

## *The Difference between Ethics and Morality: Some Reflection*

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### ABSTRACT

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Most philosophers and scholars have used ethics and morality interchangeably considering morality as the subject matter of ethics. However, it is realized based on an in-depth examination that this kind of use defeats the purpose of ethics as a separate discipline. Ethics cannot deal with morals alone. Its subject matter is whole life, especially metaphysical dimensions. Based on the method of content analysis it is claimed here that the scope and subject matter of ethics pervades whole life and the world. Hence, based on literature review it is established that both ethics and Islamic ethics are currently dealing with morals. Ethics as rational search must be based on knowledge instead of metaphysical speculation and philosophical conjecture. It is also contended that at the very outset the role of ethics is to conduct search for its knowledge-based foundation. It is claimed that the dominant view of ethics must be liberated from its conjectural and speculative foundation and be replaced by the foundation of knowledge - True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge [TAUK].

**Keywords:** Ethics, morality, TAUK, metaphysical speculation, philosophical conjecture.



**Introduction**

Philosophy as a resourceful undertaking stimulates us for a clear perception of the things around us. It is claimed ethics as a branch of philosophy investigates and makes the moral judgements about their right or wrong cognition of things to determine their moral aspects and implications. To ascertain the validity of our perceptions and judgements we need to examine the nature, scope, and implications of ethics from various perspectives such as epistemological and methodological. This paper aims to examine the issue of the relationship between ethics and morality from the perspectives of the truth and reality of life and the world and from the holistic and comprehensive point of view.

Most philosophers take ethics and morality as interchangeable terms. However, there are a few philosophers who have distinguished ethics from morality. Emphasis in ethics is on rational search for good reasons. It helps people as an instrument to measure or distinguish the merits and demerits of a concept or an action. It looks for valid and invalid reasons to make a judgment on what is right, wrong, fair, just, and good. In this way a set of morals, good manners, attitudes, and actions are identified.

**Need for a fresh look into the role of ethics**

I view ethics differently from others. My argument is that the reduction of the role of ethics to the level of morality is misleading. I contend that the ambivalence of the definitions of ethics and morality given by others is a consequence of the renunciation of some crucial ethical questions.

The truth is that interchangeable use of ethics and morality is incorrect. It defeats the purpose of the development of ethics as a discipline. I argue ethics is neither morality nor deals merely with morals and manners alone. They should not be studied under ethics. Ethics simply cannot be confined to the study of the philosophical basis of morality. I also do not see any good reason to limit the scope of ethics to morality. Ethics and its scope cannot be reduced to any moral dimension of life. Instead, the scope of is required to include all aspects of life and society. Hence, claiming that morality is the subject matter of ethics is unethical. If we define ethics as a rational search, then this rational search cannot be confined to morals alone. Ethics as a rational enquiry has the right to determine the rightness and wrongness of ideas, worldview, theories and even laws. Ethics should be defined as a rational inquiry based on True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK]. It cannot be developed based on speculation and conjecture of the metaphysical realities. For knowing answers to the fundamental ethical questions concerning origin, nature, and role of man in relation to the Creator, aim of life etc. we need knowledge – True, Authentic and Universal [TAUK]. We need to know with authenticity Who the Creator of the universe is. Is Allah, the Creator, the All-Knowing, All-Wise, All-Powerful Creator? Is it true, acceptance of Him is good and useful for mankind? What is His relationship with us,

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society, and to other creations on the planet? Whatever understanding of Him is good, reasonable, or unreasonable? What is the Truth and Reality of God? All these questions are of ethics. They are not out of the scope of ethics.

Based on the above meaning and understanding of ethics one can maintain that neither ethics can be confined to the study of morality or to the science of morality alone and nor used interchangeably for morality. Instead, ethics deals at the very outset with the origin of human life, purpose of life, code of conduct, mode of thinking and living. The reason is obvious, based on the false foundation of life, life and society cannot be transformed into good life and good society. Hence, for this reason, ethics is understood as a rational inquiry or rational search which intends to see the sound and logical grounds for the explanation and acceptance of worldviews, any concept or theory of origin of life, its worldview, purpose of life, code of life, code of conduct and values, mode of living and thinking in accordance with truth and reality of life and the world.

