

addition, I would like to thank Hujjat al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin Abdolhossein Moezzi, the Director of the Islamic Centre of England, for his support and encouragement. And last, but by no means least, I would like to thank God, the Almighty, for His Guidance and Favour upon us in both the past and the present.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

March 2012

A Glance at the History of the Shi'ite Ethics

Mohsen Javadi

Introduction

According to Islamic teachings, human beings can only flourish by faith and doing righteous deeds. God says:

> *"By the time! Indeed man is in loss except those who have faith and do righteous deeds" (103:1-3).*

Reflecting on this verse and others like it , leads to a number of serious questions: what exactly does it mean to have faith and what are the articles of faith? What kind of action can be regarded as a righteous deed? Most Muslim scholarship can be seen as an intensive struggle to explain the meaning and details of the two wings of salvation: faith and righteous deeds. Valuable books on theology, jurisprudence, theoretical and practical mysticism, philosophy and morality are all the result of this effort. Scholars with various tendencies and skills have done their best to understand the details of these two wings in different ways.

For the purposes of this paper, only "righteous deeds" (the realm of morality) will be focused on. It must be noted that there were and still are many different approaches to this matter. Shi'ite jurists, theologians and exegetes of the Qur'an and hadith (narratives relating the deeds and utterances of the Prophet or

twelve Imams), have tried to understand the moral principles and ethical teachings of the Qur'an by various methods. Some of them wanted to build a thoroughly Islamic ethical system, which would derive all its basic elements from the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith. They held that this was the only appropriate way to bring their efforts under the rubric of "Islamic ethics." After the translation of Greek books into Arabic and the growth of philosophy among Muslims though, another sort of ethical contemplation appeared. This ethical contemplation derives its basic principles and philosophical framework from the works of Plato, Aristotle and other figures of ancient Greece. As Majid Fakhri says:

> "The first relies heavily on the text of scripture, i.e., the Qur'an and the traditions of Muhammad; the second exploits the syllogistic or discursive methods far more fully and is ultimately affiliated to Greek ethics."[1]

Nevertheless, in virtue of their faith, Muslim philosophers have tried to create harmony between philosophical and Islamic ethics. Farabi (d. 950 C.E.) and Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030 C.E.) are the leaders of this trend in the Shi'ite world and some have said that their ethical works may be called "Shi'ite" in the sense of their being in harmony with Shi'ite doctrines. It would be better, however, to say that their works represent Shi'ite philosophical ethics, rather than Shi'ite ethics, which suggests a derivation from scriptural sources.

At any rate, the term "Shi'ite ethics" in the title of this paper is meant to include all sorts of ethical trends in the Shi'ite world, but there is an important point here. According to the Shi'ite teachings, reason is among the four basic sources of the moral order of Islam. (Of course, there is a minority of the Shi'ite scholars hold that reason is only a source as far as it supports the Islamic Law and that reason on its own is not capable of serving as a an independent source of moral judgments.) However, if it is

assumed that reason is one of the four basic sources then the reason-based achievements of philosophers cannot be separated from the rulings of the jurists in the field of ethics. By attending to this point a major trend among the Shi'a, to conjoin reason and revelation in their ethical studies, can be understood.

This combination of reason and revelation in moral studies, which is the characteristic of the Shi'ite approach to morality, has helped the Shi'ite scholars to develop rational investigations alongside hermeneutical inquiries of moral verses of the noble Qur'an and hadith. According to this approach, using independent reason as a source for moral understanding is not only allowed but is also prescribed and actually used in Qur'anic arguments. When God says that He will not command adultery it presupposes the rationally graspable adverse nature of adultery.[2]

To sum up this important approach to morality, the noble Qur'an is the inspiring and first level authority in providing a basis for the ethical systems of Islam, but it does not lead to undermining the authority of reason. It is even possible for reason to necessitate an interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an or of some hadith that goes contrary to their outward or literal meaning. This is due to the fact that reason is a hidden messenger of God; it can speak on behalf of God.[3]

Using reason and enhancing it in light of the revelation, Shi'ite scholars have developed an ethical theory which is both reasonable and, at the same time, is coherent with the scriptures.

In addition to these forms of ethical studies and sources there are other branches of Islamic fields like jurisprudence, mysticism and prayer books that are full of ethical ideas and considerations. Every serious study of Shi'ite ethics needs to refer to these as well. After a brief remark on the ethics of the noble Qur'an, some of the main and classical sources of Shi'ite ethics with different approaches among the Shi'ite writers will be referred to.

The noble Qur'an as the basis of Islamic ethics

Despite the fact that the word *khuluq*[4] is used only in two verses (68:4 and 26:137), most of the verses in the Holy Qur'an are related to ethical issues. This is confirmed by the Prophet's statement,

> "I have been sent by God to complete noble traits of character."[5]

There are certain Qur'anic verses that are related to the realm of ethics or are ethics-oriented verses. These include words that have some semantic or conceptual relation with ethics. Examples of such words and verses are: *dass* (abasement), and *tazkiya* (purification) (91:9); *sa'ādah* (felicity) and *shiqāwah* (wretchedness) (11:105); *islāh* (reform) and *ifsād* (corruption) (8:1) (26:181); and *hidāyah* (guidance) and *dilāl* (misleading) (64:6). There are also verses which relate to ethical matters and point to a certain act or disposition, for example: (i) the repulsiveness of burglary (5:33), of *ribā* (usury) (2:275), and of murder (5:29); (ii) the virtue/goodness of charity *infāq* (16:75), and of *sidq* (truth, honesty) (19:41). In addition to the above, most of the verses concerned with and indicative of God, *malakūt* (the kingdom of God; the Divine domain of the heavens), the human being and the natural world, revelation, prophethood, and resurrection have some relevance to ethics.

In addition to the Qur'an, there is a group of ethical texts for the Shi'a that includes commentaries and exegeses that touch upon ethical problems in a topical order or in the order of the occurrence of the verses of noble Qur'an. These works are numerous.

Narration-Based Ethics

One of the famous books in the Shi'ite tradition which contains many ethical narrations is *al-Kāfi* (literally meaning the

sufficient) of al-Kulayni (939 or 940 C.E.).[6] In the first section of his comprehensive work on the principles of religion, he dedicates a special chapter to social morality, "The Chapter of Companionship.". Dr. Howard comments on this chapter by saying:

> "At first sight it seems rather surprising to find such a chapter included in the *usul* or principles of religion. The main concern of the other chapters is man's relationship with God. This chapter emphasizes that the relationship with God also encompasses man's relationship with his fellow men."[7]

There are many commentaries on *Al-Kāfī*, out of which those of Mulla Sadra (1050 A.H), Mulla Saleh Mazandarani (1081 A.H.) and Mulla Mohammad Baqir Majlesi (1110 A.H.) are the most outstanding.

The other important source for scripture-based morality is Imam Ali's sermons, sayings and letters collected in the book *Nahj al-Balāghah*. It was compiled by one of the most noble Shi'ia scholars of the eleventh century, known as Sayyid Al-Raḍī (406AH/1015AD). *Nahj al-Balāghah* consists of three main parts: 241 sermons, 79 letters and 480 words of wisdom, in addition to nine hadith that Sayyid Al-Raḍī referred to as the "amazing words of wisdom of Imam Ali (as)".

Yet another famous book that falls under this category is Majlesi's *Bihār al-Anwār* (died 1111AH/1695AD).This book is comprises 110 volumes but volumes 64-76 in particular deal with ethical virtues and vices.[8] In this book, Majlesi has tried to collect whatever references and hadith that can be found for Qur'anic subjects and included them along with his own commentary and explanation. What adds to the significance of this book, which is indeed an encyclopedia of Shi'ite narrations, is that some of the

sources that were available to Majlesi are preserved solely through his work.[9]

Wasā'il al-Shi'ah is also an important collection of hadith that includes a section on morality. The book spans thirty volumes and is compiles by al-Hurr al-'Amili. The section of this work that discusses the major struggle (*jihād al-nafs*) has been translated into English as *Combat with the Self.*[10]

Finally, the most comprehensive narration-based book on ethics that has been written relatively recently, is *Al-Mahajjah Al-Bayḍā fi Tahzib al-Ihyā* by Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani (died 1091/1675). In his introduction to the book, Kashani enumerates the different reasons that convinced him to modify *Ihyā 'Ulūm al-Din* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) by Ghazali.[11] [12] One important reason is that some of the hadiths that Ghazali related are not authentic. In addition, Ghazali neglected to report narrations from the household of the Prophet that are found in Shi'ite sources. It should be noted that although Kashani modestly refers to his book as a summary and modification of Ghazali's book, he actually goes much further than Ghazali and his book can be considered an independent source of Islamic morality.

Purely Philosophical Ethics

As mentioned above, a purely philosophical approach to ethical studies among the Shi'ite scholars began with the translation of Greek books into Arabic. Many famous Muslim philosophers were Shi'a and this appears to be related to the high status of independent reasoning in Shi'a Islam. Farabi (950 C.E), Ibn Miskawayh (1030 C.E.) and Tusi (1274 C.E.) are three important Shi'ite leaders of this trend, whose ethical books are well known.

Farabi has written many important books on ethical subjects, such as *Tahsil al-Sa'ādah* (The Attainment of Happiness),[13] *Al-Tanbih 'alā Sabil al-Sa'ādah*,[14] and *Fusul al-Muntaz'ah* (Selected

Aphorisms).[15] In these works, Farabi offers his theory of happiness, influenced by the way Greek philosophers, like Aristotleness. Farabi elaborated on the details of virtues and vices by analyzing the special function of human beings as a unique species. Despite the influence of Greek philosophers on his ethical theory, he is not a mere imitator of them. Rather, he tries to use some of the basic Shi'ite ideas, especially the idea of Imamate, in his political and even ethical studies. For example, he holds that in some cases, knowledge can only be achieved via the Imam.[16]

Another figure who takes a philosophical approach to ethics is a very controversial scholar: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Razi (864-925 C.E.), who represents Galen's ethics in the Muslim world and is counted among the Shi'a scholars. He was a physician, a philosopher and a chemist. He has authored more than two hundred works and was known as "the unsurpassed physician of Islam."[17] His famous book, *Spiritual Medicine*, is a paradigm of philosophical study known as the medical approach to ethics (the Arabic phrase literally means the *hospital* approach). It has its own principles which distinguish it from other approaches to philosophical studies of ethics.[18] This line of ethical consideration was more practical than that of other philosophers, and indeed, like medicine, is based on experiment. In fact, most of its discussions are parallel to the discussions of medicine.

There is also a book that belongs to the Isma'ili Shi'a, called the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwan al-Safa (Brethren of Purity), the ninth essay. The authors were a group of philosophers of the fourth or fifth century A.H. (tenth or eleventh century C.E.). The attitude taken by the Ikhwan al-Safa has some esoteric elements and is rooted in the Qur'an and Hermetic tradition in Greek thought.

There is no doubt that Ibn Miskawayh is qualified to be considered the second Shi'ite moral philosophers after Farabi. He has several ethical treatises dealing with the question of

happiness and justice, but his most influential and important book is *Tahārat al-A'rāq*, better known as, *Tahdhib al-Akhlāq*. In this book, he primarily discusses the nature and function of the soul, and takes the virtues to be excellence of the rational soul. He then discusses justice, friendship and human happiness with its objects and grades. Finally he talks in detail about the different ways of healing sick souls as a moral doctor.

Nasir al-Din Tusi, also a chief Shi'ite philosopher, composed the book *Akhlāq-e Nāsiri* (Nasirian Ethics) in the light of Miskaway's *Tahdhib al-Akhlāq*. Additionally, he authored the well-known book *Awsāf al-Ashrāf*, in which he gives an account of different stations of the spiritual journey.

And last but not least, is a figure in philosophical ethics called Jalal al-Din Davāni (907/1501). His book *Lawāmi' al-Ishrāq fi Makārim al-Akhlāq* (known as *Akhlāq-e Jalāli*), like that of Tusi, has three basic parts dealing with individual morality, home economics and politics. The book, as the author says, is influenced in substance and manner by *Akhlāq-e Nāsiri*.

Unfortunately, there is no room to provide a list of the works by Shi'ite philosophers like Avicenna and Mulla Sadra. Although they have not written independently on ethics, they have provided a treasure of ethical matters such as philosophical psychology, and the stages of human life that are necessary for ethics as the whole. They have also made a huge contribution to mystical literature in Islam.

A Synthetic Approach to Reason and Revelation

The characteristic of this approach is that reason is not only used as an instrument for explaining the text, which can sometimes be seen in the narration-based attitude, but is also used as an independent source, at least in the case of the absence of textual evidence. This approach is distinguished from the philosophical one because of the great attention that it pays to the revealed

teachings. This form of ethical studies is like a spectrum whose authors include those scholars that only accept independent reason as a source for ethics in the case of lack of revelation and those who accept independent reason without limitation. The controversy over faith and reason following the actual conflict in the theoretical domain can be extended to the conflict between practical claims about reason and faith. This is not the place for the discussion of this problem,[19] so reference is only being made to one of the most important Shi'ite ethical books that has been written with this combined approach to ethics.

Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt by Mulla Mahdi Naraghi is certainly a prominent book. It contains an integrated discussion of ethics using the verses of the noble Qur'an and reliable narrations while at the same time using independent reasoning to articulate Shi'ite ethics. This book is one of the most common texts in the Shi'ite seminaries. It has been translated into Farsi in a reliable manner and is actually used as a textbook in some Iranian Universities in the field of ethics.

Ethics in Theology and Jurisprudence[20]

Unlike Christian theology that includes ethical studies, *Kalām* is primarily concerned with beliefs. Muslims scholars have developed different disciplines for studies related to the creed or theoretical aspects of religion (such as the existence of God, divine attributes, prophethood, and resurrection), and those related to practical studies (including morality and jurisprudence). Thus, the explanation of the theoretical dimensions of Islamic teachings has been reserved for *mutakallimūn* (scholars of kalām), while the explanation of practical dimensions of Islamic teachings have been reserved for jurisprudents. According to this classification of tasks, a discussion of morality should not be expected in kalām. Despite this, fortunately, there are discussions of related issues pertaining to the problem of divine actions (e.g. is it possible that God performs evil actions?), which can be used in moral epistemology. The problem at hand is how is it possible

to know that an action is evil, independent of God's commands? And furthermore, how is it possible to judge that God would not perform such an action? The main concern for moral epistemology is the justification of moral beliefs and the warranting of these beliefs. The Mu'tazilites and the Shi'ites were the first in the Muslim world to answer this question. But in order to do so they needed an ontological investigation into the character of moral properties.

Such an investigation led them to accept an objectivist view of ethics. According to them, some actions have a good character within them and others have a bad character. It is not the case that God confers these properties on them by His will or commands but rather that these properties are intrinsic (*dhāti*) and inherent in the acts. God's commands play no part in their designation as good or bad. The early Mu'tazilites did not say more about the nature of these properties (whether they supervene on natural properties, for example), because their primary interest was not in ethics, but in kalām. They wanted to show that human beings have some obligations independent of revelation, and that they even have an obligation to submit to the revelation. They hold that not only do such obligations exist, but that they can also be recognized through the intellect. Shahrestani, the famous expert on the sects of Islam, says:

> "They [Mutazilites and Shi'ites] agreed that the principles of knowledge and gratitude of benefaction are obligatory, prior to the advent of revelation, and similarly, that right and wrong ought to be known through reason, and that the adoption of right and the avoidance of wrong is likewise obligatory. The advent of religious obligation is a grace from God the Almighty that He imparted to mankind through the Prophets to test and prove them."[21]

Thus, it can be concluded that although Shi'ite kalām was not originally concerned with morality, it has provided good materials for Islamic metaethics.

With respect to jurisprudence or fiqh, the situation is quite the opposite because the task of jurisprudence is to explain the details of what needs to be performed to attain salvation. Since morality, at least according to some moral theories like the eudemonic ones that were eventually dominant in Islamic areas, sees ethics as a means for salvation, it is easy to realize that the overlapping of morality and jurisprudence could not be avoided. Of course, in theory they can be distinguished to some extent by, for example, contrasting their methods or subject matters. Nonetheless, in practice, it is difficult to draw a border between them. Many ideas related to Islamic metaethics or applied ethics can be found in the studies of jurisprudence. As an example, one of the textbooks that is used in the Islamic seminaries for the intermediate level is called *Makāsib Muhrramah*. This book, especially the first part of it, studies prohibited acts in Islam with synthetic methodology in which both revelation and reason are fully taken into account.

Although ethical studies have always received great attention from the Shi'ite scholars, a considerable increase in the amount of works produced in this field can be noted in the twentieth century, and especially in the last few decades. In addition to giving regular lectures on ethics or spirituality, Ayatollah Khomeini has written enormously on ethics and mysticism. For example, one may refer to *Arba'in* (Forty Hadiths) and *Sharhe-e Hadith-e Junūd-e 'Aql wa Jahl* (Commentary on the Hadiths of Armies of Intellect and Ignorance). Allamah Tabataba'i, in both his philosophical works but particularly in *Usūl-e Falsafeh wa Ravesh-e Realism* and his commentary of the Qur'an, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsir al-Qur'an*, has dealt with both metaethical and normative questions. Among the next generation of scholars, one may refer to the works of Ayatollah Javadi Amuli [in particular, *Mabādi-e Akhlāq* (Foundations of Ethics) and *Marāhil-e Akhlāq* (Stages of Ethics)], Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi [in particular, *Akhlāq dar*

Qur'an (Ethics in the Qur'an), vols. 1-3, *Falsafeh-e Akhlāq* (Moral Philosophy) and *Naqd wa Barresi Makātib-e Akhlāqi* (Critical Study of Ethical Theories)], Ayatollah Makrem Shirazi [in particular, *Akhlāq dar Qur'an* (Ethics in the Qur'an), vols. 1 & 2] and Dr. Mehdi Hāi'ri Yazdi [in particular, *Kāvushhāy-e 'Aql-e 'Amali* (Investigations on Practical Reason)]. Among the young scholars, one may refer to a generation of the graduates of the Islamic Seminaries of Qum who are at the same time deeply familiar with western ethics. Due to the initiatives of some of these seminarians, postgraduate courses on moral philosophy or Islamic ethics are now offered in some Iranian universities and seminaries and, as a result, many dissertations and theses on ethical subjects are being produced.

On a final note, it should be observed that there are works not produced primarily for ethical studies that have very rich materials for moral investigation and therefore are morally significant. These include the books of prayers and supplications, out of which *Al-Sahifah al-Sajjādiyyah* by Imam Sajjad is the most important. Similarly, there are many books on theoretical or practical mysticism like *Bahr al-Ma'ārif* by Mulla 'Abd al-Samad Hamadani and *Asrār al-Shari'ah wa Atwār al-Tariqah wa Anwār al-Haqiqah* by Sayyid Haydar Amuli, which have not been dealt with in this paper.[22] Of course, this is in addition to the spiritual poems in Arabic, Farsi and other languages like *Golestān* by Sa'di.

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[1] Fakhri, Majid, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill) , 1991, IX.

[2] For a discussion of ethical presuppositions of the noble Qur'an see Hourani, G.F, "Ethical Presuppositions of the Qur'an" in his book *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge), 1985, p. 35.

[3] See: Javadi, Mohsen, Faith and Reason in Shi'a tradition, in *A Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice*, Anthony O'Mahony, Wulstan Peterburs and Mohammad Ali Shomali (eds) , London, Melisende, 2006 , p.69

[4]The word Akhlaq 'morality' (pl. of Arabic khuluq or khulq) means the human unobservable inward 'face'; while the same root is used to derive the Arabic word khalq, which stands for the observable physical 'face' of a human being. See: Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Al-Mufradāt fi Gharib al-Qur'an*, s.v. kh-l-q; *Tāj al-'Arūs*, vol. . s.v. kh-l-q. Idiomatically, khulq is a psychical quality or disposition that causes an act to take place, without thinking and quite simply. What is psychically transitory is termed a state (*haal*), while what is permanent or long-lasting is called a disposition (*malikah*) *see: Al-Hikmah al-muta`aliyah*, vol. . 4, p. 63; *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, p. 27; and Al-Ghazzali, *Ihya al-`Ulum*, Vol. 3, p. 96.

[5] *Musnad al-Rida*, p. 131; *Majma` al-Bayaan*, vol. . 10, p. 86; *Bihar al-Anwaar*, vol. . 68, pp. 382-83.

[6] For a detailed study on this book and its author see "Al-Kafī' by Al-Kulayni", I. K. A. Howard, *Al-Serat*, Vol. . 2 (1976), No. 1

[7] Ibid.

[8] Majlesi, Muhammad Baqer. 1985, *Behar al-Anvar* (110 volumes), Dar Ihyā al-Turāth, Beirut

[9] For an introduction to the ethical sources of *Bihār al-Anwār*, see *Kitāb Shenākht-e Akhlāq Islami* (Bibliography of Islamic Ethics) by Mahdi Ahamad Poor et al., Pajuheshgāh Ulum-e Insāni, 1385, pp. 275-287.

[10] Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Hurr al-Ameli, *Combat with the Self*, Tr. Nazmina A. Virjee, ICAS Press 2003.

[11]This book is widely regarded as one of the greatest work of Muslim spirituality, and has, for centuries, been one of the most read books in the Muslim world. The book is divided into four parts each containing ten chapters. The first part deals with knowledge and the requirements of faith—ritual purity, prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage, recitation of the Qur'an, etc.; part two concentrates mostly on people and society—the manners relating to eating, marriage, earning a living, friendship, etc.; parts three and four are dedicated to the inner life of the soul and discuss first the vices that people must remove from themselves and then the virtues that they must strive to achieve. This work is also translated into English.

[12] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450-505 AH/1058-1111 AD) is one of the great jurists, theologians and mystics of the 12th Century. He wrote on a wide range of topics including jurisprudence, theology, mysticism and philosophy.

[13] Al-Farabi, *Tahsil al-Sa'aadah*, JaFar Al Yasin, (ed), Beirut, 1985

[14] Al-Farabi, *Al-Tanbih 'ala Sabil al-Sa'aadah*, Ja'far Aal-e Yasin (ed), Beirut, 1985

[15] Al-Farabi, *Fusul al-Muntaz'a*, Ed. Fozi Metri Najjar, Tehran, Al-Zahra 1405

[16] Ibid, 21

[17] For a detail study on his works and life see: Goodman , Lenn E. , Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, in *History of Islamic Philosophy* , (eds) Sayyid Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman , pp. 198-215.

[18] For a detailed study on this approach see: Muhhamad 'Abed Jaberi, Al-Aql al-Akhlaqi Al-'arabi , (Beirut: Markaz al- Dirasaat al-'Arabiyya) , 2001, pp. 291-315

[19] See Javadi , Mohsen , "Faith and Reason in Shi'a Tradition", pp. 77-79.

[20] I take this word to include what we call fiqh (Islamic Law) and the usul al-fiqh (the methodology of fiqh).

[21] Al-Shahrastani, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, I, 29. Cited in Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 1991), p. 31.

[22] For a bibliographical study of this approach, see *Ketab Shenakht-e Akhlaq-e Islami* (Bibliography of Islamic Ethics), Mahdi Ahamad Poor and et all, Pajuheshgah Ulum Insani, 1385, pp. 157-255.

A General Scheme of Ethics in Shi'i Islam

Abdolhossein Moezzi

This paper does not seek to deal with ethics as the ethicists have done. Nor does it deal with the philosophy of ethics as the moral philosophers have done. Rather, this paper will concentrate on the general scheme of ethics and in particular, on the triangle of the Islamic teachings: creed, law and ethics. The subject of ethics in Islam, especially in Shi'i Islam plays a major role in guiding mankind. To this end, the Prophet of Islam has said,

> "Traits of character are the receptacle of religion."

Furthermore, the subject of ethics holds so much importance from the Islamic point of view that God the Exalted, when praising the Prophet, says, *"and indeed you possess a great character"* (68:4), and the Prophet of Islam himself describes his most fundamental function as:

> "I was sent to bring to perfection the traits of character [within man]."[1]

He also said,

> "God, the Glorious, made the noble traits of character a bond between Him and His servants. Therefore, it would suffice if each of you hold fast to the character associated with God."[2]

And Imam Sadiq, the Sixth Imam, has said,

> "God, the Glorious and the Exalted, endowed the Messenger of God with the noble traits of character. So adorn yourselves with the noble traits of character. If you possess these virtues, praise God, the Blessed and the Exalted and ask Him for being endowed with more noble traits of character."[3]

The following discussion in this paper mostly draws on the Qur'an, Tradition (*sunnah*) and occasionally on the views and ideas of the Shi'a scholars. The paper will deal with some of the pivotal points that are considered to be the key factors in the discussion of the general scheme of ethics.

The Place of Man

The word akhlāq in Arabic which is the plural of khulq means temper and character. It is rooted in the inner animalistic and human forces of man. Every religion or school of thought, when dealing with good, evil, decent and indecent traits of character and their effects on man's fate and on his wordly and other-worldly lives should, first of all, deal with the place of man within that religion or school of thought. Thus in this paper, the place of man from the point of view of Shi'i Islam will be specified first.

Of course, the Qur'an has dealt extensively with how man was created and with the course of his development and his psychic, spiritual, individual and social states. This paper does not intend to touch upon all these aspects. Only the fundamental subject of the place of man from the Qur'anic point of view will be dealt with in three points below.

1. Man is the Vicegerent of God on Earth

The Qur'an says:

> *"when your lord said to the angels, indeed I am going to set a vicegerent on the earth."* (2:30)

It is understood from this verse and the subsequent ones that God told the angels He would appoint His vicegerent on earth whose qualities would be a reflection of God's qualities. Man has the ability to be God's deputy on Earth as he has learned the realities of all things.

This verse further illustrates that as a result of the grace shown by God to man he has been endowed with certain potentialities. He thus holds a special place in the order of creation that is limited only to him. This and his position as the vicegerent of God on earth indicate the distinctive feature of man.[4]

2. Man is the Only Being Endowed with Dignity

The Quran says:

> *"Certainly we have honoured the Children of Adam...and given an advantage [to them] over many of those we have created."* (17:70)

From this verse it can be understood that God favoured and made man superior to all the other beings, because He only honoured him.[5]

Human dignity means being endowed with many powers, the highest and most important of which are the intellect and free will. Through these traits, man can find sound beliefs and also attain the right traits of character and the perfections that are worthy of him. He can thereby become superior to the other creatures. The Prophet of Islam said:

"Intellect is a light which God created for man and made it the illuminator of the heart."[6]

Imam Sadiq quotes Imam Ali as saying:

"God endowed the angels with intellect only and with no instinctive desires and He endowed the animals with only instinctive desires but the children of Adam were endowed with both intellect and instinctive desires. Therefore, if his intellect overcomes his sensual desires he will be superior to the angels, and if his intellect is overcome by his desires, he will be lower than animals."[7]

3. Man Bears the Trust of God

The Quran says:

"Indeed we presented the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but they refused to bear it and were apprehensive of it but man undertook it." (34:72)

This verse of the Qur'an indicates the lofty state of man in the order of creation. In this verse, a comparison has been made between the heavens and the earth, the mountains and man.

The heaven symbolizes loftiness, the earth vastness, and the mountains steadfastness. On one hand, man is a weak being of small stature. Looking at the heavens, the earth, the mountains and man, it can be seen that man can never equal them let alone brag and boast. But the words chosen by God, the Creator, the All-wise and the All-knowing, which seems to be symbolic, indicate that the heavens and the earth and the mountains despite all their grandeur could not accept the trust and were in awe of

the grandeur of that trust. It was man who accepted the divine trust and thus became the bearer of the trust of God.

The questions that arise are: What is this trust? How will men deal with this trust? And what effect will accepting the trust have on them? The above verse is one of the most discussed verses of the Qur'an. In short though, it seems that the divine trust as undertaken by man is something that it is only possible for him to bear and that, as a result of accepting the true and sound beliefs and acting upon the obligations and injunctions that God has ordained for him, he endeavours diligently and traverses the path of God sincerely. Such a human being who obeys God and worships Him sincerely will enjoy His protection in life. Furthermore, he will ascend from the lower animal states to the highest rank of humanity and to the state of proximity to God. He will achieve the sought after perfection worthy of him and the lofty rank as willed by God for him. This verse teaches us that it is only man who possesses such potential and it is only he who can bear the trust of God on earth and enjoy the sanctity of God.[8]

The Potential of Man

What is understood from the three states of man explained above is that in terms of capacity and inner and spiritual potential, man deserves to attain the rank of vicegerent of God. He also deserves to be honoured by God, to be superior to the other beings. Of course, this does not mean that men are actually qualified for these states, but rather it means that man potentially possesses the capacity for them and can actualize it. However, if man does wrong and causes corruption and depravity on earth, God will dismiss him from the rank of vicegerent. Similarly, if he commits sins, avoids worship and obedience to God and breaks the laws of God, he will lose his dignity. If he associates a partner with God and is hypocritical in the religious truths, he will betray the divine trust and consequently will lose his human rank.

Man and Free Will

As God has endowed man with the great assets mentioned above, is he then free to employ his abilities or to ignore them as he chooses? The answer to the question from the Shi'ite point of view is that man has free will. He can choose to spend his life as he wishes. There are many verses in the Quran testifying to this truth. For example, the Qur'an says:

> *"There is no compulsion in religion; rectitude has become distinct from error."* (2:256)
>
> *"Verily, we have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful."* (76:3)
>
> *"...by the soul and him who fashioned it, and inspired it with [with discernment between] its virtues and vices: one who purifies it is certainly felicitous, and one who betrays it certainly fails."* (91:7-10)

Apart from the above-mentioned verses, reason also rules that attaining human accomplishments and values is only possible for man if he has free will and if he believes that he has free will. Of course, human freedom is not in conflict with God's control over everything, as explained in theology.

The Roles of Faith and Knowledge

The other question that arises here is: which factors and motives are required in order to uplift man to the state that God has prepared for him. It should be noted that the strongest motive of man in every task is the faith derived from knowledge of that task. The deeper his knowledge, the firmer his faith will become.

Not only does faith make man struggle against various psychic, spiritual and social pressures but it also makes him stronger and

makes his work easier for him. Therefore, in order to attain those states, correct and deep knowledge of them is necessary, as is firm and lasting faith.

Righteous Deeds

Faith and belief however, are not sufficient to attain the ranks that God has willed for man. Performing decent and proper acts as ordained by God are also required because without performing them, man cannot attain the states worthy of him. Thus, the Qur'an says:

> *"By time Indeed man is at a loss except those who have faith and do righteous deeds."* (103:1-3)

Symbolically speaking, in the same way that no bird can fly with only one wing, man cannot attain the states and ranks mentioned above with faith alone. Hence, the Qur'an says:

> *"...good words rise up to Him and He lifts up the righteous deed."* (35:10).

Submission to God

The obligations and injunctions that, if acted upon, will lead man to attain the states and ranks worthy of him have been laid down as commands and prohibitions by God and are based on man's best interests. They were conveyed to the Prophet through the revelation and have thereby reached man. Believing in and acting upon them is necessary and thus for the attainment of those states, faith should be accompanied by submission. The main point here is that belief, submission and the sincere obedience of man to God is not something imposed on him. The Qur'an says:

> *"So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of God according to which He originated mankind (There is no altering*

God's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know)." (30:30)

Therefore, as man is naturally endowed with an inner urge to seek God, it is clear that obedience accompanied by surrender at heart is not imposed on him. In fact, it is a means of fulfilling of his inner needs.

Instinctive Desires

Within man there are other forces and tendencies that, if obeyed unconditionally, will prevent him from fulfilling the will of God and performing good and decent acts. Such unconditional obedience to the instinctive desires and tendencies not only prevents man from surrendering to God and obeying Him, but is also a threat to his faith. Some of these powers, drives and desires consist of: ingratitude to God, neglect and forgetfulness of the Sacred Divine Essence, egotism, self-conceit, self-aggrandizement, jealousy, anger, love of accumulating wealth, greed, covetousness, stinginess, love of power, cruelty, indulgence in sexual desires, and so on. If these desires are gratified improperly the harm they can do to man's faith is, if not irremediable, barely remediable.

The Commanding Self

God has endowed man with a soul. One aspect of this soul is what the Quran calls, "the commanding self". This self always commands man to fulfil his desires and wishes unconditionally. Of course, the existence of this self is necessary for the continuation of human life, but it needs to be harnessed if man wishes to benefit from it properly, since it is very powerful and almost uncontrollable. Therefore, there is always a battle within man, between his carnal desires and what is willed by God, reason and original human nature. God requires man to ascend to the high peaks of perfection as do reason and original human nature, while the commanding soul commands him to evil,

corruption, and the inner conflict. The battle within man is so strong and serious that the holy Prophet called it 'the great struggle.' Of course, this does not mean that man will definitely be defeated in this struggle because anyone that takes refuge in God and asks for His help will doubtless benefit from His endless mercy, which will help him in this struggle.

The Blaming Self

God also endowed man with another aspect to his soul, which the Qur'an calls 'the blaming self.' The function of this soul is that when man takes the wrong path and commits sins, it will blame him until he returns to the right path. Thus, the blaming self establishes equilibrium within man by countering the effect of the commanding self. When balance is established, man attains the state of tranquillity or inner peace, which is the third stage of the soul within man.

The Qur'an describes those who have been able to attain the peaceful soul as the servants with whom God is pleased and says,

> *"O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing! Then enter among My servants! And enter my paradise!"* (89:27:29).

Therefore, we learn from the Qur'an that spiritual peace is attained only in the light of faith and remembrance of God:

> *"Those who have faith and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of God. Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance"* (13:28).

Controlling the Sensual Desires

As stated earlier, man possesses numerous desires which, if employed properly, are useful and even necessary for the continuation of material life and also for the attainment of high

spiritual and human ideals. However, if these desires disobey the commands of reason, they lose their balance and are changed into vices, they will be harmful and destructive.

So what is to be done? In order for the instinctive desires to obey the commands of reason or, in other words, in order for man to attain his optimum perfection and to improve his traits of character, two paths are available to: the first one is that of firm belief in God and in eternal life of the next world. If man possesses this firm belief, he will have proper control over his sensual desires because he knows that the consequence of giving into them is that he will be cut off from God:

> *"Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god?"* (5:43)

And in the words of Imam Ali:

> "Obeying one's carnal desires makes one blind, deaf, lowly and astray."[9]

Without doubt, one whose inner eyes have become blind, whose inner ears have become deaf, who does not see the signs of God and who lacks knowledge of God is a misguided man who is deprived and abased in his human life. He can hardly return to God and discover the truth. Imam Ali has has also said:

> "One who obeys one's carnal desires has sold his next life in exchange for his worldly life."[10]

Therefore, firm faith in God and life in the next world is the strongest force which prevents man from obeying his carnal desires and such a human being not only brings his desires under the control of his reason but is also always mindful of not obeying any desire save that which is wished by God. Such a man will be successful and will be placed in paradise. The Quran says:

"But as for him who is awed is saved to stand before his Lord and forbids the soul from [following] desire, his refuge will indeed be paradise." (79:40-41)

Therefore, faith in God and the reward and punishment of the next world is the right path to control one's desires and it also prevents man from obeying his carnal desires and helps him change his evil traits of character into good ones. This is a path to which the divinely-inspired prophets have invited man and asked him to obey God and be mindful of Him and fear divine punishment.

The second way to control the lower desires and improve one's traits of character is to have a deep knowledge of God, the Exalted, and to feel oneself in the presence of God. The Qur'an says:

"This is Allah, your Lord, there is no god except Him, the creator of all things, so worship Him." (6:102)

"...the All-mighty, the All-merciful, who perfected everything that He created." (32:7)

"All are obedient to Him." (2:116)

If man attains such understanding and knowledge of God, he will gain a firm faith that nothing can shake. The Qur'an says:

"Your Lord has decreed that shall not worship anyone except Him" (7:23).

"...Is it not sufficient that your lord is witness to all things? Look! He indeed comprehends all things!" (41:53-54)

Without question, such knowledge, which results in faith mixed with love of the Sacred Divine Essence, will leave no room within man for self-aggrandizement, jealousy, stinginess, anger, cowardice, love of power, worldliness and so on. Without question, faith accompanied by knowledge and sincerity not only drives base qualities away from man but it also blocks the path of satanic temptations within his heart because Satan knows that he cannot conquer the servants who have purified themselves for God. Therefore, those who have purified their hearts of inner impurity and who seek and wish nothing but the pleasure of God always live under His protection. They are worthy of vicegerency on earth and God-given nobility and are also worthy of being the bearers of the Trust of God.

It can thus be concluded that the best way to improve the traits of character, to purify the soul and attain high moral values is the way of faith in God mixed with love, which is also the way of Islam. It is the way of a religion whose most fundamental principle is the Oneness of God, which is the spirit and also the quintessence of all its doctrines and individual and social laws and injunctions.

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[1] *Mizān al-Hikamah*, hadith no. 1520.

[2] *Ibid.* hadith no. 1532.

[3] *Ibid.* hadith no. 1530.

[4] *Al-Mizān*, vol. 1, p. 115.

[5] *Tafsir-e Nemūnah*, vol. 12, p. 199.

[6] *Ibid.* hadith no. 3880.

[7] *Ibid.* hadith no. 426.

[8] *Al-Mizān*, vol. 16, pp. 348-352.

[9] *Mizān al-Hikmah*, hadith no. 6695.

[10] *Ibid.*

Moral System of Islam

Mohammad Ali Shomali

In this paper, we will try to develop an acquaintance with aspects of the Islamic moral system while taking a glance at the fruits and outcomes of living a life of faith and embarking on the spiritual journey. Moral teachings of Islam can be classified as follows:

I Instructions about one's relationship with God;

II Instructions about one's relationship with oneself;

III Instructions about one's relationship with other people including family, relatives, friends, neighbours, strangers, clients, teachers, students, fellow-human beings, and so on;

IV Instructions about one's relationship with the environment including, animals, plants, air, water and other living and non-living beings.

There is very rich literature pertaining to each category. Some examples from each category will be discussed in this paper.

I. Relationship with God

Remembrance of God: Many verses the Holy Qur'an command the believers to remember God. For example, the Holy Qur'an says:

> *"Remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning."* (3:41)

> *"And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion."* (73:8)

Remembrance of God has a lot of advantages and benefits such as the serenity and tranquillity that can be attained in the heart:

> *"Those who believe and whose hearts find serenity by the remembrance of God; now surely by God's remembrance hearts find serenity and tranquillity."* (13:28)

The other benefit of remembering God is that the heart becomes luminous. In this regard, Imam Ali has said,

> "Certainly God, the Glorified, has made His remembrance the luminosity and shine of the hearts."[1]

Worship: God, in various verses of the Qur'an, commands us to worship Him sincerely and faithfully,

> *"Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, therefore worship God being sincere to Him in obedience."* (39:2)

Addressing Abraham, God says,

> *"Say: surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for God, the Lord of the worlds."* (6:162)

Trust in God: There are many verses in which God commands the believers to trust Him:

"And on God should you rely and trust if you are believers." (5:23)

Repentance: In numerous verses God asks the believers to repent to Him and ask His forgiveness,

"O you who believe! Repent towards God a sincere repentance." (66:8)

"And ask forgiveness of your Lord, then repent towards Him surely my Lord is Merciful, loving-kind." (11:90)

II. Relationship with Oneself

Purification of the soul: God puts emphasis on the purification and purity of the human soul by swearing eleven times in the following verse,

"I swear by the sun and its brilliance, and the moon when it follows the sun, and the day when it makes manifest the sun (and her beauty), and the night when it covers the sun, and the heaven and Him who made it, and the earth and Him who extended it, and the soul and Him who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it. He will indeed be successful who purifies it and he will indeed fail whoever pollutes and corrupts it." (91:1-10)

Purification of the soul is a prerequisite for proximity to God. Indeed, the whole point of morality and spirituality is to purify one's soul. It is only when this is achieved that the soul starts shining, receiving and reflecting the radiation and light from God. A major task of all the Prophets and one of the aims behind all their endeavours in teaching the divine message was to help people to purify their souls. The Qur'an says,

> *"He is the one who has sent amongst illiterate people an apostle from among themselves who recites to them His verses and purifies them and teaches them the Book and the wisdom."* (62:2)

> *"Certainly God conferred a great favour upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error."* (3:164)

The verse below was an answer to the prayer of Abraham and Ishmael after they raised the foundations of the Holy House (*Ka'bah*):

> *"Our Lord! Accept from us; surely You are the Hearing, the Knowing...Our Lord! And raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise."* (2:127-129)

The above-mentioned verses clearly show the great significance of purification of the soul. The reason for such an emphasis is that God is the most Pure and the most Perfect and it is only by the purification of the soul that we can hope to attain closeness to Him.

Self-control: In this regard, the Qur'an says,

> *"And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids his own soul from its whims and caprices then surely the Paradise is the abode."* (79:41 & 42)

> *"O David! ...do not follow the whims of your own soul for they will lead you astray from God's path." (38:26)*
>
> *"O you who believe.... Do not follow your low desires (the whim of your soul)."* (4:135)

In *Nahj al-Balāghah,* Imam Ali has been quoted saying,

> "In the past I had a brother-in-faith, and he was prestigious in my view because the world was humble in his eyes... if two things confronted him he would see which was more akin to his whims and he would oppose it."[2]

Truthfulness: There is a great emphasis on truthfulness in both, the Holy Qur'an and traditions. Some examples are cited below:

> *"O you who believe! fear the wrath of God, and say only that which is true."* (33:70)
>
> *"O you who believe! Fear the wrath of God and be with those who are truthful."* (9:119)

In addition to these verses, after appointing Ma'adh b. Jabal as the governor of Yemen, the Holy Prophet told him,

> "I command you to fear God, tell the truth and keep your promises..."[3]

Humility: In Islam arrogance is considered a fatal deficiency of the human soul and a major source of many sins and mistakes. According to the Qur'an, the reason that Satan refused to obey God and prostrate before Adam was his arrogance. On the other hand, humility is a very great virtue. The Qur'an says:

> *"And the servants of the Beneficent God are those who go (walk) on the earth with humility and when*

the ignorant address them they reply peaceably and with great courtesy." (25:63)

"And do not treat people with arrogance, nor go about in the land exulting over much, surely God does not love any self-conceited boaster." (31:18)

Being Moderate and Balanced: As mentioned earlier, God created the world with justice and in turn He expects human beings to act justly. A requirement of justice is to give everything its due right and to strike a balance. Dealing in extremes leads to injustice to oneself or to others. Below, a verse about balance in general is mentioned first and it is then followed by two verses about specific cases in which balance is required,

"And the heaven, He raised it high, and He made the balance, that you may not be inordinate in respect of the measure, and keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient." (55:7-9)

"They are the ones who, when spending of their sustenance for the sake of God, are neither extravagant nor miserly: as with everything else they practise moderation and strike a correct balance between the extremes." (25:97)

"Neither speak your prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between." (17:110)

Patience:

"O you who believe! Seek assistance through patience and prayer, surely God is with the patient." (2:152)

> *"O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of (your duty to) God, that you may be successful."* (3:200)

Suppression of anger:

> *"It (Paradise) has been prepared for those who suppress their anger."* (3:137)

Avoidance of suspicion:

> *"O, you who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin."* (49:12)

Imam Ali said,

> "Do not regard an expression uttered by any person as evil if you can find it capable of bearing some good."[4]

Protection of tongue: The Prophet has said,

> "The salvation of the believer is in the protection of his tongue."[5]

> "The belief of a person cannot be firm unless his heart is firm, and his heart cannot be firm unless his tongue is firm."[6]

Luqman said to his son,

> "O my son! If you think that the speech is silver, surely the silence is gold."[7]

Pursuit of knowledge: Islam regards ignorance as a deficiency and the acquisition of knowledge as a virtue. The Qur'an says,

> *"One who has knowledge can never be equal to the one who is ignorant."* (39:9)

The Prophet has said,

> "It is the duty of every Muslim male and every Muslim female to seek knowledge."[8]

> "Seek knowledge even if you have to travel as far as China."[9]

> "If one leaves one's house with the intention of gaining knowledge, for every step that he takes, God shall bestow upon him the reward reserved for a Prophet."[10]

Reasoning and reflection: The Qur'an asks mankind to use reason (47 times), to think (18 times) and to reflect (4 times). For example, it says:

> *"In the creation of heavens and earth and in the difference between night and day are tokens for men of understanding. These are those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and then cry out): Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain. Glory be to Thee!"* (3:190-191).

Imam Kazim says:

> "Nothing more precious than reason has been given to people. The slumber of a man of reason is better than the worship of the ignorant throughout the night."[11]

Imam Askari says:

> "Worship does not lie in engaging oneself in saying prayers endlessly or in fasting copiously, but in engaging oneself in the reflection on the divine affairs."[12]

Focus on One's own Moral Problems: Every Muslim needs to be an active member of society, be aware of what is going wrong in society, and try to promote moral values. However, a person should not forget his own problems and deficiencies. Imam Ali has said:

> "He who sees his own shortcomings (defects) keeps away from looking into other's shortcomings."[13]

Freedom from Envy:

> *"Or do they envy the people for what God has given them of His grace?"* (4:54)

The Prophet has said:

> "Surely envy destroys the faith as fire destroys the firewood."[14]

III. Relationship with Other People

There are many instructions that govern relationships with others. Here are some examples:

Fulfilling one's Promise:

> *"And fulfil the promise surely (every) promise shall be questioned about."* (17:34)

> *"And those who are faithful to their trusts and their covenant."* (70:32)

Delivery of Trust:

> *"Surely God commands you to make over trusts to their owners."* (4:58)

> *"If one of you trusts another then he who is trusted should deliver his trust."* (2:283)

Pardon:

> *"And those who restrain (their) anger and pardon people."* (3:135)

> *"They should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving Merciful."* (24:22)

The Holy Prophet has said,

> "May I lead you to the best moralities of this world and the life to come? These moralities are to regard him who disregard you, give him who deprived you (of his bestowals) and pardon him who wronged you."[15]

Imam Ali has said,

> "When you gain power over your adversary pardon him by way of thanks for being able to overpower him."[16]

Of course, if someone insists on his wrong actions or there is a systematic violation of others' rights the proper action is to speak to that person and ask him to stop his wrong actions. It is also recommended to cancel any debt that someone owes you and that he is unable to repay.

Serving people: In Islam it is very important to render a service to fellow human beings. For example, the Qur'an reports that Jesus Christ has said:

> *"And He has made me blessed wherever I may be."* (19:31)

Commenting on this verse, Imam Sadiq, the sixth Imam has said:

> "This means that God has made me very useful (for the people)."[17]

The Holy Prophet has said:

> "To believe in God and to benefit His servants are the two highest characters."[18]
>
> "God loves most the servants who benefit other servants most." [19]
>
> "There are some servants (of God) to whom people resort in needs. They will be safe from the punishment on the Day of Resurrection." [20]

Safeguarding family: In addition to general instructions on how to treat other people, there are specific instructions about certain groups of people. For example, due to their very high status in Islam there are many moral and legal guidelines for safeguarding and promoting family life. On the philosophy of marriage for example, the Qur'an says:

> *"Among His sign is that He has created mates for you from among yourselves so that you find peace and tranquillity with them and He has established love and mercy between you. Surely there are signs in this for those who reflect."* (30:21)

The Qur'an also urges members of the family, that is a husband and wife, or children and parents, to display love and mercy for each other. For example, in the verse:

"And treat them (women) kindly." (4:19)

On the necessity of religiously training members of the family, the Qur'an asks the believers to save themselves and their family members from going astray and doing wrong (66:6).

According to Islam, the family is a sacred institution and everything must be geared towards the protection and promotion of family life. Divorce is permitted in Islam, but is considered to be the worst permitted act.

Respect for Parents: Respect for and obedience and kindness towards parents are enjoined upon Muslims. Unless the parents ask for an unjust act or a sin to be committed, a person needs to obey his/her parents. The Qur'an says,

> *"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship none but Him and has commanded you to treat your parents with good will and respect. If one or both of them should live to old age, do not reproach them in the slightest or send them away in anger, but address them in terms of honour."* (17:23 & 24)

> *"And He has enjoined on me to be dutiful to my mother."* (19:31)

The Prophet has said,

> "It is an act of worship to look at either parent with affection and kindness."[21]

> "God is pleased when one has pleased his parents, and God gets angry when one has angered either parent."[22]

> "Paradise lies under the feet of mothers." [23]

Hospitality: In Islam hospitality is considered a very important virtue and is indeed a test of belief in God and the Last Day according to the following mass-transmitted (*mutawātir*) hadith of the Prophet Muhammad:

> "Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, must treat his guest with respect and generosity."[24]

Guests are treated with courtesy and given what they need: sustenance, shelter and most importantly, a very warm welcome. The best treatment is to provide the guest with what the host has. Though the host is encouraged to give preference to his guest in using what is available, there is no need to go to great lengths, say, by borrowing money in order to buy new things or better food. The unexpected guests should not expect more than what is available. Those who fail to observe the obligation of hospitality should expect similar treatment when they meet their Lord in the Hereafter. On the other hand those who practice hospitality will be treated in an even better way when they arrive before the judgment of God, the eternal Host.

Respect for the Elders: The Prophet Mohammad has said,

> "It is not one of us the one who does not show love and compassion to our kids or does not respect our elders."[25]

Visiting the Sick: There are many traditions about the importance of visiting the sick and its etiquette, such as shortening the visit (unless the sick himself wishes them to remain more), praying for the sick person, talking to the sick person about the blessings of

God for the sick and taking gifts for him. For example, we read in a hadith:

> "The one who visits a sick will be encompassed by the mercy of God."[26]

Similar to what is mentioned in the New Testament (Matt. 25:31-46), we find in a tradition that on the Day of Judgement God will ask certain people why they did not visit Him when He was sick, why they did not feed Him when He was hungry and why they did not have given Him water when He was thirsty. The people will ask how they could have done this while He is the Lord of the entire world. Then God will reply that someone they knew was sick and they did not visit him, someone was hungry and they did not feed him and someone was thirsty and they did not give him water. Did they not know that if they had done so they would found God with him?

Treatment of the Sick: Life is one of the greatest gifts and blessings of God and therefore, must be appreciated and protected. The guiding principle in Islamic medical ethics is mentioned in the Qur'an,

> *"If anyone has saved a life, it would be as if he has saved the life of the whole of mankind."* (5:32)

One way of saving lives of people is to treat them when they become sick. It is the mutual responsibility of the sick and the physicians (or society in general). In other words, seeking the treatment is a duty for the sick himself and everybody in the society is obliged to do the needful. The Holy Prophet has said:

> "O servants of Allah, seek treatment, for Allah has not sent down any illness without sending down its treatment."[27]

This is an example of a set of narrations that makes treatment mandatory when it is available and also prohibits delaying the

treatment if doing so is harmful. On the other hand, healing people is considered a sacred job. Indeed, the real healer is God Himself:

> *"And when I am sick, He restores me to health."* (26: 80)

Respect for Teachers and Scholars: The Fourth Imam has said,

> "Your teacher has the following rights. Firstly, total respect from you. Secondly that you listen attentively when he speaks. Thirdly, that you never raise your voice in his presence..."[28]

Resisting Oppression: As was seen earlier, Muslims are required to act with justice in all their dealings with others and in all circumstances. For example, the Qur'an says,

> *"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor..."* (4:135)

According to Islam, to suffer oppression passively is as bad as to commit oppression. He who makes no effort to alleviate the suffering of an oppressed one is an oppressor. In his advice to his sons, Imam Ali says:

> "Be an enemy of oppressors and be a friend and helper of those who are oppressed."[29]

Charity: The Qur'an enjoins spending one's wealth in the way of God for the poor, the needy, to free slaves, to cure the sick and for other good causes.[30] Charity is a precondition to the attainment of piety. In this regard the Qur'an says,

> *"Those who spend their substance for the sake of God, and follow not up their gifts with reminders*

of their generosity or with injury,-for them their reward is with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. God is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing...And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please God and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not Heavy rain, light moisture suffices it. God sees well whatever you do." (2:262-265)

There are innumerable traditions of the Prophet and the Imams on the merits of charity. It has also been mentioned that "if you have nothing to give, offer at least a kind word or even just an affectionate smile."