#### **The fundamental ethical questions have been ignored in ethics**

In fact, neither in ethics nor under Islamic ethics we are supposed to study morals or Islamic morals and even human character or conduct alone because morality is not the subject matter of ethics. In fact, due to the influence of Greek philosophical thought a good number of philosophers and thinkers, including Muslim philosophers and thinkers of the past and present times, with a few exceptions, have confined the ethics to the study of morals. This unethical approach to the study of ethics is the result of the ignorance of some fundamental ethical questions. We must raise, from a pure ethical point of view, some fundamental ethical questions such as what the truth and reality of life and the world is and what is the best method to know the truth and reality of life and the world. Is there any real difference between ethics and morality? Consequently, most scholars who dealt with Islamic ethics and morality failed to explain the position of the Quran on ethics, but they called it as Islamic ethics. Hence, they used these terms interchangeably. They borrowed and depended on the issue of ethics, its goal and scope on Greek philosophical thought. However, they did not realize that Socrates had forgotten to raise the more fundamental ethical questions such as the origin and aim of life as well as the source to know the truth of the metaphysical reality of life. He did raise the question of "What ought one to do" to make life a good life but he unconsciously did not realize that without knowing the truth and reality of life how one can make life good. Socrates laid the foundation of his thought based on metaphysical speculation and conjecture and developed some assumptions. Can we do something good based on wrong premises? Before we think about what one ought to do in life, we must think about what life is as such. Bertrand Russell emphatically remarked: "The first step in ethics ... is to be quite clear as to what we mean by good and bad. Only then can we return to conduct and ask how

right conduct is related to the production of goods and the avoidance of evils" (Rosen, 1999: 2).

Hence, moving a few steps further we need first to ask. What is life? What is the purpose of life? What is our worldview? What is the source to answer all these questions? Knowledge or human speculation. Whatever answers we develop to these questions we need to make sure that our answers are, beyond any doubt, right, correct, true and in accordance with the reality of life and the universe. I suppose these questions and their answers were not raised ethically. Whereas ethically we are bound to answer these questions authentically based on True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge [TAUK]. The philosophers and thinkers did not raise the question of TAUK. They generally depend on their own faculty of reason and sense perception and assume that there is not such knowledge available with us such as TAUK. Thus, they also developed several assumptions about the metaphysical realities. They assume that anyone who possesses a high level of intellect can develop the structure of ethics based on a speculative and conjectural foundation. The assumption of good conduct was developed without knowing the reality of life based on True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge [TAUK] generally known as Islamic Revealed Knowledge. This is the root cause of all misunderstandings that are surrounded around ethics today. And this assumption and misunderstandings were caused due to some problem in their epistemological framework that was developed during the Greek philosophical period. It seems to us that those Greek philosophers in the domain of epistemological thought did not address elaborately two important questions: Firstly, they did not elaborate authentically the question of the existence of Truth and Reality of life and the world. How far are they known to man? The reasons are unknown to us. And what is the true nature of the relationship of man with that of the Truth and Reality. Socrates did not leave any authentic source for his thought except his philosophical speculation. Whatever we find out about Socrates it is through Plato, one of his disciples. Plato is also silent on this issue. Perhaps Socrates did not pay serious attention to recognize the importance of TAUK and the Truth and Reality of life. Philosophers and thinkers all too need to address, at the very outset, the fundamental question of the existence of TAUK and the Truth and Reality of life and the universe and the difference between Truth and falsehood.

Secondly, philosophers, to be familiar with the metaphysical realities, had to inquire and understand about the existence of TAUK at first. Whether there exists any TAUK or not. Is it available with man or he must develop true and authentic knowledge by himself. We did not find a reasonable discussion in their thoughts on this issue. Does it mean that humanity was really forced by Nature to live in metaphysical darkness? Does it also mean that humanity was not guided by the light of TAUK until the dawn of the period of philosophical thought? If the answers to these questions are provided,

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then the question is: Are all these questions and their answers true?