IV. Relationship with the Environment

Both in His creation and legislation God has made human beings able to benefit from nature. The Qur'an says,

> *"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: Behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect."* (45:13)

> *"It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth..."* (2:29)

However, human beings must make use of nature, and indeed every other gift and blessing, in a responsible way,

> *"Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the blessings."* (102:8)

Therefore, everything in the world that is at the disposal of human beings is both a gift and a trust. If they were only trusts, humans would not have permission to use them. Since they are gifts of God, they can be used but cannot be wasted or used extravagantly as it is the case with any trust.

> *"And He it is Who produces gardens (of vine), trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike; eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant."* (6:141)

> *"O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God does not love the extravagant."* (7:31)

In addition to this, the Qur'an makes it clear that it is a human responsibility to make efforts to improve the conditions of the globe as much as possible:

> *"He brought you forth from the earth and has asked you to improve it, therefore ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him; surely my Lord is Nigh, Answering."* (11:61)

Therefore, one must be very careful about the way they treat nature and the environment. As an example, some of the human moral and legal responsibilities with respect to animals can be observed. In Islamic hadiths it can be found that the unjustified killing of animals or negligence towards their lives is very severely treated. For example, Imam Sadiq informed those with him about the divine punishment of a woman who had fastened a cat with a rope so that the cat could not move and died out of

thirst.[31] A predominant scholar, 'Allamah Mohammad Taqi Ja'fari concludes his discussion about animals in this way:

> "Consideration of whole sources of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) leads to the conclusion that animals must not be killed unless there is a legal permission (by God) like benefiting from them or being safe from their harm. There are adequate reasons for prohibiting hunting animals for fun and one can argue from them for prohibition of killing animals without having a permitting cause."[32]

The above idea is part of a broader Islamic perspective on animal life. According to Islam, there are many rights for animals that must be observed. Consideration of those rights show that not only should their lives be protected, but the quality of their life must also be observed. For example, animals must not be bothered by forcing them to carry heavy goods or to move faster than they tolerate. Neither should animals be cursed or harassed. It is reported that Imam Ali said:

> "Whoever curses an animal he himself will be cursed by God."[33]

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[1] *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 219.

[2] Wise-saying 281.

[3] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 74, p. 129.

[4] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 71, p. 187.

[5] Ibid, vol. 68, p. 286.

[6] Ibid, p. 287.

[7] Ibid, pp. 297 & 298.

[8] Ibid, vol. 1, p. 177; vol. 2, p. 32; vol. 67, pp. 68 & 140; vol. 105, p. 315.

[9] Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 177 & 180.

[10] Ibid, p. 178.

[11] Ibid, p. 154.

[12] Ibid, vol. 68, p. 325.

[13] *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Wise-saying 349.

[14] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 252.

[15] Ibid, vol. 68, p. 399.

[16] Ibid, p. 427.

[17] Ibid, vol. 14, p. 210.

[18] Ibid, vol. 74, p. 139.

[19] Ibid, vol. 74, p. 154; vol. 93, p. 160.

[20] Ibid, vol. 74, p. 159.

[21] Ibid, vol. 71, pp. 80 & 84.

[22] Ibid, vol. 74, p. 151.

[23] Nuri, Mustadrak *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 15. p. 180; Muttaqi Hindi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, vol. 16, p. 461.

[24] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 144. This hadith has been also narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Malik, al-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, al-Darimi, and Ahmad.

[25] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 138.

[26] Ibid, vol. 78, p. 215.

[27] Ibid, vol. 59, p. 76.

[28] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 42.

[29] *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Letter 47.

[30] For mandatory charity, please refer to the discussion about almsgiving in the Chapter Three.

[31] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 76, p. 136.

[32] *Rasa'iil-e Fiqhi*, p. 250. Elsewhere he writes: "Hunting animals for amusement and without need is prohibited. Therefore, if someone makes a trip for such kind of hunting his trip is a sinful trip". (Ibid, p. 118)

[33] Ibid. cited from *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 8, p. 356.

Major Values in the Qur'an

Sayyidd Ahmad Rahnamaei

Islamic culture and values are well-rooted in Qur'anic teachings and ideals. For Muslim believers, the Qur'an is the most important text of both human and divine values. The Book of Allah provides guidance on how to establish a perfect Islamic model, structure and content for the Islamic society and its lifestyle. This is in accordance with a hierarchy of values system by means of which human beings are able to accomplish the rules of life and fulfil their goals in this world and in the hereafter. This paper briefly studies some of the major values from a Qur'anic perspective.

I. Pleasure

> *"Is then the person who follows* ***the pleasure of Allah*** *like the one who has made himself deserving of displeasure from Allah...."* (3:161)

Allah has promised the believing men and the believing women that they will abide in goodly dwellings and gardens of peaceful abode with rivers flowing beneath them; and best of all, they will have **Allah's goodly pleasure** - that is the grand achievement. (9:72)

> *"Is the one, therefore, better who lays one's foundation on piety of Allah and* ***His good***

pleasure, or the one who lays one's foundation on the edge of a cracking hollowed bank, so it broke down with him into the fire of hell; and Allah does not guide the unjust." (9:109)

No one is dearer to a true believer than Allah, and nothing is more important than His pleasure. The believer establishes his or her foundation upon piety and righteousness and aims to fulfil Allah's will in order to achieve His pleasure. Of course, the term 'pleasure' is not a perfect or exact translation of the Qur'anic terminology *riḍwānullāh* or *riḍallāh*. With this in mind, the term *riḍwānullāh* needs to be explained. *Riḍwānullāh* is a compound of the terms *riḍwān* and *Allāh*. The original verb form of *riḍwān* is *raḍiya*, meaning to enjoy or create the mental state of being pleased. Some other derivations of the same term are *rāḍī* and *marḍīy*, meaning to be pleased with someone or something and to please someone, respectively.

When used in relation to Allah's servant, the term *riḍwānullāh*, implies that Allah is pleased with His faithful servant. The best way to understand this concept is to think of "pleasing" as having a reciprocal nature. On the one hand, it is Allah Who is pleased with His devoted servant while on the other it is His servant who is pleased with Him. In other words, He pleases His servant on the one hand, and His servant pleases Him on the other. In both cases, Allah's servant has brought down upon himself Allah's favour and mercy. When the believer is dutiful to Allah, s/he serves Him with sincere devotion, performs good deeds and acts in accordance with His commands. Thus, he receives Allah's favours one after another until he reaches the point where he is pleased with Him and at the same time pleases Him in return. This concept is mentioned in the verse of the Qur'an where He says,

*"O soul that are at rest! Return to your Lord, well-**pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him)**. So enter*

among My servant, and enter into My garden." (89: 27-30)

Looking at it in this way, Allah's pleasure is the greatest achievement in the eyes of the believers since it includes every transcendent value and divine favour. When God's servant reaches this point s/he receives all of the spiritual favours from Him. This is why the Qur'an, after listing some of the divine rewards that await believing men and women, insists that,

> "*best of all is Allah's goodly pleasure—that is the grand achievement.*" (9: 72)

But the question of the nature and manner of Allah's pleasure still remains. In what sense is Allah pleased? And how is it that he may be pleased? Is there any specific term that denotes His state of pleasure? There is no way to describe Allah's pleasure in terms of emotional or mental conditions because He is a transcendental Being. To clarify the matter further, the dictionary definitions of both the English term 'pleasure' and the Arabic term *riḍwān* or *riḍā* will be considered.

'To please' in English means:

> "to make happy or to be a cause of happiness. **Please** usually implies an agreement with one's wishes, tastes, or aspirations and a happiness which ranges from mere content and the absence of grounds for displeasure to actual elation ..."[1]

'Pleasure' is defined as:

> "the agreeable emotion which accompanies the possession, acquisition, or expectation of something good or greatly desired. Pleasure so strongly implies a feeling of satisfaction or gratification that it sometimes carries no implication of visible happiness or actual gladness

> "... Often, however, the term suggests an excitement or exaltation of the senses or of the mind that implies positive happiness or gladness ..."[2]

The Quranic terms *riḍā*, *riḍwān*, or *marḍāt* on the other hand, connote a sense of consent, satisfaction and pleasure. When they are attributed to Allah, they describe His consent to one's deeds and conduct. It follows that when one's deeds accord with what Allah wills and prescribes for His servants, He is 'pleased' with them. God's servant does not achieve His consent or contentment by staying away from Him or by performing wicked actions. Thus, Allah's pleasure with a human person is manifested in His satisfaction with his or her conduct, but one's satisfaction with Allah is in one's agreement with His commands and prohibitions. Such an agreement manifests itself in one's obedience to God or to the prophets and those who are appointed as His representatives on this earth.[3]

As mentioned earlier, one cannot ascribe pleasure to God in the same way as one ascribes it to humans. Pleasure or satisfaction in the case of the human is of an emotional, intellectual, material or sensory kind, while in the case of God it is quite different. When ascribed to God's attributes of action and not to His essence one must take the concept of pleasure and make it abstract and non-emotional before ascribing it to God.

In practical affairs, the Qur'an directs the individual to pursue what is pleasing to God. Accordingly, if the pleasing action at the same time satisfies one's personal desires, one has achieved a pleasing life in this world and will achieve happiness in the Hereafter as well. In the event where following God's commandments does not tally with one's desires, requiring sacrifice for the sake of God, then greater rewards will be given in the world after, "and what is with Allāh is better and everlasting."[4] When seen in this manner, the individual's felicity is intertwined with God's pleasure in the sense that one is really

interested in obtaining it. He recognises God as the source of all happiness, finds pleasure in His pleasure and realizes that his happiness can only be actualized through God's pleasure. Being a good servant of Allah and striving to achieve His pleasure is one of the focuses of the Qur'anic doctrine. Therefore, the fulfilment of personal or social goals of morality as well as the attainment of any material or spiritual objective should be done with a view to obtaining God's pleasure.

II. Love for Allah and for People for the Sake of Allah

> *"And there are some among people who take for themselves objects of worship besides Allah, whom they love as they love Allah, and* ***those who believe are stronger in love for Allah****..."* (2:165)

> *"This it is due to mercy from Allah* ***you deal with people gently, and had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you****; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust."* (3:158)

> *"And We have not sent you (Muhammad) but* ***as a mercy to the worlds.***" (21:107)

Love is the fundamental element of a real human heart. If there is no love, then there is no heart. The power of love is like an elixir in that it can change one substance into another. It can awaken sleeping powers and free chained forces of the soul. There are several kinds and degrees of love experienced by mankind. One sort of love is that which is completely beyond the boundaries of matter and materiality. Falling in love with superior truth and excellence such as peace, liberty, equality, honesty and righteousness, as well as falling in love with people who manifest

these human traits is considered the major criterion of this category.[5] Beyond this is the love of an eternal, almighty and glorious being, who is no one other than God, the beloved and the fountainhead of blessings, mercy, peace and all the other aforementioned characteristics. This kind of love connects human beings to their Lord and helps them to purify themselves and contribute to a lasting and firmer peace.

In Islam, one's love of anything else or of anyone other than God must not oppose the love of God. One may love others, not in parallel to the love of God but for the sake of God's pleasure. For instance, s/he may love her or his fellow human beings because God wants His servants to love one another, and because by loving them, God's pleasure is secured.

III. Faith

> *"And convey good news to* ***those who believe*** *and do good deeds...."* (2:25)
>
> *"And (as for)* ***those who believe*** *and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden; in it they shall abide."* (2:82)
>
> *"Surely* ***they who believe*** *and do good deeds and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate they have their reward from their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve."* (2:277)
>
> *"And as to* ***those who believe*** *and do good deeds, Allah will pay them fully their rewards; and Allah does not love the unjust."* (3:56)[6]

The Qur'an indicates that faith in God is something intertwined with human nature and ever present to the human mind.[7]

> *"... When people are in the ship, sailing on in a pleasant breeze and rejoicing at it, suddenly a violent wind overtakes them and the billows surge in on them from all sides, and they become certain that they are encompassed about, they pray to Allah,[9] being sincere to Him in obedience: 'If You do deliver us from this, we will most certainly be of the grateful ones.' But when He delivers them, lo! they are unjustly rebellious in the earth ..."* (10:22-23)

Elaborating on the impact of faith on human conduct and behaviour, Allamah Tabataba'i says:

> "believers do not give up on themselves or feel abject under any circumstances, because they know themselves to be attached to the limitless power of the Creator of the universe. They are mindful of Him and sheltered by Him in all circumstances; their hearts are calm, clear, and strong."[11]

Accordingly, "the soul of faith accompanies a human being's body until s/he commits a great sin then it departs from the body..."[12] The soul of faith [*ruh al-imān*] has been devoted to the faithful believers. This is depicted in the Qur'an when describing the believers:

> *"...these are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and whom He has strengthened with an inspiration from Him...."* (58:22)

In conjunction with this, the maintenance of excellent morals can be secured through faith in one God and in His excellent names. God created human beings so that they strive for perfection and happiness. He loves good and purity and dislikes evil and

corruption and the final reward or punishment will be on Day of Resurrection.[13]

What seems of significance according to the Qur'an is that the wellspring of God's religion, the very reason that God revealed His religion, is the demand of the innate human nature itself. "The divine religion" in this way "is based on nature and normally people cannot go astray in a natural thing. Nor can they demand change of nature."[14] The general principles and rules of divine religion consist of faith in God, as well as in what He revealed to His prophets. These principles and instructions are in accordance with the innate nature of human beings and meet its needs, thus providing for perfection and happiness.

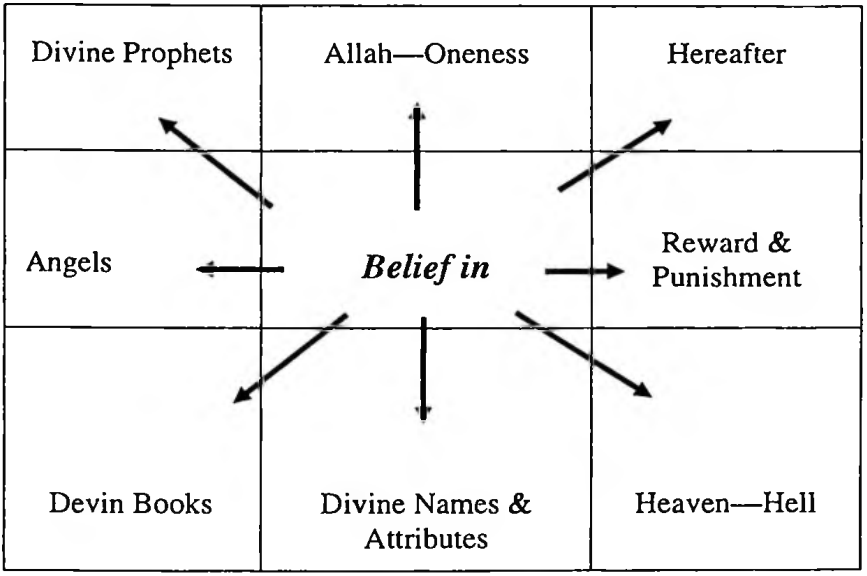
This, however, does not imply that the social aspects of faith and religion are of less significance. Drawing attention to both individual and social appearances of religion in his discussion of it, 'Allamah Tabataba'i indicates that religion is a social order decreed for human beings. Since humans are social by nature, they are in vital need of social order and discipline.[15] They need civil rules through which they can settle their disputes and differences. He says:

> "It goes without saying that material interests normally give rise to various forms of discord, rancour, and loss of amity. In order to preserve individuals' amity, society must have a set of rules that, if observed, can avert chaos."[16]

According to 'Allamah, these rules find their roots in divine religion. The Qur'an, criticizing secular rules and laws, points out that rules over society must be derived from the Divine (5:44-47). Their focus is not just "on the material side of individuals," nor is it only on harmony and preservation of the system, but divine laws take more account of spiritual values. Moreover, the rules authorized by divine religion impart "a sense of responsibility for every individual and social act, such that man feels responsible to

God, Most High, for his every action and inaction"[17] What follows illustrates an image of the varieties of Qur'anic faith.

Items of the Qur'anic Faith



Faith in God is not simply a theoretical matter, rather, it is a determining factor that creates a trust in the presence of God as "a living force in life" in the mind of the believer. All forms of prayer focus on the relationship between God and man. This forms the heart of prayer itself and helps worshipers develop their faith. It is maintained that "prayer is a means to realize the divine in man."[18] Prayer, leading the individual to humanity, is a means by which faith should be translated into practice. Getting in touch with God through impressive and effective prayer draws human life away from imperfections and lets the individual "drink deep at the fountain of purity and perfection."[19]

IV. Trust in God

> *"Those only are believers ... [who] **in their Lord do they trust.**"* (8:2)
>
> *"And those who migrate for Allah's sake after they are oppressed, We will most certainly give them a good abode in the world....Those who are patient and **in their Lord do they trust.**"* (16:41-42)
>
> *"And (as for) those who believe and do good, We will certainly give them abode in the high places in gardens .... Those who are patient, and **in their Lord do they trust.**"* (29:58-59)
>
> *"...and what is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who believe and **rely on their Lord.**"* (42:36)

One of the most obvious characteristics of the believers is their firm trust in God on every occasion and in relation to both minor and major issues. Faith in God and trust in Him are strongly intertwined (3:160, 5:11, 5:23, 8:2, 10:84). The believers seek God's support and help whenever they have taken for instance a decision to do something. They rely on Him whether they are in time of peace or war, in security or in danger (8:61-62). They do so especially when they are confronting the hypocrites or ill-hearted people and feel that they are left alone with no support (8:49, 9:129, 10:71, 33:48). The believers are taught to trust in God and act to the best of their power if they desire the betterment of the situation of their people. (11: 88) What follows indicates why the believers put their trust in God:

1. They believe that *"there is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock ..."* (11:56)

2. They have no doubt that every single affair is returned to Him (11:123, 13:30, 42:10, 60:4).

3. They are convinced that trust in Him guards them against the mischief of the Satan or the Evil One and does not let the latter have any authority and control over them (16:99, 58:10).

4. They are assured that He is everliving and never dies, so He is the best Refuge for His servants (25:58, 113:1-5, 114:1-6).

5. Through their communication with Allah, the believers recognize Him as the Mighty, Most Gracious and Merciful Who is sufficient as a protector and as the best disposer of affairs (26:217, 67:29, 4:81, 33:3).

6. The believers know there is an excellent exemplar for them in the Messengers of Allah who relied on Allah, especially when they invite their people to the Truth and when the unbelievers hurt them (33:21, 60:4-6, 14:11-12).

V. Justice

*"And as to those who believe and do good deeds, Allah will pay them fully their rewards; and Allah **does not love the unjust.**"* (3:56)

*"O you who believe! **Be maintainers of Justice**, bearers of witness for Allah's sake, though it may be against yourselves or your parents or near relatives..."* (4:135)

*"O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with **justice**, and let not dislike of a people incite you not to do **justice**; **act justly**, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty) to*

Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do." (5:8)

"Say: My Lord has enjoined justice...." (7:29)

With respect to the social-political scope, the Qur'anic policy is to aid the establishment of social justice in human society. According to the Qur'an, authority belongs to God, the source of the governing authority. Social justice has been one of the chief goals of human beings throughout history. However, this same history shows that, as a result of negative aspects of character, humans always end up engaging themselves in personal and social problems. Consequently, they let difficulties and disasters develop and these often remain unsolved. Characteristics of this type are mentioned in the Qur'an as follows:

"*Surely man is unjust, ignorant*" (33: 72);

"*Surely man is created avaricious*" (70: 19);

"*Surely man is unjust, very ungrateful*" (14: 34);

"*Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel as he sees himself free from want*" (96: 6-7).

With respect to such verses, Allamah Tabātabā'i remarks:

> "This is why whenever a man acquires power over his fellows, the dictates of social justice are forgotten; and the mighty one ignores the rights of weaker ones. It is as much true in the case of individuals as in that of nations and states; and this has been going on from the early history of mankind until the present, which is called the age of civilization and freedom!"[20]

The idea that emerges from within the Qur'an and Islamic tradition indicates that Islam, on a universal scale, encourages

mankind to practice justice and to live in a peaceful and friendly way. Believers should never be suspicious of one another. They should neither spy on nor backbite about each other. The Qur'an states,

> *"O you who believe! avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others."* (49:12)

Furthermore, the believers are commanded to judge with justice:

> *"... And when you judge or rule the people you should judge or rule with justice. Verily how excellent is the teaching which He has given to you, ..."* (4:58)

It is asserted at yet another place of the Qur'an:

> *"... if you judge, judge between them with equity; surely Allah loves those who judge equitably."* (5:42)

The holy book of Islam states,

> *"O you who believe! be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not dislike of a people incite you to act inequitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, ..."* (5:8)

VI. Piety

> *"O children of Adam! We have indeed bestowed clothing upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you; and the* ***raiment of piety*** *(that guards against evil), that is the best. This is of the signs of Allah that people may be mindful."* (7:26)

"O human persons! Worship your Lord Who created you so that you may ***practice piety*** *(and guard against evil)."* (2:21)

"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may ***be pious*** *(and guard against evil)."* (2:183)

"And (know) that this is My path, the right one, therefore follow it, and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way; this He has enjoined you with that you may ***be pious*** *(and guard against evil)."* (6:154)[21]

"O you humans! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most ***pious****, surely Allah is Knowing, Aware."* (49:13)

According to the Qur'anic understanding, piety is considered a kind of clothing. Just as there are clothes to cover our shame, protect us against cold or heat and adorn us, so, in the same way, there is the raiment of piety that guards us against evil. Just as there is external clothing, there is also internal clothing; just as there is physical clothing, there is also spiritual clothing. Humans are in need of both types of clothing to fulfil their material and spiritual objectives. Moreover, as depicted in the Qur'an, the spiritual clothing of piety is considered the best dress in Islam (7:26). Good deeds, in their varieties, are seen as instruments for achieving piety and as vehicles for obtaining God's pleasure. The Qur'an reads:

"O human beings! Worship your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may have the chance to be pious." (2: 21)

"And this is My path, the right one, therefore follow it, and do not follow other ways, for they will lead you away from His way; this Allah has enjoined you so that may be pious." (6: 154)

VII. Righteousness (Performing Good Deeds)

"Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and ***does good,*** *they shall have their rewards from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve."* (2:62)

"And (as for) those who believe and ***do good,*** *We will make them enter into gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein for ever; (it is) a promise of Allah, true (indeed); and who is truer of word than Allah."* (4:122)

"And whoever ***does good deeds*** *whether male or female and is a believer—these shall enter the garden, and they shall not be dealt with a jot unjustly."* (4:124)

"Then as for those who believe and ***do good,*** *He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of his grace..."* (4:173).

"Allah has promised to those who believe and ***do good deeds*** *(that) they shall have forgiveness and a mighty reward."* (5:9)

> *"Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good—they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve."* (5:69).

As shown in the following diagram good deeds, in terms of one's duties, can be categorised into three: duty to God, duty to fellow human beings and duty to ourselves. This three-way relationship in particular constitutes the core elements of the Islamic notion of spirituality. The three categories are intertwined and interdependent at the same time. The Qur'anic concept of spirituality suggests that it is not mere meditation. It is rather an addition to the individual's connection with the Divine, with other humans and with oneself. According to the Islamic creeds, any single ritual practice like praying, fasting, alms giving, pilgrimage and so on, must be performed and accomplished for the sake of attaining God's pleasure (*qurbatan ilallāh*). In other words, they should be performed in order to win God's favour and to please Him. For those believers who practice in this way and with this intention, pleasing God in its turn leads to pleasing oneself. This is primarily because God's pleasure itself is seen as the ultimate aim of the servant's journey: his inclination towards God is in fact the inclination towards his own satisfaction, pleasure and felicity. God's pleasure is therefore at the heart of the Qur'an's division of good deeds in general and of its doctrine of worship and phantasm in particular. As depicted in the Qur'ān, God says:

> *"Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode; and best of all is Allāh's goodly pleasure, that is the grand achievement."* (9:72)

Varieties of Good Deeds

Believing in God and Submission to Him[22]	Obeying Prophet Muhammad[23]	Keeping up Prayer[24]
Fasting[25]	Giving Wealth out of Love for Allah to: - the near of kin - the orphans - the needy - the way-farer - the beggars - for the emancipation of the captives[26]	Giving Mandatory Alms[27]
Striving in the Way of Allah[28] (The Minor Strife)	Amending the Self[29] (The Major Strife)	Enjoining the good[30]
Forbidding the Evil[31]	Restraining Anger and Pardoning People[32]	Having Patience in Distress and in Times of Conflict[33]
Keeping Promises[34]	Kind Speech and Forgiveness[35]	Safeguarding Unity[36]

Acquiring morals and improving the traits of the self in theory and practice depend upon the continuous performance of good deeds. Such an approach "etches its particular knowledge on the psyche. Gradually, a picture is engraved on the mind, which becomes impossible - or extremely difficult – to erase"[37].

God created human beings and endowed them with the ability to hear and see in order for them to reach their transcendental aims. Some of the intermediate aims of human life are to hear the truth revealed by God to His prophets, to see the signs of God in nature, to think about them, to follow the path of the truth, and finally, to journey towards the Eternal Truth (God) by means of faith and good deeds.[38] This is the path that the Creator has set for His servants in order to reach Him. However, this does not necessarily mean that the path towards this ultimate aim is already predetermined or that human beings must follow it until they reach the peak that is intended for them.

Due to their wisdom and freedom of choice, human beings are in fact trusted to be selective and to strive for the sake of their own happiness. While some people find the Truth and follow the right path, others may not be able to find it or may even be misled, because they are submerged in physical and material wants and desires, neglecting their spiritual health, their exalted aim and their happiness.[39]

If a person is not scrupulously honest and faithful, their occupation, companionship, wealth, family, business and friendship may result in their having to struggle in life and even fall into criminal tendencies.

Through the formula of honesty and faith the individual can be successful in giving up every object of adoration before God.[40] In this regard, prayer is able to provide a peaceful environment for those who wish to live in spiritual and practical peace. As depicted in the Qur'an:

> "... *Truly prayer keeps one away from obscenity and evil; and the greatest felicitation is the remembrance of God.*" (29:45)

VIII. Peace

> *"And make not Allah because of your swearing (by Him) an obstacle to your doing good and guarding (against evil) and* ***making peace*** *between people, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing."* (2:224)

> *"And if two parties of the believers quarrel,* ***make peace between them****, but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command; then if it returns,* ***make peace between them with justice*** *and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably.*" (49:9)

> *"The believers are but brethren, therefore* ***make peace*** *between your brethren..."* (49:10)

In Islamic tradition there is a passage spoken by Muslims in their daily prayers, indicating that Allah is the original source of peace:

> "Oh Allah! You are Peace, and from You Peace has been originated, and to You Peace belongs and to You Peace returns"[41]

In the Qur'an there is a passage that reads,

> "...*Allah summons* [*you*] *to the Abode of Peace* (*Dār al-Salām*)..." (10:25 and 6:127)

This sentence is repeated a second time in order to promote the idea that God is not only the source of peacefulness but that He Himself calls mankind towards it. God also introduces Himself as the One whose mercy and blessings have extended over

everything and have been bestowed on human beings in particular.

> "*Have you not seen that God has subjected to you (for your use) whatsoever is in the heavens and earth, and has lavished on you His blessings, outward and inward (seen and unseen)*?" (31:20)

Furthermore, divine books and prophets are considered a mercy sent from God to benefit people in both the earthly world and in the hereafter. As depicted in the Qur'an, the Prophets Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, along with the books they were given, the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an, should all be regarded as a mercy from God (7:52, 154, 203; 16:64, 77, 89; 17:82; 19:21; 29:3; 26:43).

The apostles of God were commissioned to begin their divine mission in a very peaceful manner and with very gentle words. The Prophet Moses was sent to address Pharaoh, an evil dictator who claimed that he was god on earth. Moses was commanded to address him with these peaceful words:

> "... *Have you (a desire) to purify yourself. And I will guide you to your Lord* ..." (79: 15-19)

In another place, the Qur'an talks of the way Allah instructed Prophet Moses:

> "*Go you and your brother with My communications and be not remiss in remembering Me. Go both to Pharaoh, surely he has become inordinate. Then speak to him a gentle word haply he may mind or fear.*" (20: 42-44)

Similarly, Prophet Jesus was sent as a mercy from God and a blessed apostle.

> "*And He has made me blessed whenever I may be...*" (19:31)

In the Qur'an, the story of the annunciation and birth of Jesus is repeated twice. The birth of Christ is regarded as glad tidings. His mother, Mary, is addressed as follows:

> "*... O Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, (who is) illustrious in the world and Hereafter, and one of the close companions of God.*" (3:45)

While still an infant in his cradle, Jesus spoke to the people, announcing.

> "*... Peace be upon me on the day I was born, on the day I shall die, and on the day I shall be resurrected.*" (19:33)

It is clear from the above that Jesus' life was bestowed with peace by God. He is therefore peace through whom mankind can be blessed with peace.

The same was also true of the Prophet Muhammad:

> "*And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.*" (21:107)

And in another verse the Qur'an indicates how the Prophet used to deal with people:

> *"Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affairs..."* (3:159)

A faithful servant of God who constantly recognizes the presence of God and respects Him in everything he or she does, is granted inner peace. This servant is in touch with the source of peace. It is also the reason why prayer is needed, time after time, to sustain the individual's spirit.[42]

IX. Thankfulness

> *"Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and* ***be thankful to Me****, and do not be ungrateful to Me."* (2:152)
>
> *"... and I will reward* ***the grateful.****"* (3:144)
>
> *"Nay! But worship Allah alone and* ***be of the thankful.****"* (39:66)

The sense of thankfulness is automatically there if God's servant realizes that he or she is dutiful to Him. Devoting thanks to God is considered the first step towards fulfilling one's duty to Him. By looking at the reasons why one should be dutiful to God, the necessity of thankfulness becomes apparent.

a) *"He is Allah Who has made good everything that He has created."* (32:7)

b) *"He is Allah Who began the creation of Adam from dust and made his progeny of a small life-germ—of an extract of water. Then He made them complete and breathed into them of His spirit."* (32:7-9)

c) *"He is Allah Who has brought us forth from the wombs of our mothers while we did not know anything. And He gave us the hearing, the sight and the hearts."* (16:78; 23:78; 32:9; 67:23)

d) *"He is Allah Who gave life to the dead earth and has established human beings in the earth and made in it means of livelihood for them."* (7:10; 14:37; 36:33)

e) *"He is Allah Who made for His servants the night to be a covering and that they may rest therein and He is He Who made the day to see and that they may seek livelihood."* (40:61; 78:11-12)

f) *"He is Allah Who sends the water which we drink down from the clouds."* (56:68-69)

g) *"The ships run on in the sea by Allah's favour. This is one of His signs."* (31:31)

Thus considered, the believer thinks that he or she must be dutiful to God, worship Him and be among the thankful to Him.(39:66). On the other hand, God, is thankful to those who give thanks to Him and He rewards them (54:35).

X. Sincerity

> *"Say: My Lord has enjoined justice, and set upright your faces at every time of prayer and call upon Him* ***with sincere devotion to Him****; as He brought you forth in the beginning, so shall you also return."* (7:29)
>
> *"Therefore call upon Allah,* ***being sincere to Him in obedience****, though the unbelievers are averse."* (40:14)
>
> *"Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, therefore serve Allah,* ***being sincere to Him in obedience.***" (39:2)
>
> *"Say: I am commanded that I should serve Allah* ***with sincere devotion to Him.***" (39:11)

"Say: It is Allah I serve ***with sincere devotion.***"
(39:14)

Islam is a monotheistic religion focusing on the oneness of God speaking of Him as the only object of worship [*Ma'būd*]. The doctrine of the oneness is depicted in the holy Book of Islam more frequently than any other issue. Accordingly, all the prophets of God invited people to this same theology notifying them to worship none but God. (3:64; 11:2, 26; 12:40; 17:22-23; 41:14; 46:21) In one case, it is insisted that the belief in the Oneness of the Worshipped One is the whole and perfect religion. It shows how the Qur'an gives credit to the idea of the Oneness.

The above explanation indicates how the believers have been highly admonished to have their sincere devotion to God and to be sincere to Him in faith, obedience and worship. (7:29; 39:2-3, 11, 14) Sincerity, like piety, guards the believer against Satan and his deceit. Satan has no rule and control over the believing men and the believing women, since they have left no room for the obedience of the Satan. They realized that the latter, as the Evil One, is their real and obvious enemy. (15:40; 36:60; 38:82-83) The Prophets of God were commanded to call upon Him, being sincere to Him in worship and obedience, though the unbelievers were averse (39:11-14; 40:14).

People have been divided into two groups based on their sincerity in obedience to God. There are those who are faithfully and consistently sincere to Him, whether in repose and fortune or in calamity and misfortune. There are also those who express their sincerity only when they are confronting disaster and affliction. People of the first group are firm in their faith, whereas those of the second hold no established faith (10:22-23; 29:65; 31:32). Describing the latter, the Qur'an says:

"He [Allah] is Who makes you travel by land and sea; until when you are in the ships, and they sail on with them in a pleasant breeze, and they rejoice

at, a violent wind overtakes them and the billows surge in on them from all sides, and they become certain that they are encompassed about, they pray to Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience: If You deliver us from this, we will most certainly be of the grateful ones. But when He delivers them, they are unjustly rebellious in the earth..." (10:22-23)

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[1] Philip B. Gove, ed. 1984, p. 614, s.v. **Please**.

[2] Philip B. Gove, ed., 1984, p. 614, s.v. **Pleasure**.

[3] Qurayshī, v. 3, pp. 102-104, 1982; Tabātabā'i, v. 17, p. 255, 1981.

[4] Tabātabā'i, 1970 (Beirut), vol. 1, p. 423.

[5] Mutahhari, 1981, p.30.

[6] For further information, see the Qur'an 4:57, 4:122, 4:124, 4:173, 5:9, 13:29 and so on.

[7] In three verses the Qur'an gives an example of riding in the ship in order to show people's attention to God when they are in danger. The spirit of the example is applicable to similar contexts, for instance when people ride in the airplane, etc.

[9] The Qur'anic name of God in Islam.

[11] Tabātabā'i, *Islamic Teachings*, p. 20. I did the underlines.

12 Allāma Tabatabā'i's interpretation of the 'Verse of Light in the Chapter of Light' in the Qur'an, (24:35). Tabatabā'i, "Al-Insan qabl al-Dunya", 1986, pp. 177-79; Tabatabā'i, 1970 (Tehran), vol. 15, pp. 152-53; Al-Qummi, 1983, p. 447

[13] Tabatabā'i, 1970 (Beirut), vol. 4, p. 111

[14] *Ibid.* , vol. 2, p. 122; English translation, 1983, vol. 3, p. 180

[15] *Ibid.* , vol. 1, p. 337; vol. 4, p. 122

[16] Tabātabā'i, *Islamic Teachings*, p. 28

17 *Ibid.* pp. 30-31. For further remarks and a comparison made by 'Allamah on and between secular and religious rules see Tabatabā'i, *Islamic Teachings*, pp. 28-36.

[18] Muhajir, 1968, p. 11

[19] Muhajir, 1968, pp. 11-12

[20] Tabātabā'i, English translation, 1983, vol. 3, p. 174

21 Some other verses of the Qur'ān in this regard are 2: 2, 63; 7: 65, 171, etc.

22 The Qur'ān, 2: 112, 177; 3: 102; 4: 59, 69, 125, 136, 176; 5: 55-56; 8: 46; 47: 33.

23 *Ibid.*, 3: 30-31, 131; 4: 59, 69, 80; 5: 55-56; 8: 46; 47: 33

24 *Ibid.*, 2: 177, 238, 277,

[25] *Ibid.*, 2: 183-185.

[26] *Ibid.*, 2: 177, 267, 270-274; 3: 91; 3: 133.

[27] *Ibid.*, 2: 110, 277.

[28] *Ibid.*, 5: 35; 9: 20; 16: 110; 6, 69.

[29] *Ibid.*, 2: 160; 3: 88; 5: 105.

[30] *Ibid.*, 3: 103, 109, 113

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*, 3: 135.

[33] *Ibid*, 2: 153, 155, 177; 103: 3.

[34] *Ibid.*, 2: 177; 5: 1; 6: 152.

[35] *Ibid.*, 2: 263; 47: 21.

[36] *Ibid.*, 3: 102, 104; 8: 46.

[37] Tabātabā'i, 1970 (Beirut), vol. 1, pp. 354; English translation, 1983, vol. 2, pp. 206-207.

[38] *Ibid.*, vol. 20, pp. 120-21.

[39] *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 46.

[40] Muhajir, 1968, p. viii.

[41] Abbas Qummi, 1991, p. 30; Muller, "Description," *Seeking*, p. 208.

[42] Muhajir, 1968, p. 12.

The Concept of Love in Islam

Mahnaz Heydarpoor

The concept of love is one of the most important concepts in Islamic philosophy, theology, mysticism and ethics; indeed, in some aspects, it plays the most crucial role. For example, in defining the Islamic point of view on the relation between God and the whole universe in general, and between God and mankind in particular, love holds the most significant place. In what follows, an explanation of the place of love in Islamic ethics will be offered, but prior to that is an elaboration on the concept of love in the whole Islamic world-view.

Divine Love

Love as the highest reason for creation

In early *kalām* (Islamic theology), a heated debate began on the purpose behind God's creation and acts. Some theologians thought that the attribution of reason or purpose to His deeds led to the assumption that God is in need of His creatures and He creates them to meet those needs. The comparison is like a human who works to earn money, or studies to learn. However, the dominant view, especially among those who have had a more rational approach, like Nasir ul-Din al-Tusi, has always been that God is Wise (*hakim*), so whatever He does is for some exactly

and carefully pre-studied purposes. He never does something arbitrarily or in vain. It is asserted in the Qur'an:

> *"What! Did you then think that We had created you in vain...?"* (23:115)

Of course, it is clear that God Himself does not gain anything from His creatures, nor from His act of creation. This is not only because He is completely free from any sort of need, but also because it is logically impossible that a given effect would have any type of influence on its (existential) cause. Whatever effect is produced, has been produced by the cause. God has not created the universe to benefit Himself, but rather to give benefits. A popular Persian poem reads: "I have not created creation to get benefits, I have created people to show them my generosity."

There is a famous divine saying (*hadith qudsi*) which can be found in books about the goal of creation in Islam. According to this hadith, God says:

> "I was a hidden treasure; I loved to be known. Hence I created the world so that I would be known."[1]

The Arabic original term for "loved" is derived from the root *hubb*, which means to like or to love. In other words, *hubb* is a general concept that can belong to simple things such as preferring some types of food (which in English could be translated as 'would like') or to the most important things in one's life such as the intensive desire for someone or some ideals, such as the beloved, to the extent that one might even be ready to be destroyed in order to please the beloved or secure it. *Hubb* in such cases can be translated as 'love.' There is another term in the Islamic culture that is also used in Arabic on occasions and more commonly in Persian, to mean the intensive love: *'ishq*. There is also *wudd* which means friendship and affection.

The question does arise though as to why God loved to be known? Certainly, God has no desire for fame. The purpose behind His love to be known can be understood by considering the fact that God, who is the Wise, the Compassionate and the Omnipotent, creates the universe and particularly human beings to give them the opportunity to gain maximum grace and perfection that they have capacity for receiving. Of course, the perfection of any kind of being is decided by the degree of its similarity or closeness to God, and the most important factors in this are the love of God, and prior to that, knowledge of God since there can be no love without knowing the beloved subject.[2]

God's Love for Himself

Since the reason for loving something is none other than the apprehension by the lover of the beauty and perfection, or more generally the goodness of the beloved, the greatest possible love is certainly the love of God for Himself. God is the most beautiful and the most perfect being and His apprehension of Himself is also the best apprehension, so His love for Himself and His joy are the most intensive. Avicenna writes:

> "The necessarily existent (*Wājib al-wujud*) that has the highest perfection, beauty and brightness and perceives of Himself as so with a complete perception ... is in Himself the greatest lover and the greatest beloved and has the greatest joy because of Himself that causes the greatest joy..."[3]

Elsewhere he says:

> "The being that has the greatest joy in respect to something is the First (*al-Awwal*) in respect to Himself, since He has the greatest understanding and has the greatest perfection. He is free from contingency and non-existence that are sources of

> all evils and nothing can make Him busy so that He neglects. The true love is the joy which is caused by perception of the presence of something."[4]

Sadr al-Din Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra, the founder of the school of *al-hikmah al-muta'āliyah*, makes the same point:

> "What causes love is what is received or will be received from the beloved. The higher the goodness and the more intense the existence, the more deserved of being loved and the greater the love for goodness. Now the being, which is free from potentiality and contingency, due to its ultimate goodness, has the ultimate level of being loved and the ultimate level of loving. Therefore, His love for Himself is the most perfect love and the most loyal one."[5]

He also adds that since God is Simple (not compound, without any parts) and Divine attributes are not additional (or accidental) to His essence in existence, (the idea that is greatly accepted by Muslim philosophers and the majority of theologians and known as the unity of His essence and His attributes), His love is identical to His essence. In this way, one can justifiably say that He is love as He is knowledge and life.

God's Love for Creatures

God's love for the world in general and human beings in particular, is unanimously believed in and emphasised by all Muslims. Indeed, one of the God's names is *al-Wadūd*, He who loves. This is in addition to those names that imply His love for creatures, such as *al-Rahmān* and *al-Rahim* meaning the all-Compassionate, the all-Merciful. Every chapter of the Qur'an except chapter 9 (which starts with verses about warning pagans) begins with the phrase: "In the Name of God, the all-

Compassionate, the all-Merciful." Yet the number of repetitions of this phrase in the Qur'an is equal to the number of chapters in it, that is 114 as the phrase occurs twice in chapter 27. It is noteworthy that although one of the things attributed to God in Islam is wrath (*ghadab*), its application is much more limited when compared to the application of His mercifulness and love for His creatures. Indeed, His wrath is only for those who deliberately disbelieve or commit evil actions. This is an idea that all Muslims agree with and is clearly expressed in many sources. This is evident in the profound statement mentioned in the well-known prayer, *Jawshan Kabir* when God is addressed as the one "whose mercy has preceded His wrath."

God has different levels or degrees of love for His creatures. One of them is His general and encompassing love that includes all beings. If there were no such love nothing would be brought into being. This love includes even wrongdoers, since they also manifest or represent some stages of goodness in their essence and this is that aspect of their being that is loved by God even though it may be overwhelmed by the demonic aspect of their characters and therefore they might be disliked overall.

A higher level of Divine love is God's love for true believers; those who believe in Him, the ultimate Truth and who do good deeds. Those are the people *"He loves and who love Him"* (5:54). In the Qur'an, we find that God loves *"the doers of justice"* (5:42; 8:60; 9:49), *"those who purify themselves"* (9:108), *"the pious"* (3:76; 9:4 & 7), *"those who do good (to others)"* (5:13 & 93; 3:134 & 148; 2:195), *"those who trust (Him)"* (4:35), *"the patient"* (3:146), and *"those who repent very much and purify themselves"* (2:222).

It is noteworthy that in many cases in the Qur'an God's displeasure is described not by focusing on His dislike, but rather indirectly by phrases, such as *"God does not love any ungrateful (or unbeliever) sinner"* (2:276), *"God does not love the unjust"* (3:57&1140), *"surely, God does not love him who is proud,*

boastful" (4:36) and *"surely God does not love him who is treacherous, sinful"* (4:107).

God's Love for Perfect Human Beings

According to Islam, the highest level of Divine love for any creature is His love for perfect human beings, such as the prophets. Prophet Muhammad has a special place in this regard. One of the well-known titles of him is *Habibullāh*, which means the beloved of God. In a famous Divine saying God addresses the Prophet, "If thou were not, I would not have created the heavens."[6] As S.H Nasr and many others have indicated,

> "Muslim saints over the centuries have seen in the love of God for his Prophet and in the Prophet's love for God, the prototype of all love between man and his creator."[7]

Human Love

Similar to what was seen earlier in the case of Divine love, human love for God, for His creation, for good deeds and for each other plays a crucial role in the Islamic world-view, especially in theology, mysticism and ethics. In fact, love for the truths embodied in religion builds faith. For Muslim theologians, inspired by the Qur'an, although faith is based on knowledge of the religious facts, it is not reducible to that knowledge. There might be people who have knowledge of the religious facts and are confident about them but still do not commit themselves to any faith. Faith and belief only come when a person voluntarily commits himself to acceptance of articles of faith and does not refuse to follow them. In other words, faith is there only when one loves religious beliefs and not just when one comes to know them. The Qur'an says:

> *"And they denied them (Divine signs or miracles) unjustly and proudly while their soul had been certain about it."* (27:14)

The prototype example of those who know very well but refuse to practice what they know is Satan. According to Islamic sources, Satan acts out of arrogance and selfishness, not out of ignorance.

Thus, a person becomes faithful and a believer only when he has respect and love for the articles of faith. We read in a famous hadith that Prophet Muhammad asked his companions what "the firmest handhold of faith" was. They suggested different things like prayer and hajj. When they could not give the appropriate answer the Prophet said.

> "The firmest handhold of faith is to love for the sake of God and to dislike for the sake of God, to befriend God's friends and to renounce His enemies."[8]

The same idea is emphasised by the Imams of the household of the Prophet. For example, Fuḍayl ibn Yasār, a disciple asked Imam Sadiq whether love and dislike derive from faith. Imam replied: "Is faith anything but love and dislike?"[9] The same hadith is narrated from Imam Baqir. It is also narrated that Imam Baqir said: "Faith is love and love is faith."[10]

An overall study of the Qur'an and narrations (*hadiths*) shows that in the Islamic view love, whether Divine or human belongs only to the precious and valuable things as far as they are so. The result is firstly that the degree of love that different things deserve or receive differs according to their merits, and secondly that anything in conflict with those precious and valuable things or that prevents their realisation should be disliked. For example, if justice is to be loved injustice should be disliked. Or if a person who tells the truth is to be loved a person who lies should be disliked. Of course, in respect to their other characteristics and

deeds, the situation might be different. A single person might be loved or praised for something and at the same time he might be disliked or blamed for the other.

It has been a common theme in moral advice given by great Muslim preachers that one should not let one's love for something or some person make him negligent of the whole truth. The reason for this emphasis is that love naturally tends to make the lover "blind and deaf". If you love someone it is very unlikely that you will have an impartial view of something pertaining to that person, unless the love is directed by reason. This is why even Sufi Muslims should try not to be overwhelmed by love. Siraj ed-Din writes:

> "The Sufi has no choice but to be vigilant, observant, and discerning, to put everything in its rightful place, and to give everything its due. ... It is in virtue of this perspective that Sufism is a way of knowledge rather than a way of love. As such it tends to repudiate partialities which the perspective of love necessarily condones and even encourages."[11]

Human Love for God

According to Islam the minimum expectation from believers is that God should have the first place in their heart in the sense that no other love may override one's love for God. God should be the highest and foremost object of love. The Qur'an says:

> *"Say: If your father or your sons or your brethren or your wives or your kinsfolk or the property you have acquired or the commerce you fear may slacken or the dwellings which you love- if these are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and striving in His way, then wait till God brings about*

His command; God does not guide the transgressing people." (9:24)

This verse clearly indicates that one's love for God has to be superior to one's love for whatever else one may come to love in one's life. This superiority shows itself when the love for God and for His religion comes into conflict with one's love for one's personal belongings. In this case, a believer should be able to sacrifice his personal favourite things for the sake of God. For example, if God asks us to give our lives to protect the innocent, our territorial integrity or other such causes, we should not let our love for comfort or family prevent us from striving in His way.

Therefore, a believer is not the person who just loves God. A believer is the person whose love for God is the highest and strongest love he has. Elsewhere, the Qur'an says,

"Yet there are some people who adopt rivals instead of God, whom they love just as they (should) love God. Those who believe are firmer in their love of God..." (2:165)

Why should one love God? According to Islam, one reason for loving God lies in the fact that God is the most precious, the most perfect and the most beautiful being that a man can ever conceive, and therefore man, out of his innate nature that aspires to values, beauty and perfection, loves God.

Many Islamic scholars, especially mystics have asserted that everyone feels a great love for God the Almighty in their hearts without necessarily being aware of it. They argue that even disbelievers who are purely concerned with secular aims or ideals love and worship what they take to be the ultimate good. For example, those who want to possess power want to have the ultimate power. They will never be satisfied with becoming a mayor or even the president. Even if they could control the whole globe they would think about controlling other planets. Nothing

in the world can set their hearts at rest. As soon as people reach what they had set up as their ideals, they realise that it is not sufficient and they will seek more. Islamic mystics inspired by the Qur'an such as Ibn Arabi, believe that the reason behind this phenomenon is that everybody is in fact seeking the ultimate good, that is, God. The Qur'an says,

> *"O man! Surely you strive (to attain) to your Lord, a hard striving until you meet Him."* (84:6).

However, the fact is that many people make a mistake in recognising what the highest good is. Some take it to be money, others might take political power as their god, and so on. The Qur'an says, *"Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?"* (25:43; 45:23)

Furthermore, if it happens that these people reach what they have set up as their ideal, their innate love for God (the highest good) will remain unresponsive and so they will feel unhappy and frustrated. Ibn Arabi says,

> "Nothing other than God is loved. He is what appears from whatever is beloved in the eyes of whoever loves. There is no being except that it loves. Thus the whole universe loves and is loved and all these go back to Him just as nothing has ever been worshipped other than Him since whatever a servant (of God) has ever worshipped has been so because of wrong imagination of deity in it; otherwise it would have never been worshipped. God the most High, says (in the Qur'an): 'and your Lord has commanded not to worship but Him.'(17:23) This is the case with love as well. No one has ever loved anything other than his Creator. However, He, the most High has hidden Himself from them under the love for Zaynab, Su'ad, Hind. Layla, dunya (this world),

> money, social position and all other beloved subjects in the universe."[12]

He adds that "mystics have never heard any poem or praise or the like but about Him (and they saw Him) beyond veils." (Ibid)

The other reason for loving God is to reciprocate His love and blessings. There is a rich literature in Islamic sources on different aspects and manifestations of God's love and favour for all human beings, including, *in a sense*, wrongdoers and those who disbelieve in Him. Human beings love whoever does good to them, and they appreciate such favour and benevolence and feel obliged to be thankful. The Prophet has said,

> "Love God because He has done good to you and He has bestowed favours upon you."[13]

According to Islamic narrations, God said to both Moses and David: "Love me and endear Me to my people." Then in response to their question about how to endear Him to the people, God said, "Remind them about My favours and bounties, for they do not recall My favours without the feeling of gratitude."[14]

In a mystic prayer, known as the Whispered Prayer of the Thankful, Imam Sajjad says,

> "My God, The uninterrupted flow of Thy graciousness has distracted me from thanking Thee!
>
> The flood of Thy bounty has rendered me incapable of counting Thy praises!
>
> The succession of Thy kind acts has diverted me from mentioning Thee in laudation!

> The continuous rush of Thy benefits has thwarted me from spreading the news of Thy gentle favours!"

He then adds,

> "My God, My thanksgiving is small before Thy great boons, and my praise and news spreading shrink beside Thy generosity toward me!
>
> Thy favours have wrapped me in the robes of the lights of faith, and the gentlenesses of Thy goodness have let down over me delicate curtains of might!
>
> Thy kindnesses have collared me with collars not to be moved and adorned me with neck-rings not to be broken!
>
> Thy boons are abundant-my tongue is too weak to count them!
>
> Thy favours are many my understanding falls short of grasping them, not to speak of exhausting them!
>
> So how can I achieve thanksgiving?"[15]

A believer who has started his spiritual journey towards God first comes to recognise God's blessings upon him in providing him with uncountable support and help that has enabled him to act. When he continues his journey and is equipped with a mystical view of the world he comes to realise that every good thing, indeed, comes from God himself. We read in the Qur'an,

> *"Whatever benefit comes to you (O man!), it is from God, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from yourself."* (4:79)

There is no reason to think otherwise. The reasons for inflicting unjust suffering fall into one or a combination of the categories below:

- **Lack of power:** A person who oppresses others may do so because he wants to gain something from it, or because he cannot prevent himself from doing something harmful to others.

- **Lack of knowledge:** A person may even have good intention of benevolence, but due to lack of information or making wrong conclusions may do something that harms the recipient.

- **Dislike and malevolence:** A person may be able to do good deeds and may also know how to do it, but he still fails to do so, because he is not kind enough, or even more, because he dislikes the recipient and wants to satisfy his anger and wrath by inflicting pain on him/her.

Muslim thinkers argue that God never does anything unjust or harmful to His servants, since none of the above reasons exist. He is the all-Powerful, the all-Knowing and the all-Merciful.