Is it false and untrue to claim that philosophers do need the TAUK for better comprehension of the realities of the metaphysical world? Is it true, correct, rational, logical, and scientific to depend on conjecture or speculation for understanding the metaphysical realities instead of TAUK? Is it wrong, untrue, illogical, and irrational to claim that humanity needs to have TAUK for authentic cognition in line with that of metaphysical realities? We do not know why philosophers, particularly Socrates, who rejected paganism and advocated knowledge as virtue and emphasized the importance of rational understanding, did not discuss all this in detail. Rather, contrary to this, we found philosophers talked more about happiness in life. Happiness was considered by them as the goal of everyone's life. For example, as Aristotle put it, happiness is the one good that is desired for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else (Ottosen, 2006: 319). This resulted in the form of epistemological and methodological error and ended up with speculation and conjecture.

The philosophers of the Greek period did not figure out that the understanding of physical and metaphysical realities by themselves was the subject of ethical inquiry i.e., how far their understanding of the physical and metaphysical world is correct, true, authentic, good, and useful. It seems to us that instead of developing their understanding based on TAUK, they preferred to develop their thought based on conjecture and speculation and called their methods rational, logical, and empirical. Instead of developing a correct and true understanding of physical and metaphysical worlds based on knowledge they developed certain assumptions about them. Their development of ethics is no exception to this approach. This assertion that one should focus on good conduct for a good society is by itself an assumption not a reality or truth. It will be demonstrated later that this assumption is not logical, hence, defeats the purpose of ethics because whatever is said is not supported by empirical evidence. Ethics is not only the matter of "what ought one to do?" Ethics is more than that. At the very outset we need to know: what is life, what is the purpose of life, who is the giver of life and who takes life? etc. These are the basic questions of ethics. Ethical questions are not moral questions alone, they are different from moral questions. Due to lack of proper understanding of the real ethical questions the subject-matter and scope of ethics was not only confined to the study of morals, rather ethics and morality are used interchangeably. Hence, we argue that ethics is not the same as morality.

Following the Greek philosophical tradition, the modern Western and Muslim scholars who write on ethics or Islamic ethics discuss more and more on morality or Akhlaq instead of dealing with ethics as such. They mix ethics with morality or Akhlaq. Instead of elaborating ethics in an ethical manner they have focused more on morality and Akhlaq and have ignored the fundamental ethical questions, such as is

it good, right, and rational to develop the idea of good life without raising first the question of right or wrong concept of life or the origin of life in a rational manner? Can we achieve a good life without knowing truthfully which concept of life is true, right, and authentic? Can we discern the true answer to this metaphysical question of origin of life authentically based on conjecture? Are our rational and perceptual faculties capable of answering metaphysical questions as true and authentic answers? Is the metaphysical search based on speculation and conjecture authentic beyond any doubt? Is the history of metaphysical and epistemological search a witness to this truth that our metaphysical and epistemological search is successful in answering the metaphysical and epistemological questions correctly and authentically? Can philosophers and thinkers answer correctly and authentically as well as independently the questions of origin and purpose of life? Are the conditions of our contemporary life demonstrating the presence of good life and good society on earth which were considered the goals of ethics?

Don't we need to answer all the fundamental questions before we embark on developing any framework of good conduct and good life? Are not the questions of metaphysics and epistemology the questions of ethics? Are all metaphysical and epistemological explanations really and authentically 'correct', 'right' and 'true'? Can we answer these questions based on our reason and sense perception? Are our reason and sense perception capable of answering the questions related to metaphysical realities? Are our reason and sense perception free from conjecture and speculation? Is it right, good, and rational to begin our rational, empirical, or ethical search based on speculation, assumption, guess, imagination, doubt, and conjecture instead of knowledge, certainty, authenticity, and truthfulness? Is it ethical to develop our worldview based on conjecture? Are our theories and ideas about ontology, axiology, cosmology, eschatology, and epistemology correct and true in reality? Are these not the fundamental ethical questions that need ethical answers? Why did the pioneers of ethics ignore all these fundamental questions of ethics under ethics? For us these are more important ethical questions. Failure and success of man depends on the correct and true answers to these fundamental ethical questions. But unfortunately, these important ethical questions were neglected and are still being neglected. They are not addressed by those who have written or still write on ethics. Even in meta-ethics these questions have not been addressed. What constitutes the concern of meta-ethics is again related to morality. Hence, questions such as the following have been raised in meta-ethics: "whether there is a true morality; what in the world could determine the truth or correctness of a morality; how we would recognize or have knowledge of the true morality, if there is one; whether 'correctness' is even required in order for there to be a rational basis for taking our own moral views seriously; whether the known or rationally believed truth of a moral code is by itself enough to give us sufficient reason