Thus, the picture of God in Islam is the loving, all-Merciful, all-Compassionate and all-Benevolent One. He loves His creatures more than they may ever love Him or themselves and His anger and wrath is out of love and preceded by love. There seems to be no difference among Muslims in believing in God who is love, though they might vary in the amount of emphasis they put on this aspect of the Islamic world view compared to others. In general, it can be said that Muslim mystics and ethicists are more concerned with this aspect of Islam than Muslim Philosophers, and Muslim philosophers in turn are more concerned than theologians. However, as mentioned earlier, there is no disagreement in viewing God as the loving, the all-Merciful and the all-Compassionate. We read in the Qur'an that, in response to

Moses' request for the good life in this world and in the hereafter, God said, *"(As for) My chastisement, I will afflict with it whom I please, and My mercy encompasses all things."* (7:56) We also find in the Qur'an that a group of angels who bear the Divine Throne pray:

> *"Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore forgive those who repent and follow Thy way and save them from the punishment of Hell."* (40:7)

Although God's love for His servants is not arbitrary and depends on their merits, His love for wrongdoers and those who have turned their back on Him is so great that it surpasses their expectations. The emphasis on this aspect of Divine love constitutes a considerable part of Islamic literature, including Qur'anic verses, hadiths and even poems. For example, in the Qur'an, God says:

> *"Say: O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of God; Surely God forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful."* (39:53)

The idea of repentance is one of the key concepts in this regard. In many verses of the Qur'an, God speaks of the constant possibility of repenting and returning to Him: He is the Forgiving. He says:

> *"But whoever repents after his iniquity and reforms (himself), then surely God will return to him (mercifully); surely God is Forgiving, Merciful."* (5:39)

The Qur'an also refers to the fact that God not only forgives those who seek forgiveness, but also that He may change their wrong

deeds to good deeds. About those who repent and believe and do good deeds, the Qur'an says,

> *"...these are they of whom God changes the evil deeds to good ones; and God is Forgiving, Merciful."* (25:70)

It is interesting that in the Qur'an God is introduced, not as the One who just accepts the repentance of his servants and returns to them when they return to him, but as the One who first attends to the servants who have broken their servitude to God in one way or another. God still displays love for the goodness and truth in their hearts (i.e. their hearts are not sealed). God returns to such servants first, then they repent and return to Him, and then He returns to them to forgive them. Therefore, as S. H. Tabatabai, the author of *Al-Mizān* in 20 volumes notes, every repentance and return of a wrongdoer servant is surrounded by two returns of God: the first return gives the person the ability for voluntary repentance and the second return is God's forgiveness after the person has repented. The fact is clearly stated in the Qur'an:

> *"... they knew it for certain that there was no refuge from God but in Him; then He turned to them (mercifully) that they might turn (to Him); Surely God is the oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful."* (9:118)

According to Islamic mysticism, one's knowledge of God as the most beautiful and perfect being and the source of all good things and consequently his love for God who is Love and Mercy gets so strong and encompassing that it will occupy all of one's heart. At the same time, knowledge of one's weakness and deficiencies in front of God becomes so intense that finally he will sense emptiness and nothingness. As such, a person loses his sense of the 'I' and becomes selfless. He will be identifiable with every type of goodness. From nothingness, one reaches the position of 'everything-ness.' He will feel no limitation or restriction. In a

well-known *hadith*, we read that "Servitude to God is a substance, whose essence is lordship."[16] A pure servant of God whose will is melted into His, will be able to bring about extraordinary deeds.

Sheikh Mahmud Shabistari in his *Sa'ādat-Nāmeh* has a beautiful description of what he takes to be different stages of the spiritual journey towards God. He says:

> "The service and worship of God
> Is a dictate of the Merciful
> To every creature: man and jinn alike.
> And yet this order takes to task
> The most elect-as God has said:
> *"I did not create the jinn and men for aught but they should worship Me."* (51:56)
> Through worship man is brought to prayer;
> From prayer to mystic thought, and then from thought
> The flame of gnosis leaps, until he sees
> The truth with contemplation's inner eye.
> Such wisdom comes from altruistic love (or kindness):
> The latter is its fruit, the first the bough.
> At last comes Love which ousts all else:
> Love undoes all sense of 'two';
> Love makes all One,
> Until no 'mine'
> Nor 'thine'
> Remain."[17]

Suhrawardi in his *On the Reality of Love* elaborates his view on the spiritual journey. He believes that this journey and its states and stations arise from virtue (*husn*), love (*mihr*) and reflective sadness (*huzn*). He relates virtue to the knowledge of God and love to the knowledge of the self. Sadness is the outcome of the knowledge of what was not and then was. Suhrawardi believes that knowledge of the self leads to the discovery that the self is

divine, and this results in loving God and in mystical experiences. The necessary relation between knowing oneself and knowing one's Lord is indeed a Qur'anic idea, which is clearly and greatly emphasised by hadiths. For example, Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever knows himself has known his Lord."[18] Suhrawardi believes that sadness is caused by reflection on the created order, which signifies separation of man and his departure from his original abode.[19]

According to Islam, love for God is very active and manifests itself in all aspects of one's life. It shapes all of one's love and dislike. It also shapes one's behaviour with others and with oneself. We read in the Qur'an:

> *"O you who believe! Whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then God will bring a people, He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in God's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer."* (5:54)

In the well-known hadith of *nawāfil* (meaning non-compulsory good deeds) it has been said,

> "Nothing makes My servants closer to Me compared to the performance of obligatory deeds, *wājibāt*. My servant constantly gets close to me by *nawāfil* till I love him. When I love him, then I shall be his ears with which he listens, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks, and his hands with which he holds: if he calls Me, I shall answer him, and if he asks Me, I shall give him."[20]

Human Love for Fellow Humans

A believer who loves God is expected to love His people and be kind to them. Of course, those whose evil character surpasses this factor are excluded. The Prophet said:

> "O servant of God, let your love and dislike be for the sake of God, because no one can attain to the *wilayah* (guardianship) of God without that, and no one shall find the taste of faith without that, though his prayers and fast be great in number."[21]

If one's love and dislike are to be only for the sake of God, it would be impossible not to love His people.

On the necessity of love for people, we see that the Qur'an praises those members of the Household of the Prophet who fasted for three consecutive days and everyday gave the only little food that they had at home to a poor, an orphan, and a captive respectively:

> *"And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. [They tell them] we only feed you for God's sake: we desire from you neither reward nor thanks."* (76:8 & 9)

There is a well-known *hadith* narrated in different sources where the Prophet said:

> "People are all God's family, so the dearest people to Him are those who benefit His family the most."[22]

According to one *hadith* and similar to what is mentioned in the New Testament (Matt. 25:31-46), on the Day of Judgement God will ask some people why they did not visit Him when He was

sick, why they did not feed Him when He was hungry and why they did not give him water when He was thirsty. The people will ask how this could have happened, while He is the Lord of the world? Then God will reply: "So and so was sick and you did not visit him, so and so was hungry and you did not feed him and so and so was thirsty and you did not give him water. Did not you know that if you did so you would find Me with him?"[23]

Conclusion

Thus, love plays an essential role in Islamic ethics, Islamic mysticism, Islamic theology and even Islamic philosophy. To draw an Islamic picture of the world, including the story of the creation of the universe and mankind and then God's treatment of humanity, one always needs to invoke the notion of love. God Himself is love and has created the world out of love. He treats human beings with love. Faith also starts with love - an overwhelming love for certain truths and is required to flourish by the nourishment of this love to the extent that one's love for God, the True (*al-Haqq*) fills all parts of one's heart and directs all aspects of one's life. Love for God can increase only when one reduces one's selfishness and if one can ultimately get rid of selfishness and the 'I', he will be a perfect man whose will and pleasure will be the will and pleasure of God. Love for God and freedom from selfishness can be secured first by sacrifice and losing desires for the sake of God and His people, and then by having no desire other than what God desires and no will other than His. At this point, of course, there will be no sacrifice and no pain. Ethical rules are guidelines of this path of love, enlightened and oriented by teachings of the intellect and the Prophets.

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[1] *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 84, pp. 198 & 344.

[2] It has to be noted that Muslim mystics usually speak of manifestation (*tajalli*) rather than creation (*khalq*).

[3] Avicenna, 1956, p. 369.

[4] Avicenna, 1375 A.H., vol. 3, p.359.

[5] Shirazi, 1378 A.H., vol. 2, p.274.

[6] *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 15, p. 27; vol. 16, p. 405.

[7] Nasr, 1989, p. 321.

[8] Al-Kulayni, 1397 A.H., *Kitab al-Iman wal-kufr*, "Bab al-Hubb fi Allah wa al-Bughd fi Allah", No. 6, p.126.

[9] Ibid, hadith 5, p. 125.

[10] Al-Majlisi, 1983, *Kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, "Bab al-Hubb fi Allah wa al-Bughd fi Allah", lxvi, p. 238.

[11] Siraj ed-Din, 1989, p. 234.

[12] Ibn Arabi, 1994, vol. 2, p. 326.

[13] Al-Daylami, 1370 A.H., p. 226.

[14] Majlisi, 1983, vol. 8, p. 351 & vol. 14, p. 38.

[15] Chittick, 1987, pp. 242 & 243.

[16] *Mizān al-Hikmah*, vol. 6, p. 13, No. 11317.

[17] Cited from *Beyond Faith & Infedideity: The Sufi poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* by L. Lewisohn, 1995, pp.231&232

[18] For a discussion on self-knowledge (*ma'rifat al-nafs*), see Shomali, 1996.

[19] For a discussion on his view in this regard, see *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* by Mehdi Amin Razavi, 1997 especially p.680.

[20] Kulayni, 1397 A.H., vol. 4, p. 54.

[21] Majlesi, 1983, vol. 27, p. 54.

[22] Hemyari, 1417 A.H., p. 56.

[23] For example, see al-Hilli, 1982, p. 374.

Self-Interest in Islamic Ethics

Ali Jaberi

This paper aims to study the basis of values from an Islamic point of view and see how the problem of self-interestedness is viewed in accordance with the Islamic teachings.

The Basis of the Islamic Value System

Obviously, Islam pays special attention to goodness and badness of actions. The goodness and badness of actions are so important that they define the fate of every person. The Holy Qur'an holds that *"Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds."* (74:38) Furthermore, the Qur'an says that life and death are created in order to test the quality of our actions:

> *"Who created death and life that He may try you - which of you is best in deeds"* (67:2)[1]

It should be noted that the life in the Hereafter is defined according the consequences of people's deeds in this world. In a well-known hadith, the Prophet Mohammad is quoted as saying: "This world is a *farm,* of which *the hereafter is the harvest.*"[2] According to the Qur'an, on the Day of Judgement all the deeds will be weighed, while the scales for weighing man's deeds are so delicate and even the smallest weight of his action will be counted:

> *"On that Day mankind shall come forth in scattered groups to be shown their deeds. And who so has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and those who have done an atom's weight of evil shall see it."* (90:6-8)

Now let us turn to the criterion of the goodness of actions. Of course, in the Islamic moral teachings, special attention has been paid to the moral virtues and merits to be acquired and to the vices to be avoided.[3] There is no doubt that, nourishment of moral excellence is very important and has always been one of the great aims of the divine Prophets:

> *"Certainly Allah conferred a favour on the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His messages and purifying them, and teaching them the book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error."* (3:164).

In this verse purification is mentioned before teaching. The reason is that purification is the aim of the prophethood, while teaching is an instrument.[4] More specifically, concerning the Holy Prophet, God says, *"And most surely you are on a mighty morality"* (68:4). In fact, the Prophet had already won from his contemporaries the recognition of his sublime morality, inasmuch as he had won the title of *al-Amin, the faithful one*. He is the one who has been described by God as a role model and example,

> *"Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar"* (33:21).

The Prophet himself had clearly announced the objective behind his Prophetic mission: "I have been appointed as a prophet of God for the completion and perfection of noble characteristics."[5]

However, despite the significance of moral virtues in Islamic teachings, moral virtues are, in turn, also treated as dependent variables. This leads to the question concerning the real criterion or foundation for moral values. Certainly, it is not possible to deal with the Islamic value system without considering "monotheism."

Islam is a monotheistic religion that believes in God as the master of all a person possesses, including themselves. On the other hand, it can be understood from the Qur'an that God has created all the endowment on the earth for human beings and that man is appointed as the vicegerent of God on earth (2:30 & 34; 6:165). These verses show that man as the vicegerent of God upon earth has been created to illustrate the attributes of God in his own life. Thus, man has a central position in the material universe.[6]

The natural follow-up question to this is the significant question of why the human being has been created. Or, to put in Aristotelian words, what is the supreme good that humans always seek, which is always desirable in itself and not for the sake of something else? Obviously, there is no room for a narrow interpretation of the goal of human life, by limiting it to materialistic happiness. According to the Qur'an, the purpose of the creation of jinn and human beings is to worship God (51:6). Therefore, as Mutahhari has also elaborated, the goal and ideal that Islam offers is God and everything else has been treated as a means towards it. So, it is proximity to God that is treated as the intrinsic goal, and everything else including even religious and moral obligations are nothing but preliminary steps leading to the final stage of the encounter with God.[7]

It is noticeable that worship (*'ibādah*) in Islam is not limited only to the ritual acts. As Amini puts it, worship involves:

> "discharging social responsibilities, compassion, goodness and serving God's servants with the intention of God's nearness ... whose reward is ten times higher than performance of Hajj."[8]

According to a divine saying, God says:

> "My servants are My children, therefore, the most beloved person before Me are those who are kindest towards them and do their best in taking care of their needs."[9]

When the Prophet of Islam (s) was asked who the dearest of human beings to God was, he replied, "It is someone who is of greatest benefit to the people." He also said,

> "If someone hears a person calling Muslims to help him and does not respond positively to his call and request for help and does not assist him, he is not a Muslim."[10]

Another very important question arises here: is the worship of God consistent with any kind of egoism? It has been suggested that this depends on the level of the worshippers.[11] For ordinary people worship can be treated as a search for a better reward in the next world, but there are free and noble people who do not worship for "securing the benefits or deliverance from physical and material sufferings." Their worship is exclusively out of love, affection and gratitude. Imam Ali (a) says,

> "A group of people worshipped God out of desire for reward. Surely this is the worship of traders. Another group worshipped God out of fear. This is the worship of slaves. Still another group worshipped God out of gratefulness. This is the worship of free men."[12]

Accordingly, there are people who worship God because He deserves to be worshipped, and this is the worship of mystics. In another saying, the holy Imam is even more explicit,

> "O God I do not worship you for fear of your fire or for cupidity in desiring heaven, I worship you because you are worthy of it."[13]

It still seems however, that for the ordinary people who constitute the majority of believers worship is performed in an egoistic spirit. As will be discussed below, in Islamic teachings the ego is defined as something wicked and as a dangerous enemy. Furthermore, because self-seeking and God-seeking cannot go together, it brings about a significant role for "intention" in a Muslim behaviour.

The essence of the intention is to perform an act with the motive of obedience to a command of Almighty God. It is believed that the actions of man are reflections of his beliefs and thoughts, on the one hand, and that the value of any action depends upon the motives of the action, on the other. As a result, from Islamic point of view, it is the intention and its purity that play the important role in a Muslim behaviour. As Ayatollah Khomeini puts it, the perfection of worship depends on sincere intention. He adds,

> 'It is the sincere intention and pure purpose on which depends the perfection and defectiveness of worships, and their validity and invalidity. As much as the worships are free from association with non-God and from adulteration of intention, they are sincere and perfect'. [14]

Accordingly, no worship is acceptable to God the Almighty without sincere intention and with any form of shirk (setting up equals with God), and there is nothing important in worship as intention and its purity.[15]

Thus, inclusion of the pleasure and satisfaction of anyone other than God, whether it is one's own self or someone else, is treated as polytheism in worship, and has been condemned strongly by Islamic teachings. It is called outward shirk, if the person

worships for someone else's satisfaction, and it is called inward shirk, if the worship takes place for the sake of satisfying one's own satisfaction.[16]

Therefore, the "goodness of action" (which is called "*husn-e fi'li*") is not sufficient. It must be supplemented with the "goodness of agent" (which is called "*husn- fā'li*"), that is, the goodness of the performer, which involves having a good intention. An action can be good, if and only if it is done with the intention of "nearness to God."[17]

It should be noted that in the Islamic moral system, in addition to the goodness of action and the goodness of the agent, lawfulness of means is also required. In other words, from an Islamic point of view, duties and responsibilities can be performed only through lawful means.

Self-Centrality

In this section, the nature of "self" (*nafs*) from an Islamic point of view will be studied. Nafs means self, soul, heart and person.[18] According to Mulla Sadra[19], while the soul (nafs) is a single reality, it appears first as the body (*jism*), then through substantial motion and inner transformation it becomes the vegetative soul, then the animal soul, and finally the human soul. To be more precise, while at the beginning the soul is the body, it passes through inner transformation and various stages until it becomes absolutely free from matter and change. Meanwhile, whereas the sense organs are not capable of knowing themselves, soul knows itself and uses the sense organs, as instruments.[20]

Nafs plays such an important role in Islam that the knowledge of the self is the key to the knowledge of God. Accordingly, the holy Prophet held, "He who knows himself, knows his Lord."[21]

According to Muslim philosophers, a human being is a single reality. Despite its unity, the human self has different dimensions,

including the animal self and the rational self. As Ibrahim Amini (2005, Ch. 4) has put it,

> 'the animal self continuously strives to dominate by keeping human being amused with whims, passions and lower animal desires, thus, closing the path of perfection, exaltation and movement towards God the Almighty and making a human being captive of his animal self.'

In contrast, the human self

> 'strives for attaining the higher sublime spiritual stations of human perfection leading towards God's Countenance, and in order to accomplish his cherished goal, tries to control, and forces the animal-self for his absolute submission.'

The Holy Qur'an pays special attention to the self and its development and believes in the existence of three stages in this regard.[22] The first stage is called *al-Nafs al-Ammārah*, meaning 'despotic soul, carnal soul, commanding soul, soul imperative and/or soul that bids to evil.'[23] The second stage is *al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah*, meaning 'the reproaching soul, self-accusing soul, reproachful soul and/or blaming soul.'[24] Finally, the highest stage of development of the human soul is *al-Nafs al-Mutma'innah*, meaning 'the soul at peace and peaceful soul.'[25]

The first type of soul is the lowest stage of man in his spiritual growth, and this is the same as the animal self. It is this stage which belongs to the low *desires* and *animalistic passion rule* of the man's mind and his capability of doing any evil without restriction. This stage of the self is defined as something *wicked* and as a *dangerous enemy*, which

> 'is responsible for all sorts of evils and against which we are supposed to wage a great struggle (*Jihād-e Akbar*), till it becomes completely

> submissive, otherwise it will inflict terrible misfortune upon the defeated person. It is associated with *passion* (*al-hawā*), which in the sense of *desire* is always evil.'[26]

At the second stage, the humanity in man gets the upper hand, and according to the commentators, this stage is the beginning of his moral resurrection.[27]

At the final stage, the human self is characterized as a precious valuable jewel possessing Heavenly excellence, which has been treated as a source of all superior characteristics and human virtues.[28] The Holy Qur'an says,

> *"O soul at peace! Return to thy Lord well pleased well-pleasing! So enter among My chosen servants, and enter thou My Garden."* (89:27-30)

In the case of concentrating against the animal soul, "monotheism" in Islam is to be dominant. Therefore, the agent's behaviour and conduct must be consistent with Islamic monotheism otherwise they would be void and worthless. As mentioned earlier, self-seeking, especially in its extreme sense, is not consistent with monotheism and God-seeking. To put in Tabatabai's terms, self-interested behaviour, because of associating someone else with God, is in fact a deviation from the path of monotheism.[29]

Of course, as a result of being animal, the human being requires food, water, clothing, shelter and sexual desires, but as was mentioned in previous section, he has not been created to live in this world like an animal. Rather, he has been created with the aims and objectives of utilizing his animal existence for perfecting the humanistic one. Otherwise, such an individual does not deserve to be called a human being, instead he will be an animal, or even worse.[30]

The Islamic moral system aims to develop both individualistic and socialistic characteristics of human beings, so that individuals can voluntarily follow their own spiritual and intellectual evolution and apply human virtues in themselves and in the society. This is the way that man, as vicegerent of God, can reflect a ray of His attributes in the society. This could be what Sadr considers the necessity of changing human behaviour through changing his treatment of self-interests, in which religion has a significant role in bringing about a kind of integration between morality and self-interest.[31]

So far, an attempt has been made to show that in Islamic literature self-love and self-interest are normally thought to have a tendency towards loving the lower stage of the human soul, and following what its passions and desires demand. Self-love, in this sense, in addition to being the source of sins, corruptions, and disasters, can be the source of vices, such as self-admiration (*'ujb*), arrogance (*kibr*), greediness (*hirs*) and miserliness (*bukhl*), which are strongly condemned by Islamic ethicists.

According to Islamic ethicists, it seems that 'ujb as well as many other vices result from self-love and when the human being is plagued with the evil of self-love, it is the source of all human faults and moral vices.[32] It should be noted that in Islam undertaking spiritual journey towards God, the Exalted, does not necessarily require living in seclusion or forgetting social responsibilities. As Mohammad Behishti and Jawad Bahonar hold, a religious man is interested in all good things of this world and the hereafter, from an Islamic point of view. But the main difference is that, "for him the pleasure of God is above everything else."[33]

Conclusion

This paper is focused on the Islamic understanding of self-interest. In Islam happiness and salvation depend on the life and especially on the actions in this world. This leaves no doubt about

the importance of taking into account the consequences and outcomes of actions. But, in addition to the consequences, moral virtues are very important to the extent that the holy Prophet Mohammad declared their perfection as the aim of his mission. In addition to taking into account the outcomes of actions and virtues, intentions must be carefully looked at too. The worship of God should be done with pure intentions. Worshipping God involves the performance of all duties and obligations and improves all aspects of human life. Finally, the issue of the self and its different dimensions, including the animal self and the human self was addressed. While the animal-self is taken to be something that needs controlling, the human self is characterized as a precious valuable jewel and the source of all superior characteristics and human virtues. It was also argued that Islamic teachings direct human behaviour towards the higher stage and at the same time, are strongly against the extreme case of abandoning the animal soul and its needs. The campaign against the lower self does not mean approving living in seclusion and not trying to improve the life conditions for oneself and others.

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[1] See also Makarem Shirazi, vol. 24, p. 318.

[2] Mortada Mutahhari, 1975, part. V.

[3] See e.g. M. M. Naraghi, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 118-125.

[4] See Makarem Shirazi, 1987, vol.1, p.330.

[5] See Ibrahim Amini, 2005; M. Shirazi, vol. 24, p. 368.

[6] See M. Shirazi, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 118-125 and S. M. H. Tabataba'i, 1963, vol. 1, pp. 187-193.

[7] See, M. Mutahhari, 1994a, p. 160.

[8] Amini, 2005, Ch. 26.

[9] Amini, 2005, cited from Kulayni, 1986, vol. 2, p. 199.

[10] Ibid. vol. 2, p. 164.

[11] See, e.g., M. Mutahhari, 1982.

[12] Imam Ali, 1970, Wisdom 237.

[13] Ibn-e Meytham, 1995, p. 612.

[14] Khomeini, 1999, pp. 325-330.

[15] See Kulayni, 1986, vol. 2, pp. 84-100.

[16] See Khomeini, 1986, pp. 325-330.

[17] See Mutahhari, 2004, part, 3.

[18] Gibb and Kramers (A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, 2001, P. 434-435) list 15 meanings for nafs, citing from *Taj al-'Arus*, and add two others from Lisan al-Arab and hold that most of these meanings are metaphorical.

[19] One of the important changes that Mulla Sadra brought about in the reformulation of philosophy and theology was the emphasis he laid upon the importance of the science of the soul (*'ilm al-nafs*) or psychology above and beyond what peripatetic philosophy had believed. In addition, as Sayyed Hossein Nasr describes, " Mulla Sadra removed the discussion of psychology from physics or natural philosophy and made it a branch of metaphysics and a study that is complementary to the science of the origin of things." (Sayyed Hossein Nasr, 1963, P.955)

[20] See Majid Fakhry, 1991, p. 132.

[21] Khomeini, 1981, p. 6.

[22] See Makarem Shirazi, 1987, vol. 25, p. 280.

[23] B. Khorramshahi, 1991, p. 634.

[24] Ibid. p. 635.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibrahim Amini, 2005, Ch. 4.

[27] See e.g. Makarem Shirazi, 1987, vol. 25, p. 274.

[28] See, e.g., Ibrahim Amini, 2005, Ch. 4.

[29] Tabataba'i,1998.

[30] See e.g. Makarem Shirazi, vol. 7, p. 118.

[31] Baqir Sadr, 1989.

[32] See, Khomeini, 1981, p. 52, and 1999, p. 71, and 1999c, pp. 253 and 338.

[33] Beheshti and Bahonar, Ch. 3: Deep and Definitive Knowledge.

Theocentric Ethics in Islam:
From Spiritual Consciousness to Moral Conscience

Reza Shah-Kazemi

Many times, the term 'theocentric ethics' is not used to denote a systematic philosophy of ethics centred on a particular conception of God. Rather, what is intended is a spiritual orientation towards the divine nature: an orientation that generates ethical sensibility and moral rectitude in the measure of the accuracy of perception of the divine nature. In particular, this ethical sensibility is generated according to the depth of intuition of the beauty of God. The perception of the divine nature (or consciousness of the ultimate reality) is the deepest foundation of moral comportment. In other words, spiritual consciousness fashions moral conscience. Veracity, on the level of metaphysics, carries in its wake sincerity on the level of ethics. What follows is a preliminary sketch of this view of the spiritual, and one might say 'aesthetic', foundations of moral praxis in the metaphysical, mystical and visionary traditions of Islam.[1]

Having stated the basic argument of this paper, it is necessary to respond to an objection that might be made at this point: surely, moral conscience *precedes* spiritual consciousness, in that one is first taught basic moral rules and ethical principles, and then gradually acquires a sense of higher spiritual and metaphysical realities. While this is evidently true as an empirical observation of the process of individual development, the argument misses

the point that, in principle, it is the actual nature of the good, rather than the particular good, that determines the moral vision of right and wrong and that vision is imparted by the teacher, whether the latter be a prophet, saint, elder or parent. This vision contains a moral dimension but is determined essentially by a particular worldview, in which a notion of ultimate reality is heavily implicit.[2] Thus, in a religious context, the view of the Good or the Absolute takes priority over morality in the very measure that the principle takes priority over its manifestations and the essence over its forms.

One particularly important aspect of divine nature with regards to the present discussion is expressed in the following definitive statement by the Prophet about the nature of God, "Truly, God is beautiful and He loves beauty."[3] The word used for beauty here is *Jamāl*, one of the divine names being *al-Jamīl*, 'the Beautiful.' It should be noted that the divine names, traditionally 99 in number, are collectively referred to in the Qur'an as 'the most beautiful names', *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, the word for beautiful here coming from another root, that of *ḥasuna*, to be fine, good and beautiful. This description of the divine names comes in an important passage in the Qur'ān in which several such names are mentioned:

> *"He is God, other than Him there is no god, Knower of the hidden and the manifest, He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. He is God, other than Him there is no god, the King, the Holy, Peace, the Bestower of security, the Guardian, the Almighty, the All-Compelling, the Supreme; glory be to Him above all that they ascribe as partners to Him. He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner of forms, unto Him belong the most beautiful Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, the Wise."* (59:22-24)

Even though some of the divine names refer to the wrathful side of God, nonetheless, as a whole, they are given the epithet of 'beautiful,' and this fact in itself is full of significance. Even those qualities that, on the surface, appear not to be beautiful, those that refer to God as 'the Avenger' (*al-Muntaqim*) or 'the Slayer' (*al-Mumīt*), are in fact integrated within the framework defined by beauty. All these apparently 'negative' attributes are manifested in order to restore a lost equilibrium and thus bring about harmony, and harmony is inseparable from beauty. In this way, all the divine qualities are described collectively as 'beautiful': the totality of the acts of the attributes of God cannot be described as anything other than beautiful insofar as they are complementary, integrated, harmonious and therefore 'beautiful.' Beauty is not just one among a range of qualities and attributes; rather this quality paves the way to something absolutely fundamental and irreducible about the divine nature.

In addition, all of the 114 chapters of the Qur'ān bar one begin with the *basmala*, the consecration: 'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful' (*bismi'Llāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*). This likewise indicates the ontological precedence of beauty over other qualities, for the names of mercy refer to the gentle and, as it were, 'maternal' aspect of God (the root of the word for mercy, *raḥma* is connected to the word for 'womb', *raḥim*). Although it might seem more logical to balance out the formula of consecration by referring to a name expressing the rigorous side of God alongside one of these names of mercy, a repetition of the principle of compassion is found instead. God is, above all else, merciful and compassionate. As the Qur'an says, *"My Mercy encompasseth all things"* (7:156). The qualities of mercy, forgiveness and compassion all stem from the absolute goodness of God. Infinite goodness and absolute beauty, then, are inseparable within the divine nature and also on the plane of the human soul. As Frithjof Schuon so aptly puts it as he sums up the relationship between virtue and beauty in general with a particular pertinence to the relationship within the Islamic view of ethics, 'beauty is outward virtue, virtue is inward beauty.'[4]

As mentioned earlier, the word for beauty in the *ḥadīth* describing the divine nature was *jamāl*, but the other word for beauty, *ḥusn*, as in the phrase *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*, 'the most beautiful names,' is closer to the core of the relationship between virtue and beauty. Whereas the conventional term used for 'ethics' is *akhlāq* (plural of *khuluq* - character, nature), there is another term that encompasses the meanings of virtue, goodness, beauty and moral excellence, and that term is *iḥsān*, the literal meaning of which is 'making beautiful.'[5] The word is the verbal noun derived from the fourth form of the Arabic verb, *aḥsana,* meaning to do good, to make excellent and/or to adorn. In the Shi'i tradition of ethics, much emphasis is placed on the contrast between *ḥusn* (beauty) and *qubḥ* (ugliness) in the definition of virtue and vice respectively. What is particularly emphasized in this ethical tradition is the principle that the intrinsic beauty/goodness of good acts, attitudes and dispositions can be grasped as such by the intellect and are not merely the result of some arbitrary divine *diktat*: acts are not simply defined as 'good' because the revealed Law prescribes them, nor are bad acts bad simply by virtue of being proscribed by the same Law. Rather, the Law prescribes good acts because they are intrinsically good, and the intellect is, by its nature, capable of perceiving that goodness and the 'beauty' of that goodness.[6] Likewise, as regards bad actions, they are bad by nature, and both their evil and their 'ugliness' can be perceived by the intellect.[7]

Iḥsān is the third term in a ternary formulated by the Prophet in the well-known saying, *Ḥadīth Jibrā'īl*, (called such because the interlocutor in the dialogue is none other than the angel Gabriel in human form). The angel came to the Prophet and asked him a series of questions:

> "O Muhammad, tell me about Submission (*al-islām*)," the stranger asked. The Prophet replied:
>
> "*Al-islām* is to testify that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God, to perform the prayers, to pay the poor-due (*al-*

> *zakāt*), to fast in the month of Ramaḍān, and to make the pilgrimage to the House [the Ka'bah] if you are able to do so." He [Gabriel] said,: "You have spoken truly," and the onlookers stated their amazement at him asking him and saying that he had spoken truly. The angel continued: "Then tell me about faith (*al-īmān*)." He said: "It is to believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof." Again the angel in human form responded: "You have spoken truly." He then said: "Then tell me about virtue (*al-iḥsān*)." The Prophet replied: "It is to worship God as if you could see Him, and if you see Him not, yet truly He sees you."[8]

The discussion pertaining to the 'vision' of God is vast and complex in the Islamic tradition, and it is not possible to include it here. Suffice to say that the most satisfying formulation regarding the nature of this vision is given by Imam Ali who, upon being asked whether he had 'seen' God, replied that he would not worship what he had not seen, and added,

> "Eyes do not see Him through the witness of outward vision, but hearts see Him through the verities of faith (*ḥaqā'iq al-īmān*)".[9]

'Seeing God' through the vision of a heart transfigured by the spiritual realities of faith constitutes the highest form of *iḥsān*, and carries in its train that mode of *iḥsān* that is expressed by the notion of 'virtue.' The *muḥsin* is therefore one who does good but also sees God, rather than 'seeing himself.' The Imam warns mankind to beware of vanity, conceit and lavish praise of oneself by others, as these are 'Satan's most reliable opportunities to efface the virtue (*iḥsān*) of the virtuous (*al-muḥsinīn*).'[10] The true, objective vision of God results not only in virtue but also in spiritual effacement in the *face* of that supreme Reality. On the

contrary, the all-engrossing vision of oneself leads to forgetting God (the abandonment of 'theocentric' ethics) and to all those vices that feed upon egocentricity as their life-blood.

To be virtuous then, is to be a *muḥsin*, and this entails much more than simply an outward mode of action, or a set of observable behavioural traits. In reality it is a form of worship governed by the awareness of God, an awareness that God always 'sees you,' even if 'you see Him not.' It should be noted that this form of worship cannot be conflated with the specific acts of formal worship already described by the Prophet when answering what *islām* consists of: that is, the double testimony, the canonical five daily prayers, the alms tax, fasting during the month of Ramaḍān and the pilgrimage to Mecca. The 'worship' in question here, in the context of *iḥsān*, is supra-formal. It encompasses the whole of one's life. One's inner being is fashioned by the permanent awareness of the divine presence, a presence which is conscious: God truly sees you.

The state governed by the principle of *iḥsān* is thus a pre-requisite for the sincerity of outward action, whether such action assumes the form of obligatory prayer or moral praxis. It is a state of being that is determined by a *vision*. Vision that is not, in the first instance, moral but which carries moral rectitude in its train. It is a vision of ultimate reality, eliciting and generating an existential disposition: one must first *be* and then *act*. Being takes priority over action in the same measure that spirit takes precedence over form, and principle over its manifestations. This existential disposition, or mode of being, is predicated, realistically, not only upon the ultimate spiritual vision of 'seeing God' but also, on the less exacting 'vision,' that is constituted by the knowledge that, 'if you see Him not, yet truly He sees you.' The consequent implication is the awareness that one is perpetually in the presence of God, in the presence of that Reality to which one is accountable; an absolutely just Reality that calls for ethical propriety, but is also, above all else, beautiful in its essence and invites towards partaking in contemplative felicity.

The very beauty of God, appreciated in the measure of one's contemplation, calls forth the beauty of man. "Assume the character traits of God" (*takhallaqū bi akhlāqillāh*),[11] the Prophet is reported to have said, and the divine archetype of beauty is rendered accessible to man through the sincerity of his effort at realizing *iḥsān*, the 'making beautiful/fine/excellent' of his own soul. In the Islamic universe of ethical discourse, one might say that there is no ethics without aesthetics and aesthetics, for its part, extends far beyond the domain of artistic sensibility, while also including it. The appreciation of beauty enters into the articulation of one's spiritual sensitivity and into one's ethical behaviour. It could also be said that in the theocentric view of ethics being presented here, spiritual aesthetics functions as a bridge connecting metaphysics with ethics. The assimilation of the Real on the plane of metaphysics takes the form of a vision of the Beautiful, and this in turn bears fruit as ethical predisposition: the moral goodness that is inward beauty. Ethical action is thus predicated ultimately, on contemplation. It is initially based on an intuition of the divine substance of goodness and beauty, an intuition profoundly deepened through the practice of prayer, and ultimately brought to fruition by spiritual contemplation.[12] Thus we find Imam Ali insisting that all of our actions are the fruit of our prayers: "Know that your every action is dependent upon your prayer."[13]

Turning now to the level of moral praxis, let us note that the metaphysical qualities of Being or, in theological terms, the 'names and qualities' of God, are discernible not only in their archetypal or principal nature, but also through their traces or reflections in the souls of exemplary human beings, primarily the prophets and saints. In Islamic terms, the final prophet, Muḥammad b. 'Abdillāh, is regarded as the most complete embodiment of the virtues which, for their part, are rooted in the divine qualities that they reflect. This perspective on the relationship between human and divine qualities is summed up by Ibn 'Arabi, possibly the most influential theosopher/gnostic in the Islamic mystical tradition,[14] in his description of the wisdom

behind the creation of Adam. This description comes at the beginning of his chapter entitled, 'The Ringstone of the Wisdom of Divinity in the Word of Adam' in his most famous work, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* (*The Ringstones of Wisdom*):

> "The Real, glorified be He, willed in virtue of His Beautiful Names, (which are innumerable) to see their identities (*aʿyān*) [or His Identity (*ʿayn*), if you so wish] in a comprehensive being that comprises the whole affair insofar as it is possessed of existence,[15] and His Mystery is manifest to Himself through it. For the vision a thing has of itself in itself is not like the vision a thing has of itself in another thing, which will be like a mirror for it..."[16]

In this perspective, the whole of creation is akin to a mirror, while Adam is the principle of reflection for that mirror. It is thus the human being alone who reflects all of the qualities back to God; by this means, God comes to enjoy the vision of all of His own qualities 'in another': in those perfect exemplars of humanity who faithfully reflect the source of their creation. The qualities are divine, whether they are grasped in their supra-manifest mode within the divine nature, or in their manifested mode within human beings. However, the difference in existential modality is never overlooked by this vision of essential identity. The difference is analogous to that of light and its reflection in a mirror: the reflection is light, and nothing other than light as regards its essential substance and its reality, but it is also other than light as regards its limitations, its derivative nature, and its ontological contingency or 'poverty.' It is utterly dependent on a source external to itself.

As mentioned above, it is in the soul of the Prophet that the divine qualities are most perfectly embodied as virtues. The conduct of the Prophet (his *Sunnah*) is a fundamental moral and spiritual paradigm for the believers. The Muslims are told by God

in the Qur'an (33:21) that they have in the Prophet a *"beautiful example"* (*uswah ḥasanah*), and the Prophet is indeed imitated both in his outward acts and in his inward attitudes. But one should not view the prophetic paradigm only in terms of the last prophet. The reality of the prophetic substance is by no means exhausted by its manifestation as the particular man through whom the final revelation was conveyed. Rather, this prophetic reality, substance, or 'light' is to be understood in terms of the following statement by the Prophet: "I was a prophet when Adam was still between water and clay."[17] This statement recalls that of Christ: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John, VIII: 58). The prophetic reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-muḥammadiyyah*) or the prophetic light (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*) not only transcends all particular prophets, but it also comprises them. It is thus that in the Qur'an the essence of the prophetic message is deemed to be one and the same:

> *"And We sent no messenger before thee, but that We revealed unto him: There is no god but Me, so worship Me"* (21:25).

Likewise, one can understand better why belief in all the prophets is incumbent upon the Muslims and that, even more profoundly, the true believers are described as those who do not make any distinction between God's messengers. This is expressed in the following verse, which comes closest of all to defining the Islamic credo:

> *"The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord, and [so do] the believers. Every one believeth in God and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers— we make no distinction between any of His messengers..."* (2:285)[18]

In this light it is easier to understand why the Qur'an is replete with stories and lessons from the lives of many of the pre-

Muḥammadian prophets of whom there are, according to tradition, 124,000: "*about some We have told thee, and about others We have not told thee*" (40:78). These prophets are fully integrated within the Muslim spiritual universe, albeit in ways that may not fully correspond to the accounts given in the New and the Old Testaments. The different prophets, as depicted in the Qur'an, can be seen as so many facets of one and the same jewel, or crystal; the dazzling array of refractions of the one light passing through it being elicited by the different environments in which the essential prophetic message is conveyed. The way in which the one message assumes such diverse forms is beautifully expressed in the following Qur'anic image:

> "*And in the earth are neighbouring tracts, and gardens of vines, and fields sown, and palms in pairs, and palms single,* ***watered with one water.*** *And we have made some of them to excel others in fruit. Surely herein are signs for a people who understand.*" (13:4; author's emphasis)

All of the prophets are also seen as belonging to a single *ummah*, a single religious community. In the chapter of the Qur'an aptly entitled 'The Prophets' (al-anbiyā'), mention is made of Moses, Aaron, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Ishmael, Enoch (Idrīs), Ezekiel, Jonah, Zacharias, John, Jesus and finally, Mary, the last person to be spoken of prior to the verse which declares: "*Indeed, this, your ummah is one ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me*" (21:92).

The stories of the prophets are thus stories of and for the single, all-embracing, universal religious community. A Muslim typically reads the stories of the different prophets as pertaining to sacred history and also to the doctrinal teachings of Islam. He compares them to the moral challenges he faces in his own life and, inwardly, to the spiritual vicissitudes of one's own soul. To give just one example of the latter principle, Rumi, in the middle

of one of his stories concerning Moses and Pharaoh, suddenly breaks off the narrative and speaks directly to his readers:

> 'The mention of Moses has become a chain to the thoughts (of my readers), for (they think) that these are stories which happened long ago.
>
> The mention of Moses serves for a mask, but the light of Moses is thy actual concern, O good man.
>
> Moses and Pharaoh are in thy being: thou must seek these two adversaries in thyself.
>
> The (process) of generation from Moses is (continuing) till the Resurrection: the Light is not different (though) the lamp has become different.'[19]

Thus, all of the prophets and their stories concern the Muslim at different levels, offering the spiritually sensitive seeker so many exemplary ways in which to deal with concrete problems, the prophetic response embodying the appropriate combination of moral and spiritual qualities. The situations described in the Qur'an cover an astonishing range of complex ethical challenges together with solutions in which spiritual principles are brought to the fore. One such challenge, a particularly relevant one for our times, is that with which the prophet Joseph was confronted. A brief look at his way of overcoming temptation, according to the Qur'anic account, will help to illustrate the relationship between moral rectitude and spiritual vision, which is being emphasised in this paper.

The story of Joseph in the Qur'an is contained within chapter 12, entitled 'Yūsuf,' and which, unlike other chapters, is almost exclusively devoted to the story in question.[21] It is similar, in its broad outlines, to the story as recounted in the Bible, but there are many significant differences. The part of the story which is of concern here is Joseph's success in resisting the attempted

seduction of Zulaykhā, the beautiful wife of his master in Egypt. This addresses the heart of one of the most sensitive moral problems of our times: how to resist temptations to seek sensual gratification outside the bonds of marriage. Despite being a prophet, and thus *ma'ṣūm* or morally impeccable, Joseph nonetheless felt, at some level of consciousness, the pressure exerted by Zulaykhā's attempted seduction. This is clear on both occasions[22] when Zulaykhā tried to seduce him. On the first, Zulaykhā had bolted the door and urged Joseph to come to her. His reply was: "I seek refuge in God," and the Qur'ān adds, pointedly *"She verily desired him, and* ***he would have desired her****, had he not seen the evidence of his Lord"* (12:23-24; author's emphasis).[23] On the second occasion when Zulaykhā made her advances (this time together with her invited guests), and when imprisonment was threatened if Joseph refused, he cried out,

> *"O my Lord, prison is dearer to me that that unto which they are inviting me; and if Thou fend not off their plot,* ***I shall incline unto them*** *and become one of the ignorant"* (12:33; author's emphasis).

Therefore, Joseph was indeed attracted to his beautiful seductress, but ascribes his successful resistance not to his own power but to God. After he is released from prison, and exonerated of all guilt, he says, *"I do not exonerate myself, for the soul incites to evil, unless my Lord hath mercy"* (12:53).[24] What should be stressed here, to begin with, is the juxtaposition between human sinfulness and divine mercy, for a unilateral stress on this contrast would diminish human moral responsibility and would imply that human agency is entirely passive and utterly dependent upon divine intervention. Man's moral agency however, is active, and is rigorously centred on intellectual discernment and spiritual vision. Joseph 'saw' concretely the 'evidence' of his Lord, instigating a return to the very essence of iḥsān, a vision of God, which translates into unshakeable virtue. In this instance, it

generates the power to abstain from evil, to remain incorruptible, and this power cannot be dissociated from the beauty of the vision enjoyed. For what is 'seen' by Joseph is not just some abstract moral 'evidence.' The comprehension that extra-marital relations are sinful, and will be punished by a just Lord who knows and sees everything was not the deterrent as much as what he saw: the 'evidence' provided by the very presence of that which he witnessed. The reality and power of God is fully present for the prophet, but so is the self-evident, albeit supra-sensible, beauty of God and it is this transcendent beauty which eclipses the ensnaring but illusory beauty of the seductress. In the face of absolute beauty, all of its reflections on lower planes fade into insignificance, even if all beauty, on whatever plane of manifestation or reflection, is nothing but the beauty of God. The substance of beauty is one, absolute and infinite, while its forms are many, relative and finite.

In light of this beauty, resistance of temptation emerges not so much as a consequence of negative constraint, but rather out of a supremely positive attraction: the irresistible attraction exerted by the transcendent source of all beauty upon the soul of one whose spiritual 'eye' enjoys the vision of God. It is not that such a person has to strenuously withhold himself from the world; for the world, and all its false allure, is withdrawn from one who is penetrated by this vision of beauty. It is possible to assert, therefore, that beauty, far from being merely that which is aesthetically pleasing, is ethically empowering in the very measure that the beauty in question is retraced to its divine source. One might go so far as to say that love of God is inconceivable in the absence of the beauty of God. It is this beauty and not just the divine qualities of goodness, mercy, justice, and so on, that make God infinitely lovable. It is this love of God, stemming from a concrete vision of divine beauty, which buttresses and deepens all moral values, imbuing them with an existential certitude which moral conviction, on its own, will not possess. This certitude is existential and not just conceptual in that love of divine beauty resounds with the deepest nature of the

soul. And, as seen already, the nature of the soul is made in the 'form' of God, a form which the Qur'an refers to as:

> *"most beautiful: God...formed you, and made beautiful your forms (aḥsana ṣuwarakum)."* (40:64)

A 'theocentric ethics' governed by this vision of the intrinsic beauty of divine reality makes good action not only conceivable and practicable but also infinitely attractive, if not irresistible. To accomplish sin, in such a perspective, becomes practically inconceivable, in much the same way as ugliness is intrinsically repulsive. One should also note, finally, that a moral disposition that is centred on God rather than man, far from rendering inaccessible the source of human morality, makes that source inescapable. For man is made in the image or form of God, and he cannot escape That of which he is an image, and which is thus more fully constitutive of 'his' reality than he is himself. To return to our earlier image, this is just as the reflection is more fully real as the Light of which it is a reflection than it is as a reflection. Thus, God describes Himself as being *"closer to him than his jugular vein"* (50:16); and the divine reality *"cometh between a man and his own heart"* (8:24). The beauty of the divine presence, therefore, is not only transcendent, but it is also immanent and all-pervasive. The formula of the first *shahādah* of Islam can therefore be adapted to: 'There is no beauty except [that of] God (*lā jamīla illā Allāh*).' This testimony appears as an appropriate response to the universal, and indeed **unavoidable**, beauty of God. For if it be true that He 'sees' us (*"He is with you wherever ye be"* (57:4)), it is also true that we cannot help 'seeing' Him and the beauty of the countenance divine: *"Wherever ye turn, there is the Face of God"* (2:115).

[1] These esoteric dimensions of Islam are expressed within both Shi'a and Sunni branches of the faith in the form of Sufism and 'Irfān respectively. It is also true however, that even in its formal exoteric structure, Shi'ism contains features that are akin to that which is found expressed within Sunni esoterism. According to Henri Corbin, the 'great themes' of Sufism are those of Shi'ism, beginning with the fundamental distinction between the Law (*al-sharī'a*) and spiritual Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*), and continuing with the polarity of "*ẓāhir* [outer, apparent, exoteric] and *bāṭin* [inner, hidden, esoteric], the idea of the cycle of *walāyah* [sanctity] in hierohistory following on from the cycle of prophecy. The idea of the *quṭb* or mystical pole, in Sunnī Sufism is simply the translation of the Shiite idea of the Imām ..." Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, tr. Philip Sherrard (London, 1993), p.191.

For a more nuanced approach to this issue, see S. H. Nasr, "Shi'ism and Sufism: their Relationship in Essence and in History", in *Sufi Essays* (London, 1972).

[2] As Alasdair MacIntyre writes, "we are looking for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to order other goods, for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to extend our understanding of the purpose and content of the virtues, for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to understand the place of integrity and consistency in life." *After Virtue—A Study in Moral Theory* (London, 1981), p. 204.

[3] See A.J. Wensinck et al, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (Leiden, 1936-1969), vol. 1, p. 373, for references to standard collections of Sunni ḥadīth which cite this saying, such as those of Ibn Ḥanbal, Muslim and Ibn Māja. In the Shi'a tradition, this saying is attributed to Imam Ali. See 'Allamah Muṭahhari's online book, *The Islamic Modest Dress* (http://al-islam.org/modestdress/title.htm) for references to this saying in the compendium of traditions entitled *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*. The following saying of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is also noted by Mutahharī, "God is beautiful and He loves His creatures to embellish themselves and reflect their beauty."

[4] Frithj of Schuon, *The Transfiguration of Man* (Bloomington, 1995), p.113.

[5] See Sachiko Murata and William Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (New York, 1994), pp. xxxii, 267-273. In drawing attention to the aesthetic connotation of this key term, the authors cast into a different light the many verses in the Qur'ān that mention *iḥsān* and its derivatives. For example, 53:31: "... [*that He may*] *recompense those who do what is beautiful with the most beautiful.*"

[5] Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q.27 a.1: "The beautiful is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the

beautiful is that which calms the desire, by being seen or known ... it is evident that beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty."

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[7] See Ja'far Subhani, *Doctrines of Shi'i Islam* (trans. R. Shah-Kazemi), (London, 2002), pp. 48-51, for a brief explanation of the 'intelligibility of virtue and vice', by a leading contemporary Shi'i theologian. See also M A Shomali, *Shi 'i Islam: Origins, Faith & Practices* (London: ICAS, 2003), pp. 136-140.

[8] This is the first part of a strongly authenticated tradition related by both Shi'i and Sunni sources. See, for the full text in both English and Arabic, *ḥadīth* no.2 of *An-Nawawī's Forty Hadith* (Tr. E. Ibrahim, D. Johnson-Davies, (Damascus, 1976), pp.28-33.

[9] See Syed Ali Reza's translation (which we have not followed) of the dialogue between the Imam and Dhi'lib, in which this important statement occurs in the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, translated as *Peak of Eloquence* (New York, 1996), p. 354.

[10] *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Tehran, 1993) p. 382; *Peak*, p. 546.

[11] This saying, though not strongly attested by the exoteric authorities, nonetheless plays an indispensable role in the elaboration of the spiritual foundation of virtue in the mystical traditions of Islam. It goes hand in hand with the esoteric interpretation of another saying, which is well-attested: "God made Adam in His form (*ṣūratihī*)." In general, the theologians understand the form in question to be that of Adam. Thus, "God made Adam in Adam's form" whereas the mystics understand the form to be that of God.

[12] For the difference between formal prayer and essential contemplation (both being understood as modes of 'remembrance of God') see the essays in the section on prayer and spirituality in *Catholics and Shi'a in Dialogue—Studies in Theology and Spirituality* (eds. Anthony O'Mahoney, Wulstan Peterburs and Mohammad Ali Shomali) (London, 2004), pp. 185-320.

[13] *Nahj al-Balāghah* p. 330; see also the English translation of Syed Ali Reza (which we have not followed) in *Peak of Eloquence*, p. 487.

[14] Ibn 'Arabī's influence is equally strong in the Sunni and Shi'i traditions, even if not all of his positions conform to those upheld within the exoteric dimensions of the two traditions. For the most comprehensive presentation of Ibn 'Arabī's vast corpus, see the two volumes by William Chittick, *The Sufi*

Path of Knowledge (Albany, 1989) and *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany, 1998).

[15] One might also translate this as 'qualified by existence' (*muttaṣifan bi'l-wujūd*). The meaning here is that God created a 'being' (*kawn*, which also means cosmos, and more literally, 'that which has come to be') capable of comprising, through reflection and in manifest mode, the 'whole affair,' that is, the supra-manifest reality of the divine essence, doing so insofar as it, the *kawn*, is 'qualified' by existence, that is, it has bestowed upon it a relative and derivative existence, that existence which, strictly speaking, pertains solely to the divine Essence, whence the epithet for this school of thought, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the oneness of existence or being.

[16] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣuṣ al-Hikam* (trans. Caner Dagli, *The Ringstones of Wisdom*) (Chicago, 2004), p. 3.