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for conforming to it" (Ottosen, 2006: 2). The same attitude is also of those who write on Islamic ethics. They think that they are concerned in Islamic ethics with Islamic Akhlaq or Islamic morality or Islamic conduct. Hence, they explain more about morality or Akhlaq under Islamic ethics and confine its subject-matter and scope to the study of morality. The current books and articles dealing with Islamic ethics are the best examples of this gross root misunderstanding.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Abdul Haq Ansari argues that Islamic ethics is not explained clearly yet. We do not find scholarly works on this subject. Whatever works we have on Islamic ethics they do not explain Islamic ethics. They use in their titles Islamic Ethics but fail to deal with Islamic ethics. All of them end up with Islamic morals or Akhlaq. For example: Yasien Mohamed's paper "*The Evolution of Early Islamic Ethics*" (2001) does not deal with Islamic ethics as such rather with Islamic morals. A serious reading of this paper reveals this bitter fact that he fails to distinguish between ethics and morality as a result he explains Islamic morals instead of Islamic ethics. Abdullahi Hassan Zaroug's paper "*Ethics from an Islamic Perspective: Basic Issues*" (1999) falls in the same category. He also neglects to explain what Islamic ethics is? We do not find in his paper any definition or meaning of Islamic ethics. He did not explain how Islamic ethics differentiates itself from conventional ethics. Readers fail to understand in what way Islamic ethics is different from conventional ethics. His paper deals with Islamic morals and moral concepts.

Zayan Kassam (2001) writing on "*Islamic Ethics and Gender Issues*" focuses on issues related to women and discusses them in terms of 'right', 'good', or 'just' and basically follows those who confine ethics to morality.

Amy B. Sajoo in *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas* (2009) is concerned with Muslim conceptions of 'good' as developed in a particular social setting. This 'good' is mostly interested in issues such as biomedicine and ecology: asking how and why those conceptions are taken seriously. For Amy Sajoo, questions related to 'civility', 'humanism', and 'governance' are more important in ethics. "For they engage such basic contemporary notions as human rights, the rule of law, and civic culture in which conceptions of the good, whether as ethos or specific moral judgment, are vitally entwined." (Sajoo, 2009: xiii). From this quote it is obvious that Amy Sajoo is dealing with ethics in a moral sense. Hence, he overlooks serious ethical questions and responds to moral concerns.

Muhammed Kunju Salim in *Islam, Ethics and Teachings* (1991) takes a religious approach to some moral issues instead of ethics.

Azim Nanji's work on "*Islamic ethics*" (1993) at the very outset makes an unethical comment in the beginning when he argues that Islam is among the youngest of the world's major religions because his observation goes against the Quranic declaration

that God sent Islam since the inception of life on earth - as the worldview and the way of life and code of conduct - not as religion - through all His Messengers [pbuh] from Prophet Adam, [pbuh] till the last Messenger, the Prophet Muhammed, [pbuh] (pp. 106-107). Islam continues to be the oldest as well as youngest din sent by God for the guidance of mankind. This article also fails to elaborate Islamic ethics in time space context. It seems to us that due to the influence of modern Muslim and Western thought on his mind, he ignores to remain within the purview of Islamic ethical discourse. He also goes on to explain Islamic morals instead of elaborating Islamic ethics and ethical concepts of the Quran.

In another work on ethics entitled *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions* (2007) edited by Morgan and Lawton, Azim Nanji contributed on Islam and ethics. Here he dealt with the issues such as religious identity and authority; personal and private qualities; marriage and the family; influences on and the use of time, money, and other personal resources; the quality and value of life; questions of right and wrong; equality and difference; conflict and violence and global issues. His treatment of these issues may be within the ethical framework, but these issues are not basic issues of ethics from Islamic point of view.