[17] This saying is found in Shi'i sources, such as Amīnī's, *al-Ghadīr* (vol. 7, p. 38), and al-'Āmilī's *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ* (p. 29); and in such Sunni sources al-Ḥākim's *al-Mustadrak* (vol. 2, p. 609; with a slight variation. Here Adam is described as being 'between spirit and body'); al-Suyūṭī's *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr* (vol. 2 , p. 296, in the same form as the latter reference). These references are from the CD Rom *al-Mu'jam al-fiqhī* (Tehran, Nashr-i Markaz, 2003).

[18] See our *The Other in the Light of the One: The Universality of the Qur'an and Interfaith Dialogue* (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 2006) for a discussion of this important theme, based on traditional spiritual exegesis of the Qur'an.

[19] *Mathnawī* (Tr. R. A. Nicholson), (London, 1934) III, 1251-1255. (The words in parentheses are by Nicholson.)

[21] Each of the other chapters of the Qur'ān which bears the name of a prophet as its title in fact devotes only a limited portion of the chapter to the prophet in question.

[22] In the Bible's account of this incident Zulaykhā makes only one advance.

[23] One should also note that Joseph says, *"my lord hath made excellent (aḥsana) my abode."* Most commentators say that the lord in question is his master, the husband of Zulaykhā, but a more mystical reading would have the lord refer to God, so that the meaning becomes: 'God has made excellent (or beautiful) my spiritual station.' This reading fits well with the principles being discussed here.

[24] Joseph expresses here one of the key themes in what would be later elaborated within the discipline of mystical psychology. The 'soul which incites to evil' *(al-nafs al-ammārah bi'l-sū')* is that lower dimension of the

soul which needs to be overcome. First it is tamed through discipline (when the soul is characterised by self-censure: *al-nafs al-lawwāmah),* and then it is eliminated altogether through grace, when the soul is characterised by the 'peace of certainty' (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*). See Muhammad Ajmal 'Sufi Science of the Soul', in *Islamic Spirituality* (ed. S. H. Nasr) (London, 1987), vol. I, pp. 294-307.

The Relation between Religion and Ethics

Abolfazl Sajedi

To investigate the relationship between religion and ethics, it is first necessary to define the two terms. There are extensive discussions about the nature of religion but they will be neglected for the present in favour of a simple definition. Religion means: "a collection of propositions that describe the beings and prescribe some obligations that lead to human perfection and guidance." In fact, these are the Divine propositions, which include some beliefs regarding the world, humans and their origins and Resurrection.[1]

'Akhlaq' is an Arabic word which is equivalent to the French words 'morale' and 'ethique',the English words 'moral' and 'ethics' and the Latin word 'moralis.' 'Akhlaq' is the plural of 'khulq' and 'khuluq' that can connote any of the following meanings: manner, custom, attribute, nature, humanity and religion. 'Attribute' from the list above includes both good attributes such as braveness and bad attributes such as scariness.[2]

Researchers in the field of ethics have used different meanings for 'ethics.'[3] The important ones are as follows: firmly-rooted attributes of the soul, all attributes of the soul whether firmly-rooted or not, soul attributes and deeds. From these, the second meaning appears to be the most suitable. The deeds corresponding to each attribute are 'ethical' not 'ethics' because a human's internal attributes are the origin of ethics and not ethics

itself. Thus, this meaning of ethics will be used in this paper. The science of ethics is a science that discusses the different good or bad, stable and non-stable attributes, the voluntary actions resulted by them, the methods of achieving virtues and removing iniquities, and some rules to evaluate optional attributes and actions.

The Interdependence of Religion and Ethics

There are different theories regarding the relationship between religion and ethics. They can be divided into four groups: contrast, contradiction, correspondence and cooperation. Some believe religion and ethics have two completely different domains and purposes. They have their own borders and there is no relation between them. Others believe religion and ethics have many conflicts and are contrary to each other. Another group believes they have partial correspondence with each other and finally, there is a group that believes they have independent domains and do not correspond but they are related to each other. All four of these will be explained in more detail below:

1. Contrast

The defenders of the theory of contrast believe that the domains and purposes of religion and ethics are completely different and that they therefore contrast with each other. The domain of religion is the relation between humans and God and the domain of ethics is the relation between humans and other humans. There is no logical relationship between the two. They do not have any common purpose and are completely independent. Religion tries to make humans Divine beings, give them transcendence and fulfill their internal feelings of dependence on God. Ethics on the other hand, provides rules to correct the social relations of human beings.

It seems that restricting the domain and purpose of religion to a human's relation with God and excluding social relations from it

is the result of this theory's definition of religion. This definition is not rational and is rejected by Islam. The purpose of a true religion is human perfection. Different personal and social factors and relationships affect the existential aspects of a human being. Therefore, practicing the personal and social teachings of ethics plays a great role in human perfection.[4]

2. Contradiction

Some people insist on the contradiction of religion and ethics and believe religious beliefs are an obstacle for ethics and eventually make them vanish. They argue that if there was a connection between the two, any disintegration of religious beliefs would ends up in the disintegration of ethics.[5] One of the famous advocates of this theory is Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who believes Christianity brings about objection and strengthens slavery[6] while ethics is responsible for educating powerful and active humans and eliminating weakness, humility and fear. He believes 'God's death' and liberty from the restrictions of religion is the only way to provide correct ethical development.

The contradiction between science and religion in Christianity or the inconsistency of its teachings with ethics is the main reason for Western ethical philosophers to believe the idea of contrast or contradiction between religion and ethics. However, these do not apply when considering Islam. Islam is not an obstacle in the development of a human's abilities. It does not expand abjection, slavery and fear (rather it helps human's to grow their internal talents) and it respects the individual and the society. Islam fights injustice and admires virtue.

3. Correspondence

The third group of people believe that the relationship between religion and ethics is absolute generality and peculiarity and that ethics is part of religion. The famous Islamic thinkers define religion as follows:

'a collection of beliefs, moralities and commands that are sent by God through the Prophets for human's guidance and perfection.'

According to this definition, ethics is a part of religion. Yet this definition does not mean ethics is completely dependent on religion. The belief is that the two correspond with each other. In other words, religion has some teachings in various fields. One part of it corresponds to ethical teachings, even complements it. Mu'tazilites and some Shi'ite scholars who give reason a special importance believe ethics can be independent from religion as well.

This theory is acceptable to some extent; for further explanation refer to the chapter 'unity and cooperation.'

4. Cooperation

The fourth and final group believe that religion is not a part of ethics, nor is ethics is part of religion; the two do not correspond with each other. They are not completely in contrast with each other and they are not in contradiction either; rather they speak of a different type of relationship between religion and ethics. They believe religion and ethics are independent but that they cooperate with each other. They have a kind of logical relationship, similar to that between cause and effect, influence and effect or action and passion. This perspective includes a great number of views as it encompasses all the perspectives that speak of a partial or total need of religion in relation to ethics, or a complete or partial dependence of ethics on religion, are included. Therefore this collection of views may be divided into two main parts: dependence of religion on ethics and dependence of ethics on religion.

Dependence of Religion on Ethics

1. Understanding God

One of the reasons for the necessity of understanding God, and probably the main reason mentioned in Shi'ite theological works, is based on accepting an ethical statement, 'thanking the provider (giver of sustenance) is necessary.' Since God is the provider of sustenance and thanking the provider of sustenance is necessary, it therefore follows that knowledge of God is necessary in order to thank Him. It is here that ethics provides the guidance to understand Him and fulfil His rights.[7]

2. Worshiping God

Another point where religion needs ethics, as mentioned in Shi'ite theological books, is that the base of religion, which is the necessity of worshiping God, depends on ethical rules. What makes God's worship and our servitude necessary? The answer is that God has created us and has some special rights on us; and since we are his servants, we should fulfil His rights. The way to do this is to worship Him and be good servants. This point is elegantly expressed by Imam Sajjad (a) when he says, "God's greatest right over human is to be worshiped."[8] Therefore, an ethical command ("everyone's right should be fulfilled") persuades humans to be religious and to practice their religious duties.

3. Reaching Religion's Goals

Religion's goals will not be achieved without the help of ethics. Religion claims to form human personality, manage a human's personal and social life and make him fortunate in this world and the Hereafter. In order to reach these goals, some ethical commands should be realized. Therefore, it can be concluded that religion cannot reach its goals without ethics.

The best way to promote religious values is to practice ethical rules. In other words, it is the practicing of ethical rules by religious people and their leaders that can make people interested in following religion. God says,

> *"It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him."* (3:159)

4. Making Religious Propositions Meaningful

One of the reasons that religion needs ethics, as mentioned by Richard Bevan Braithwaite (1900-1990), a contemporary English philosopher and physicist, is that it makes religious propositions meaningful. In his challenging article, "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief"[10] in which he has explained his theories regarding religious language, the meaningfulness of religious propositions and the relation between science and religion, he states that religious propositions become meaningful only if they are reduced to ethical propositions. On the one hand he is influenced by the theory of logical experimentalists regarding meaningfulness. They believe that only scientific rules and logical and mathematical tautologies are meaningful and other propositions, including religious and ethical ones are meaningless and do not have any epistemological value. On the other hand though, he has tried to find another solution for the meaningfulness of religious propositions. He has therefore accepted the later theory of Wittgenstein which says meaning depends on usage and, based on this criterion has explicated religious propositions. He believes religious propositions are applied and, as a consequence, they are meaningful. Furthermore, the application of religious propositions is similar to the application of ethical propositions. It is thus necessary to study

the latter to understand the former and apply it correctly. Analysing ethical propositions, Braithwaite says they are used for "expressing the purpose of the speaker to act according to the special method specified by that ethical proposition." These propositions show that the speaker is engaged in a special kind of life and is suggesting it to others. For example, assuming that a person believes utilitarianism in ethics and says "I have to do this specific ethical deed to gain the maximum profit", he is in fact expressing his intention to act according to utilitarianism. His sentence is not a cognitive statement. It just shows his engagement to a specific kind of act.[11]

Not all intentions expressed are ethical. It is only if the speaker's intention is general or if it is included in a general rule that it is an ethical expression. An ethical proposition entails being responsible and obliged to obey a general rule. Thus the meaning of the sentence "steeling is bad" is "I oblige myself to this general rule: I should not steel." It does not mean, as positivists believe, "I dislike steeling."

Similar to his analysis of ethical propositions, Braithwaite believes that religious propositions also show that the speaker is engaged in a special kind of life and is suggesting it to others as well. These statements are not cognitive and there is no reality behind them. They cannot be considered either true or false but they are also not just used to express one's feelings. A sentence such as "God is love" means "I have decided to have a romantic type of life and suggest you do so too". By inference then, the application of religious propositions is similar to artistic and literary propositions that irritate people to a specific direction; they do not give any knowledge to discover a scientific or historical reality.

Braithwaite also believes all religions are profitable fables and myths and obeying them will result in human transcendence.[12] All religions are "long stories" that suggest a special kind of life. The only difference between religious and ethical propositions is

that religion presents the same ethical claims more attractively and based on analogies, allusions and stories. Therefore as Braithwaite believes, we should not tend to find real information through religious propositions. The criterion of their meaningfulness is their use and profit in human life and attitude.

Criticism

Besides the serious problems of the presuppositions of this theory regarding the criterion of meaningfulness and accepting the later theory of Wittgenstein,[13] it has the following problems regarding the meaning of religious propositions:

1. Braithwaite insists on the point that religious propositions are non-cognitive and religions are merely useful fables. He therefore believes ethical statements denote one's engagement to a specific method without considering whether it is real or not. This non-cognitive perspective of religion is not correct regarding Islam. Islam has a system of belief that can be divided into two groups: one group describes the beings and the other group includes some obligations. Examples of things described as part of the first group are the existence of God, humans, this world and the hereafter. Human beings have the ability to grow and can actualize their abilities and achieve ethical values, spiritual transcendence and the felicity of this world and the hereafter. They can also waste their lives, not try to actualize their abilities and make themselves ill-fated. After knowing the 'beings,' it is then logically necessary for every human being to practice 'the obligations' to achieve the desired perfection and the felicity of this world and the hereafter. The Islamic belief system presents some obligations that complete human intellect, guide human attitudes and direct human feelings to achieve the above-mentioned perfections. God has presented this system of belief through his Prophet and the Divine book. Most religious subjects and matters are realistic. A number of religious propositions are used to explain the 'beings', such as the existence of God, Qur'an, the Prophet, this world and the hereafter and the physical

and spiritual aspects of humans. Other religious propositions present 'obligations' which show the human path to achieve real purposes.[14]

2. The fabulous look at religion presented by Braithwaite and some other Western thinkers is not correct regarding Islam because, not only does this attitude incorporate a non-cognitive look at religious propositions, but it also contains the following problems:

a. It is not consistent with Quran because it clearly rejects this theory;

b. The theory is the result of comparing the Divine religions with the religion of primitive human beings and then presenting a general proposition for all of them, but this generalization is not correct. Religions are very diverse and if some are fabulous, it does not follow that the others are fabulous as well.

c. This approach has tried to understand religion through the deeds and beliefs of religious people instead of understanding it through the main sources.

d. The complication and ambiguity of subjects such as God's existence and his attributes is one of the reasons why some have defended this theory while the complication of a subject does not make all the judgments regarding it mythical.[15]

Dependence of Ethics on Religion

This view is very much discussed by the Western ethicists. Advocates of religious and secular ethics have tried to discuss this point. The first group has clarified different kinds of dependencies and the second group has denied them and consider ethics as independent from religion. Another group has even spoken of the contradiction between the two. Some of the areas in which ethics depends on religion are as follows:

Existential Need

It has been claimed that the origin of everything, including ethical values, is God's creation because God is the creator of this world and all the things inside it. He is therefore the creator of good and if there was no God, there would be no good. Thus, the existence of ethics, which deals with good deeds, depends directly on God. Since dependence on God results in dependence on religion, it can be deduced that ethics is based on religion. This type of reasoning is false as explained below.

Firstly, in the above deduction, it is assumed that because everything, including ethics, is created by God then everything is dependent on religion. However, the whole universe is created by God and depends on God for its existence, but many things do not depend on religion for their existence.

Secondly, ethics is made up of ethical statements that are conceptual and not external and/or objective. All experimental sciences and liberal arts including Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Psychology, Sociology, Law and so on, are conceptual. If it is said that ethical statements are created by God and therefore depend on religion, then all other sciences and all kinds of conceptual beings, notions and declarations, whether true or false, should depend on religion. This though, is not acceptable.

Conceptual Need (the Divine Command Theory)

Three main theories are posed regarding the definition of ethical concepts.[16] These are: intuition theories, non-cognitive theories and definable theories.

The followers of definable theories believe that ethical concepts can be defined and analysed. Many theories are categorized in this group. They are divided into two groups: the naturalist group and the metaphysical group. The first group defines the ethical concepts based on experimental and natural concepts and the

second group uses philosophical and theological concepts to define them. The Naturalists are themselves divided into three minor groups: biological theories, sociological theories and psychological theories.

The followers of the intuition theories believe that ethical concepts and rules cannot be defined by unethical expressions. Some of them at least, are self-evident, intuitional and simple. They can be known through intuition not experimental observation or metaphysical argument.

The supporters of the non-cognitive approach believe ethical concepts and rules are meaningless and cannot be defined, neither by natural, metaphysical or intuitional inferences.

Among the defenders of the definable theories, are those, such as the followers of the Divine command theory, who stress the need of ethics with regards to religion. This theory can be explained in two forms: the first one is called notional and the second is called affirmative.

1. The Notional Theory of the Divine Command

The first account of this theory, which Jonathan Harrison called 'the linguistic theory of the Divine command', tries to analyse the concept of ethical good and bad. This theory presents a conceptual and linguistic analysis of the meaning of good and bad and asserts that ethics is related to religion for the imagination of the concept of good and evil. Therefore, the definition of ethical good is: anything commanded, willed or acted by God. According to this theory then, God's will and good are the same.

This theory has some problems. For example if it is accepted then statements such as "God is good", "God gives good commands" and "God's action is good" are tautologies and meaningless. This is not acceptable for most religious and even non-religious people.[17] In addition, the Divine command theory has the problems of the second theory as well. The conceptual analysis is

only useful if it is along with affirmative and causal discussions. A statement such as that which Harrison mentions (that is, good is what God has commanded), can be simply criticized as follows: good has some other meanings as well, such as what the practical reason, society or feelings command. Therefore, he has to present a causal analysis to defend his theory.

2. The Affirmative Theory of the Divine Command

The second account of this theory tries to explain the reason why ethical actions are considered either good or bad; it asserts that ethics needs religion to affirm its statements. Therefore God's command, will or action affirm and determine whether other actions and attributes are good or bad. This theory, defended by some scholars of different regions, (such as Ancient Greece and the world of Islam), is the same as the theory explained by Aristotle in his *Euthyphro*. Most of Ash'arites believed this theory as well. In other words, this perspective can be seen from two aspects:

2-1. From an ontological perspective

If it is accepted that, from the affirmative perspective, God's command determines whether matters are good or bad, the following question arises: do ethical rules and principles depend on God's command in reality and as it exists, regardless of our knowledge of them, or do they depend on God's command for understanding them and as it is demonstrated (good)?[18] Muslim theologians have two different approaches regarding this subject:

Some, like the Mu'tazilites, emphasize essential goodness and 'badness' of deeds and believe that humans know them by reason. They reject the Divine Command Theory from both ontological and epistemic perspectives. Others, such as the Ash'arites, believe that both are determined by God. In other words, they believe both the values and knowing the values depend on God's commands and prohibitions. They believe the

origin of values and ethical obligations is God's commands and other actions and attributes have no objective reality beyond His commands and prohibitions. In other words, if there was no God, or if there was a God but He did not have any commands and prohibitions, there would be no difference between justice and injustice, honesty and lying. On this basis, nothing would be essentially good or bad and it would not be possible to discern something good from something bad, except by referring to God's commands and prohibitions. (This is because they believe that moral goodness and badness cannot be understood rationally).

This theory has some problems which are as follows:

Firstly, it is very clear that affirming propositions such as the ugliness and bad nature of injustice, robbery, crime, accusation, hypocrisy, conceit and self-absorption, and the goodness of justice, charity, honesty, modesty and self-sacrifice, does not depend on accepting any religion and all human beings accept them.

Secondly, if the Ash'arites are asked why God's commands, should be obeyed, they will not be able to answer. If they say God has ordered it to be so, it would be a circular proof because the question asks the reason that God's commands, including this command, should be obeyed. And if they say because of reason, then they have withdrawn their claim.

2-2. From an Epistemic Perspective

Many Shi'ite scholars believe ethical values are naturally and existentially independent from God's commands and prohibitions. This is unlike their understanding which may require, at least some of them, religious propositions. Therefore, although they believe actions have natural goodness and badness, they hold that some of them are recognized through reason and some through the Divine law. More exactly, basic values are

known by reason but their details and how to achieve them are understood by the help of the divine law. On this basis, ethics needs the Divine revelation. Religion determines ethical values as it is demonstrated and helps one understand the goodness and ugliness of deeds, their limitations and conditions.

This theory is quite defendable and is based on the presupposition that although some ethical principles, such as goodness of justice and ugliness of injustice, are understandable without religion, human reason cannot determine all ethical values on its own. As previously explained, it cannot be expected that the Divine law will help one to understand basic values because verifying the Divine law itself depends on accepting these values. Moreover, if understanding these values without the help of religion was not possible, it would be a circle and impossible. But, after proving the legality of the Divine law, it is acceptable to refer to religion to understand the details of ethical values because human knowledge is not enough to completely understand and identify the world, one's destination and his path.[19]

Need for a Commander and a Prohibiter

Many Western philosophers believe one of the needs of ethics for religion is the supposition of God's existence and some even prove his existence by with moral arguments which are all common in one aspect: ethics is dependent on religion.

Kant is supposedly the first person who relied on ethics to prove God's existence and his argument was later used by others. They were all called 'moral arguments for God's existence.' Although Kant supposes that none of the theoretical reasons of proving God are acceptable, he believes accepting some religious doctrines such as God's existence and eternity of soul are essential to practical reason and ethical rules. They are the axioms of practical reason.

According to Kant, reason commands the human being to create the highest goodness. This goodness has two components: complete virtue and felicity. Virtue is the cause of felicity and felicity is coordination between nature, human will and tendency. In other words, it is the state of a wise being in the world and everything is according to his will and tendency. On the other hand, the human being is not the creator of the world and thus cannot manage and coordinate it with his will and tendency, and fulfil the felicity with nature. It follows that there should be a cause for the nature which is distinct from nature and precisely coordinates between virtue and felicity. This cause is God.[20] Therefore, since humans should ethically create the highest goodness, it should be possible and this possibility necessitates God's existence. Hence, ethics necessitates God's existence.[21]

Following Kant, others have also presented moral arguments for God's existence and have accepted the need of ethics for religion. Some important proofs are as follows:

1. All human beings feel an energy inside them which produces ethical commands. This command and prohibition needs a commander and forbidder. Humans cannot be commanders themselves because they can command themselves one thing one day and then command the opposite the day after. Ethical values are absolute and can only exist when the producer is God. Since absolute ethical values do exist, then God exists too.

2. Sometimes it is said that 'law' needs a 'legislator.' Similarly 'ethical values' need a 'Divine legislator.' If it is accepted and confirmed that there are ethical values, then the existence of God should be accepted.

3. Ethical values and rules are objective and not relative. Any objective matter needs a creator for its existence and will not exist without it. This creator is either a material matter or a person. The former cannot create values because material laws

only describe objects. They do not give any decree or obligations. Additionally the rules of nature cannot be violated, but it is possible to disobey ethical principles. Therefore the creator of ethical values should be non-material, that is, a being. This person is either a human being or not. The first of these is not possible because human beings evolve but values are constant. Thus, the creator of ethical laws should be an eternal being and superior to all humans. This is nothing except God. C. S. Louis (1898-1963) in his book *Mere Christianity.* and W. R. Sorley (1855-1935) in his book *Moral Value and the Idea of God* argue that believing in God is rooted in believing in an objective ethical system that has an everlasting validity.[22]

Ethics Relies on Real Information

One of the dependencies of ethics on religion is that it should have true and real information of the world, humans and the beginning and end of the universe, otherwise ethical propositions will not have enough validity and stability, no matter whether they are expressed in the form of obligations (such as: "we should not oppress the others") or they are declarative (such as "oppression is inappropriate").

More elaborately, ethical theories are divided into two groups: realistic and non-realistic. According to the realistic theories, ethical obligations and values are related to concrete realities and are cognitive.[23] On the opposite side, non-realistic theories consider ethical propositions as non-cognitive. Non-realistic ethical schools are not acceptable because they have various problems, such as:

1. Impossibility of being described as true or false: If ethical propositions were not cognitive and were based on personal feelings and plates, they could not be described as true or false. The truthfulness of a proposition means that it corresponds with reality and the falseness of it means that it does not correspond

with reality. If there was no reality beyond ethical propositions, there could be no speaking of its correspondence with reality.

2. **Obstructing reason and demonstration in ethics**: if the possibility of describing ethical propositions as true or false is denied, there will be no way of proving or rejecting an ethical proposition because 'proving' means showing the truthfulness of a statement and 'rejecting' means showing the falseness of it. Thus, there will be no way of preferring one ethical school over another. This is because, according to non-realistic views, ethical propositions maximally show that the obligator has decided to dictate the obligation and command. Moreover, his command is based on personal feelings and palates and cannot be rationally explained. Therefore, there would be no rational explanation of ethical propositions because there is no logical connection between values and realities and there is no criterion or rational reason for proving or rejecting ethical commands.

3. **Ethical pluralism**: if the realism of all ethical propositions is denied, they should all be accepted, even if they are contradictory or contrary. In this case, ethical anarchism will be dominant. As a result, killing the oppressed and stealing will be as acceptable as helping the castoffs and respecting other's rights.[24]

4. **Ethical relativism**: if it is not possible to connect ethics with human tendencies and interests, then ethical judgments will depend on instant feelings and tendencies. As these are variable, there will be no stability in ethical judgments.[25]

The above problems have forced many ethical schools to somehow accept realism, but not all realist approaches are acceptable; they have different bases such as personal hedonism of Epicurus, and utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill.[26] All these schools connect ethical propositions with an outside reality such as joy, power and profit but they have all forgotten the most superior reality of existence, God, and the highest human perfection, getting close to this being. They have relied on some

realities that have a much lower value and validity compared with the Divine values. A true religion gives information to its followers which help them to achieve better ethics.

Determining the Purpose of Ethical values

One of the needs of ethics in religion is to determine the purpose and goal of ethical deeds and values. In other words, ethical deeds are valuable for their goals and purposes and for those who have holy purposes that are essentially desirable for them, they should act to achieve these goals. Here, ethical values are formed. Some say that, on this basis, a human's highest goal is to get close to God and ethical actions become valuable from this point of view since anything that makes a person closer to God or provides the path for it is valuable. Therefore, the dependence of ethics on religion can be explained o follows: humans achieve knowledge of God through religion and God is introduced as the purpose of human perfection. As a result,, ethical values are created because if there was no religion and no teachings, then ethical values would have no base. In conclusion then, although religion and ethics are two independent domains, religion gives a great service to ethics: it determines the superior goal of ethical values.[27]

Strengthening People to Practice Ethics

Socrates believed that just being aware of good ethics is enough to practice it. However, this is not a complete theory. Aristotle, unlike his teacher's teacher, believed that mere knowledge is not the complete cause for action. He believed the main factor affecting action is weakness of will. This theory is acceptable because a human being has two aspects: the one related to his cognition and the other related to his inclinations. Human beings do not necessarily act according to their knowledge or obey their reason. They might not practice what they think is good even though it means disobeying his reason and completely ignoring his judgments. This problem is common among all human beings.

The dominance of animal tendencies easily suppresses reason and human feelings. Many people know ethical values and rules but do not obey them. They know a specific action should be done but do not appreciate it or that another action should not be done, but they do it. For instance, all humans know the importance of respecting their family, their children's rights, of helping the old, their parents and the poor but most of them do not put this into practice. It is clear that knowledge and reason do not create enough motivation for action and sufficient power for moving towards ethical deeds.

Psychological research shows that without any encouragement or punishment, most human beings, if not all of them, do not tend to be good and avoid the bad.[28] In fact most humans struggle with expediency, egoism and self-love in all their matters, including ethical ones. Very few people respect love of reality, God and ethical values. In addition, most religious people who do respect ethical rules and oblige themselves to be good and avoid bad do so because they are scared of Hell and its torments and they are eager for Heaven and its blessings. Here, the need of ethics for religion becomes clearer: without religion and some of its teachings such as God's justice, existence of the Resurrection and auditing human deeds, most people would not oblige themselves to ethical rules and values. Religion assures humans of the result of their deeds and speaks of the effect of ethical practices in this world and the hereafter and thus, it drives humans to act according to ethical rules. Religion promises the best for those who practice good deeds and the worst punishments for those who do bad. It makes humans realize that there is a greater control and power and thus actualizes ethical values.

Therefore, religion provides the human being with internal motivation for practicing ethics. Some people follow these rules out of their love and obey them due to religion's promises. Receiving revelation and believing it gives a special strength and motivation to both groups, which is not comparable to any other internal or external motivation and stimulus.

Removing Negligence

All human beings simply forget ethical propositions and do not pay enough attention to them (even though they are aware of them) because they are surrounded by factors that create negligence. This is not specific to the layman. Thinkers and intellectuals have the same problem as well. In order to practice ethics, besides an internal knowledge of the good and bad, it is necessary to have a Holy source too to remind people. Religion is a good reminder. Thus, ethics is not very successful and effective without religion.

In fact, religion revives a human's hidden nature and conscience. Reason and knowledge cannot have such an effect without the help of religion. Everyone understands, by his conscience, the importance of helping the old and the poor and respecting his/her parents, but some factors may damage and weaken this conscience. Furthermore, everyone is aware that the relationship between human beings should not be mechanized and human feelings should not be weakened. They try to find a solution for this problem but the reality is that a society with low faith will unconsciously end up in this direction because lack of religion ends up in weakness of conscience. On the other hand, religious doctrines awaken human conscience and prevent its weakness.

Unity and Cooperation

Ayatollah Misbah believes religion and ethics are two independent fields but that they cooperate with each other and they have some similarities and differences. He says,

> "if ethics means discussions, subjects and predicates (regardless of religion's theory about ethics), the relation between religion and ethics is generality and peculiarity in some respect."[29]

He also says that based on his analysis of ethical concepts and propositions, in which he believes they represent the real

relationship between human voluntary deeds and final perfection, ethics is not based on religion. This means that this theory can be accepted without any religious belief but religious beliefs, principles and also the content of revelations are needed to understand the final perfection and its relation to human deeds.[30] On this basis, ethics needs religion to determine the final purpose and also to recognize and determine valuable, invaluable and neutral deeds.[31]

From another perspective, Misbah believes that the relation between religion and ethics is absolute generality and peculiarity and says that ethics is a part of religion. Therefore, they have an organic relationship with each other like that of the human head and the whole body. If we compare religion with a tree that has roots, trunk and branches, beliefs are the roots of the tree, ethics are the trunk and religious commands are the branches and fruits of it. Thus, the trunk of the tree is a part of the tree.[32] He believes this theory is more acceptable than the other theories.

It seems to me that ethics is divided into two branches: upper and lower ethics. The lower ethics is the part of ethics that does not depend on religion. It can be understood and accepted without a specific religion. But the upper ethics can be only accessed through religion. Religion creates progression in ethics just as it enriches reason. In fact, reason connects us to religion and proves the necessity of God and religion; but in the next step, religion comes to help reason and makes it rich. The same is true for ethics. The lower ethics is independent from religion but upper ethics depends on it and is in fact part of religion. One is intra-religious and the other is extra-religious. One is next to religion and the other is parallel to religion and part of it. The upper and the lower ethics and their relation with revelation can be distinguished in two fields: understanding and practicing. In other words, both for understanding the upper ethics and practicing it, religion is needed, but the lower ethics does not need religion for either case.

[1] "هويت شناسي دين در اسلام و غرب", Abolfazl Sajedi, *Andishehaye Falsafi*, no.3.

[2] Refer to 'kholq' in the following dictionaries: Taj-ol-Aroos, Lesan-ol-Arab.

[3] Following 'ethics', the word 'ethical' has different meanings as well and may have special meanings in the mentioned cases.

[4] For more information refer to: "قلمرو حكومتي دين", Abolfazl Sajedi, *Faslnameh Oloom Siasi* (Political Sciences Quarterly), no.35.

[5] John Hospers(?), *Philosophy of religion*, p. 80.

[6] Lawrence C. Becker, تاريخ فلسفه اخلاق غرب , trans. by a group of translators, Mo'asseseh Amoozeshi-Pajouheshi Imam Khomeini press, 1378, p. 1044.

[7]. "دين و اخلاق" (Religion and Mystics) in *Qabasat*, Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, no. 13, p. 33; and Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, فلسفه اخلاق (Philosophy of Ethics), p. 175.

[8]. "فاما حق الله الاكبر عليک فان تعبده لا تشرک به شيئا", Behar-ol-Anvar: vol. 71, p. 3.

[10]. Braithwaite, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), reprinted entirely in Ian T. Ramsey ed., *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy* (London: SCM Press, 1966).

[11]. Basil, Mitchell. ed. *The Philosophy of Religion*. (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 78.

[12]. Mitchell, p, 86.

[13]. Refer: Abolfazl Sajedi, زبان دين و قران (The Language of Religion and Quran), first part.

[14]. For more information refer: ibid, second part.

[15]. For more information refer: ibid, pp. 244-248.

[16] Frankena(?), pp. 205-220; Mesbah(??), pp. 41-43.

[17] Jonathan Berg, پي ريزي اخلاق بر مبناي دين, trans. by Mohsen Javadi, *Naqd va Nazar*, no. 13-14, p. 205.

[18] Refer to ibid, p. 212.

[19] For more explanation refer to: Abolfazl Sajedi, دين و دنياي مدرن، عصر نياز, chapter 'محدوديت علم و عقل'.

[20] Refer to: Mohammad-Reza'I, تبيين و نقد فلسفه كانت (An Explanation and Criticism of Kant's Philosophy), p. 253; Shtefan Koorner(?), Philosophy of Kant, translated by Izzat-o-llah Fooladvand, Kharazmi Press, 1367, pp. 322-323.

[21] "اخلاق بدون خدا", Hadi Sadeghi, *Naqd va Nazar*, no. 13, p. 254.

[22] Refer to: Michel Peterson, عقل و اعتقادات ديني, trans. Ahmad Naraqi and Ibrahim Soltani, Tarhe No press, 1376, pp. 163-165; , "اخلاق بدون خدا", Hadi Sadeghi, *Naqd va Nazar*, no. 13, p. 237; Mesbah, p. 176(??).

[23] A cognitive proposition is a sentence which speaks of a concrete reality, regardless of any agreement or contract, internal feelings, personal palate, recommendation or order.

[24] Refer: Mojtaba Mesbah, بنياد اخلاق , Mo'asseseh Amoozeshi-Pajouheshi Imam Khomeini press, 1385, pp. 31-44.

[25] Refer to: Mohammad taqi Mesbah Yazdi, نقد و بررسي مكاتب اخلاقي, pp. 33-34; Mojtaba Mesbah, بنياد اخلاق, pp. 34-45; for the relation between beings and obligations refer to: Mohsen Javadi, *مسئله بايد و هست: بحثي در رابطه‌ي ارزش و واقع* pp. 180-186 and Modarresi, *فلسفه اخلاق* pp. 282-303.

About realism in ethics refer to: بصيرت اخلاقي, trans. by Fat'hali, Mo'asseseh Amoozeshi-Pajouheshi Imam Khomeini press, 1385.

[26] Refer: Lawrence C. Becker, The History of West's Philosophy of Ethics, Trans. by a group of translators, pp. 97-167; Mohammad Taqi Mesbah, فلسفه اخلاق, second part (مكاتب واقع گراي طبيعي).

[27] Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, فلسفه اخلاق, p. 183; "دين و اخلاق" in *Qabasat*, Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, no. 13, p. 34.

[28] See: How Could Ethics Depind Religion, Jonathan Berg in *A Companian to Ethices*, p. 531-532 (from: Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, فلسفه اخلاق, p. 183).

[29] فلسفه اخلاق, p. 186, par. 1,2.

[30] فلسفه اخلاق, p. 186, par. 3.

[31] فلسفه اخلاق, p. 188.

[32] Refer: "دين و اخلاق" in *Qabasat*, Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, no. 13, p. 32; Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, فلسفه اخلاق, p. 174 and 186.

Faith and Morality in Islam and Christianity

Mohammad Fanaei Eshkevari

Knowledge and Practice

Human perfection comes through knowledge and practice. In other words, man's existence is due to his knowing and doing. The human being is not a fixed creature. He is an uncompleted project. What he will be is different from what he is. What he will be is, to a large extent, due to his own efforts. This difference takes place by his knowledge and action. Thus, knowledge and practice are two wings with which the human can fly in the sky of perfection. Hence, it can be said that human beings are formed by their knowing and doing together.

The middle term that joins these two is an emotional element that encompasses will, desire, eagerness, love, commitment and so on. One's personality is shaped by three major elements: epistemic, emotional, and practical. It corresponds to the three dimensions of a human being: his mind, heart, and body. The domain of the mind is knowledge, the domain of the heart is love and the domain of the body is action.

The distinction between knowledge and practice, or the theoretical dimension and the practical dimension, results in two types of knowledge or studies that are recognized in different areas of human concern. It is the difference between 'knowing *that*' and 'knowing *how.*' For example, knowing *about* swimming

is different from knowing *how* to swim. In philosophy, speculative or theoretical philosophy or wisdom (*hikmat-e nazari*), such as Metaphysics, is distinguished from practical philosophy or wisdom (*hikmat-e 'amali*), like Ethics. This distinction is found in other disciplines and sciences as well. We have the 'pure sciences' like Physics and Mathematics, and the 'applied sciences,' such as Medicine, Engineering, and so on.

In Islamic mysticism (*'irfān*) theoretical or speculative mysticism is distinguished from practical mysticism. Speculative mysticism (*'irfān-e nazari*) is similar in many respects to metaphysics and deals with topics such as God, man and the afterlife. Practical mysticism (*'irfān-e 'amali*) is more concerned with the external and inner practices of mystics, such as prayer, fasting and meditation.

In the field of religious studies too, scholars recognize these two aspects. One can differentiate between theoretical theology and practical theology. From the Islamic perspective an authentic religion contains two types of teachings: theoretical and practical. It offers a worldview, a body of teachings concerning God, the world, the nature and destiny of human beings the relation of the world in general to God and that of the human soul in particular to God. On the basis of such a worldview, it also offers a way of life, teaching a human being how to build his personality, correct his relation to God and other creatures in general and his fellow human beings in particular.[1]

Human salvation (*falāh*), real and ultimate happiness, is happiness in the hereafter. This happiness depends on the way one lives. Religion gives humans a reason to live. It gives meaning to life. It gives something that nothing else can give: real happiness (*sa'ādat*) and salvation. Salvation is the ultimate and eternal happiness that can never be lost. Only a religious life, a life according to the will of God that includes in itself a moral life, leads to salvation.

True Beliefs and Righteous Deeds

For a positive response to religion, humans need both reason (*'aql*) and faith (*imān*). Reason is a faculty by which humans are able to understand the truth and relevance of religion. And faith is belief and absolute submission to God that manifests itself in the belief and commitment to the religious teachings, such as belief in God, revelation and life after death. However, religiosity/piety is not only having a body of belief but one of its essential components is living according to these beliefs, that is, morality and praxis. This is what the Qur'an calls righteous deeds (*al 'amal al-sālih*). Therefore, from the Islamic perspective having true beliefs alone is not enough for salvation. Rather, righteous deeds are also necessary. The Qur'an is clear in this regard:

> *"Surely Man is in loss, save those who believe, and do righteous deeds, and counsel each other unto the truth, and counsel each other to be steadfast."* (Chapter 103)

Belief in God leads to obedience to God. As the human heart responds to God in love, so human behaviour will respond in obedience to God. When there is no obedience, although there may be a desire to love God, real love of God is not present. A sincere believer must obey commands of God or religious law, what is obligatory and what is forbidden.

According to the Qur'anic teachings, obedience to God requires two categories of commitments or duties: duties with regards to God and duties with regards to creatures. Human duty with regards to God is to worship him, and human duty with regards to creatures is to serve them (*al-khidmah*). In other words, obedience to God requires these two types of practices, purely spiritual observances, like prayer, and moral/social duties such as giving alms.

Morality requires loving, caring and serving any living being. As we see in Islamic teaching, this is part of religious life and an inevitable condition for salvation. Thus, a genuine believer cannot be indifferent with regards to the wellbeing of others but should instead be an active member of society. These points and related issues about essential elements of Islam and its end are outlined in the following verses of the holy Qur'an:

> *"That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the Godfearing who believe in the Unseen, and perform the prayer, and expend of that We have provided them; who believe in what has been sent down to thee and what has been sent down before thee, and have faith in the hereafter; those are upon guidance from their Lord, those are the ones who prosper."* (2:2-5)

These verses contain the main elements of the Islamic belief system. For a Muslim, these verses answer the question "What is religion all about?" This passage contains the outlines of Islamic teachings. Reflecting on these verses, one can find the answers to the fundamental questions regarding the Islamic revelation.

Firstly, it describes the Qur'an. Since it is sent by God, and received by the infallible prophet, there is no doubt in it. There is no doubt that it is the word of God, and there is no doubt in its content. Secondly, it describes what the Qur'an is for. It is the book of guidance which provides guidance for a meaningful life, for those who want to be guided, the pious ones. It gives guidance in what to believe and how to behave. It provides guidelines for the spiritual development of personality and eventually its salvation.

The Essential Elements of Religion

Religion is not only a system of belief, or merely feeling a supernatural reality in one's heart. It is not only a moral system,

or an otherworldly spiritual teaching. According to the verses quoted above, religion is a system of life comprised of two elements: faith/belief, and practice.

Faith

Faith or belief in the unseen (*ghayb*), a domain of reality that is beyond perception of our physical senses, is the cornerstone of religion. God Himself is the ultimate unseen, and to believe in Him is the essence of religion. In addition, belief in other unseen realities and events, including angels, the Day of Judgment, the Qur'anic revelation and revelations to the previous prophets is an essential element of religiosity. Thus, faith is indispensable to religion.

Practice Type I: Direct Worship of God

According to the Qur'an, religion is not merely a system of belief - it is a way of life. Practice is vital to religion. True belief in something is to have one's personality and life changed. Our beliefs must shape our lives. They are not merely items of information that are known in a shallow way. Belief is a kind of knowledge and commitment that changes humans. Religious belief has a crucial impact on one's behaviour. One of the characteristics of a religious belief is its practical consequences. A star can be known through human senses but the knowledge of it may not any affect in human life. However, to know God will affect a person's personality and his way of living. One cannot be indifferent with regards to his belief in God.

What kind of reaction does a person have to knowing God? Belief in God requires worshipping Him. This is, because He is perfect in an absolute sense and deserves to be worshipped and in addition, He is the source of all good and beauty. Whatever we have is from God, including existence, life and all the equipment of life. Prayer is an example of the practice of worshipping God. So worship is the human response to faith.

A question arises here whether human beliefs are a means for other purposes or if they are by themselves goals. The common view may be that belief in God and the afterlife are the means to a better life and to salvation. But is that all?

Islamic thought, especially in its mystical understanding, does not prefer such means-goal type of distinctions. God is not a mere means to another goal (be it happiness, salvation, and so on). He is the ultimate goal. It goes beyond this distinction and transcends this dichotomy. Knowing God and belief in Him are by themselves goals and not merely means to something else.

So, knowledge of God is the thing that humans want. It is an end but it is not the only thing that a person wants. More than anything it is the relationship with God that human beings seek. This is, of course, not separate from belief and knowledge. Going to Heaven is also what humans want but it is not the main reason to seek knowledge of God. In fact, belief in God and connection to Him is the ultimate goal that includes all other goals in itself. He is the End of all ends (*ghayatul ghayat*).

Practice Type II: Loving/Serving Others

Religious belief results in worship and prayer, but is that enough? No. Serving others is another kind of practice. This service (*khidmat*) is vital to faith, and is also a kind of obedience. It is about how to deal with other creatures in general and people in particular. As humans have duties with regards to God, so they have duties with regards to other living beings especially our fellow human beings. Every member of a community is obliged to participate in the praxis of the community. Both vertical relations, man's relation to God, and horizontal relations, man's relation to God's creatures, have to be corrected.

The Qur'an says that believers perform prayer and expend that which God has provided for them. They are not indifferent with regards to people. They have a duty and responsibility to others.

An example of a response to this duty and a major component of practice is the act of charity.

Sincerity Verses Hypocrisy

From the Islamic viewpoint, in all sorts of religious, spiritual and/or moral practice, intention is essential, that is, the apparent physical action is not the whole thing. The spirit of the action is the intention of the agent. Three elements are involved here: knowledge, intention and action. The mind, heart and body all play their roles. Religiosity covers all aspects of the human being. They all are dependent on God and must work together in devotion to God. The real subject of reward and retribution, praise and blame is intention. An action is an act of worship only if it is done for the sake of God. Sometimes the value of a good work is destroyed by an intention for self-glory. If for example in prayer, the intention is not pure, if the act is done out of hypocrisy (to show off) for example, it destroys the prayer. Sincerity or purity (*ikhlas*) is the opposite. It means doing something purely for God. Anything that is done for God and His glory is worship. Good intentions are rewarded and, according to a hadith, God has said that because of His mercy, He does not punish bad intentions.

This focus on intention is a crucial difference between religious and secular ethics. The spirit of an act, not only the physics of it, determines whether or not that act is a religious/moral act. Accordingly, serving others for the sake of God is also obeying God and therefore is an act of worship.

Faith and Immorality

The separation between belief and practice is not admitted, though conceptually the two are distinct. Neither is one separate from the other, nor is one only a means to the other. They are intertwined. Religious texts show that there is a connection between faith and morality: faith should make people and society

better. However, the question that arises here is why there are some people who have faith but do not care much about morality. So here a question arises about people who profess faith in God but do not live moral lives.

A few options can be given for these kinds of people. One possibility is that they could simply be hypocrites and have no real faith at all. They only say that they have faith, but the lack of moral life shows they do not.

However, often it is due to bad education, theological misconceptions, selfishness, pride,, egoism, self-centeredness, attachment to this world and weakness of will. All of these lead to immorality.

A person could have some faith and that faith could be keeping him from living more immorally than he already is. Faith comes in degrees and some people have such weak faith and such a bad propensity towards evil that they still appear bad to the larger society. This does not necessarily mean they have no faith, only that their faith is very weak. People have varying degrees of faith, and faith can strengthen or weaken.

A religious device in promoting morality and action is to fight against the sources of immorality. The source of all injustice and misdeeds is egoism or following one's own desires. One way in which people become immoral is that they see a conflict between their pleasures and desires on the one hand and virtue and truth on the other. Initially, being good seems to entail sacrifice. But what faith does is take away this conflict. Faith tells a person that in being good nothing is lost. That in the end and overall, true happiness and joy is found in doing what is right.

For a moral life a person needs to strengthen their faith. How can this be done? There are many ways to achieve this, one of which is the remembrance of God. Remembrance of God is incredibly important to faith. If someone remembers that God knows

everything and is present everywhere, he would not disobey Him. Sin is the result of the negligence (*ghaflat*) of God, and the remembrance of Him is the opposite of such negligence. Remembering death is also important in helping a person strengthen his faith and in promoting good works. In remembering death humans realize that they will face the consequences of their actions in the Day of Judgment.

Religious teachings tell people that they are all created by God and that they return back to Him. Therefore, all people have a common origination and destination, a common ground and common values. All are children of one family. In a letter to Malik Ashtar, who was appointed as the governor of Egypt, Imam 'Ali advised him to treat people kindly, and not to

> "stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in faith or like you in creation."[2]

As seen through this statement, besides faith one needs training and exercise of religious piety in order to easily follow moral life.

The separation between self-love and love for others is naive. One may have both at the same time. In being moral, one does not lose anything of value. Morality at the beginning is about apparent self-sacrifice, but there is no loss. To think that being moral requires loss or misery is a superficial and erroneous way of thinking. A similar example is sport. To succeed in a sport one needs to undergo a lot of hardship and give up his rest. But the athlete sees the bigger picture. He sees that these apparent deprivations are not really deprivations at all, but just part of achieving a greater good.

The materialistic idea of morality and human rights, however, lacks such common grounds. Without God, there is no solid common ground that human beings share. There is no satisfactory

explanation to remove the prima-facie conflict between self-love and other-love. Therefore, materialistic views of morality and human rights contain a paradox. Morality should be like drinking a sweet juice, not like taking a bitter pill. Only religious faith has this miracle.

Christianity

The relationship between faith and practice is a good topic for Muslim-Christian dialogue. It seems that in principle there is a common stand between these two religions. Christianity typically views faith as something prior to and necessarily resulting in morality. Anyone who has true faith will act morally. In John (chapter 14 verse 15), Jesus is recorded as saying, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." It is a simple formula: true love and faith in Jesus and his message will naturally result in improved moral character. In The same idea is stated in another way in the same chapter, "He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me" (verse 21). This corresponds with another famous analogy found in Jesus' teachings that the relationship between faith and work (or the moral life) is like a tree and its fruit. You can tell the type of tree by the fruit it bears. The same is true about people. People of faith produce the fruit of morality (see Matthew 7:16-20).

Another analogy often given in Christian teachings is the relationship between fire and smoke. Fire always produces smoke. It cannot do otherwise. If there is a fire, there must be smoke. The fire is like faith and the smoke is like good work.

James, the brother of Jesus (Gal, 1:19) and leader of the Church in Jerusalem until his death writes:

> "as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead." (James 2:26)

This means that a person whose faith does not result in moral conduct has a dead, or unreal, faith. James says in the same

chapter that faith is perfected by deeds (verse 22) and that faith without deeds is useless (verse 20).

It is clear in these teachings that faith in God must and will always result in a moral lifestyle. It cannot be otherwise.

The Contemplation-Action Debate

Some people have argued that according to Christianity, religion is all about faith. As St. Paul noticed, faith in divine forgiveness leads to salvation and there is no room for human action. Righteous deeds are worthless for salvation. According to this idea, faith is necessary and sufficient for salvation, and work is neither necessary nor sufficient.

On the basis of this understanding, some Christian mystics have preferred contemplation and exalted feelings to action. The story of Martha and Mary in the New Testament, explains that Martha, who serves people, is spiritually lower than Mary, who lives a purely contemplative life. Thus,

> "While charitable acts are good, pious thoughts entertaining religious imagery are better, and the passive state of union with God, mediated by no acts, or imagery, is best of all."[3]

On the basis of this Biblical story, Augustine argues that the contemplative life is superior to the active life, because

> "what Martha chose passes away...there will be when none will hunger nor thirst. Therefore, will her care be taken from her."[4]

On the other hand, Mary's part, which is contemplation, shall not be taken from her. The object of action is temporal, while the object of contemplation is eternal, which is superior. According

to St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662), the person with a contemplative life prays "from burning divine love and maximum purification,"[5] whereas the person with an active life prays out of fear and hope. In this line of thinking, some have gone so far as to claim:

> "The demands of salvation and the demands of morality are not automatically and simultaneously fulfilled, and they may even be antithetical."[6]

However, it seems that this understanding needs to be rethought. If it is taken as mentioned, it would not be consistent with the principal teachings of Christianity, according to which love of God is not separate from love of a neighbour. Love of God entails love of all creatures but of course, love of God and love for His creatures is not at the same level.

Contrary to those who accuse mystics of escapism, and having an inactive life, Evelyn Underhill states that mystical life,

> "Shall not be abstract and dreamy, made up, as some imagine, of negations. It shall be violently practical and affirmative; giving scope for a limitless activity of will, heart, and mind working within the rhythms of divine Idea...[and making] the inner and outer worlds to be indivisibly One...Even under the most favourable circumstances, you shall and must move easily and frequently between that spiritual fruition and active work in the world of men."[7]

It is true that some mystics have underestimated the importance of an active life, however, some others, such as St. Thomas, prefer the active life over the contemplative life. They think that an active life is better than a contemplative one because in contemplation, yourself person only serves himself, but in good work, he serves others. The mystic John Ruysbroeck,

> 'emphasized the necessity of self-purification and of the performance of good works as a preparation for an interior life of virtue in which the powers of the soul, intellect and will, can turn themselves, under the attracting influence of grace, to the indwelling God. The higher stage of mystical contemplation and union with God, which can be attained only through divine grace and not simply by human effort, expresses itself in a life of good works which flow from this union and are informed by it.'[8]

Even those who prefer contemplation over action, like Augustine, admit the superiority of a mixed life. In their view, the combination of contemplation and action is the best. Meister Eckhart states,

> "What a man takes in contemplation he must pour out in love. If a man was in rapture such as St. Paul experienced, and if he knew a person who needed something of him, I think it would be better out of love to leave the rapture and serve the needy man. It is better to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as St. Paul saw."[9]

"The preparation for mystical communion," says Bernard, "entails 'good works... peace, gentleness, justice, obedience, cheerfulness.' Prayer and contemplation without deeds of mercy on behalf of the needy friend are 'inane idleness.' "[10]

Hence, one can claim that the combination of faith and praxis or contemplation and action, is closer to the ideal of Christian life. Therefore, it can be concluded that faith and praxis, a pure heart and righteous deed, and worshiping God and serving people are required in both Islam and Christianity, and in fact in all Abrahamic religions

[1] This in its generality seems to be common to all Abrahamic religions, i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

[2] Imam 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, (Maryland: Ahlul Bayt Assembly, 1996), Letter 53, p. 239.

[3] James R. Horn. *The Moral Mystic*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983, pp. 4 & 5.

[4] Dom Cuthbert Butler. *Western Mysticism*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p. 160.

[5] Elmer O'Brien. *Varieties of Mystic Experience*. New York: Amentor Omega Book, 1964, p. 80.

[6] Arthur C. Danto. *Mysticism and Morality*. New York: Harper and Row,1972, p. 82.

[7] Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1915, pp. 160 & 161.

[8] Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972, p. 286.

[9] Walter T. Stace. *Mysticism and Philosophy*. London: Macmillan & Co. 1961, p. 338.

[10] Valdo Beach and Richard Nibebuhr, *Christian Ethics: Sources of the Living Tradition*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1973, p. 179.