Bashir Ahmad Dar, in his book *Quranic Ethics* (1993), however, seems to be little different from other above-mentioned authors. Writing on Quranic Ethics Dar first explains what is ethics? But again, his definition of ethics remains within the context of conduct and morality and does not provide an ethical definition of ethics. For example, he says ethics deals with the manifold problems of human conduct. He, therefore, concludes that "Ethics is the study of human conduct, not as it is, but as it is related to certain basic ideals and norms..." (Bashir, 1993). Instead of clarifying the position of Islamic ethics, he creates more confusion about Islamic ethics and fails to define it. One finds in his work several misconceptions about Islam and Islamic ethics.

*The Ethics of Islam* (1980) is produced by Syed Ameer Ali. Ameer Ali followed the line of other scholars and discussed in this book morals. He did not explain anything about ethics. Richard G. Hovannisian' edited book *Ethics in Islam* (1985) includes eight authors who have contributed to this book. Fazlur Rahman's article on *Law and Ethics in Islam* remains within the framework of ethics. This is a good example of an ethical approach to the issue of Law in Islam and its contemporary relevance. One might have some reservation with the conclusion of Fazlur Rahman but beyond any doubt his approach is ethical. Articles by Wilferd Madelung and Frederick M. Denny on *Nasir Ad-din Tusi's Ethics Between Philosophy, Shi'ism, and Sufism* (1985) and *Ethics and the Quran: Community and World View* (2021) deal with some aspects of ethics and demonstrate ethical concern of authors. Other articles of this book reflect the moral concern of authors.

Another important work which is generally referred to on the issue of Islamic ethics

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is *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran* by Toshiko Izutsu (2002). In this book, Izutsu is not different from other scholars. He is also interested in ethics with morals. He argues that we can divide the “Quranic terms of ethical and moral implication...into two major groups.” He asserts that the first category of the ethico-religious concepts of the Quran are more interested in the “ethical life of the Muslims” whereas the “concepts in the second category...reflect the spiritual characteristics which...man as a religious being should disclose.” What does he mean by ‘ethical life’ and ‘spiritual characteristics’? He himself explains this and demonstrates that for him the scope of ethics is religio-moral concerns. Hence, he gave title to his book the *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*. According to him, Islam is “essentially ‘ethical’ religion. What does he mean by it? For him ‘ethical religion’ means a religion like any other religion which is more concerned with morals and morally sound life (Izutsu, 2002: xi). Izutsu failed to see that Islam is not a religion in a limited sense which is concerned with some aspects of life such as religious and moral, but it is the Din—the way of life which is concerned with life as such. The ethical concern of the Quran lies in its explanation of the Truth and Reality of life and the world and Islam as the way of life and source of culture and civilization. Islam stands for development and excellence in life and society for which it presents its own scheme of development. Izutsu in his book focuses more on morals and morality instead of elaborating ethics from a Quranic perspective.

Off-quoted work on Islamic ethics *The Ethical Philosophy* of Al-Ghazzali by M. Umaruddin (1996) is a true reflection of the influence of Greek philosophy and modern Western approaches to knowledge and science. This book is developed within the framework of dominant philosophical thought on ethics. This is the reason that the author of this book makes this remark: “The ethical character of the Quran is shown by the following passages of the Quran, chosen at random”, and he quotes the ayaths (5: 36; 5:60) to support his argument: “Shall the reward of good be aught but good? And be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor, and the companions in a journey and the wayfarer and the slave-maids in your possessions.” (Umaruddin, 1996: 65). These ayaths of the Quran do not reflect ethical concerns. In fact, M. Umaruddin fails to understand the real ethical concern of the Quran and makes unethical statements. See for example the following:

Ethics in Islam is nothing, but the body of injunctions laid down in the Quran for the practical conduct of life and fully exemplified in the practice of the Holy Prophet throughout his life (Umaruddin, 1996: 66). Though fundamental principles of ethics were present in the Quran, ethics as a science did not take shape till the influence of Greek thought asserted itself on the Muslim mind (Umaruddin, 1996: 68). But the first systematic attempt in the field of ethics was that of Ibn Miskawaih...who wrote a book

called Tahdib al-Akhlaq. Philosophic and systematic, it is the first treatise of its kind embodying the ethical views and opinions of the Greeks and the ethical system of Islam. It begins with a consideration of the spiritual nature of the soul (Umaruddin, 1996: 71).

The above-mentioned quotes also reveal the fact that the treatment of ethics of M.Umaruddin remains basically within the frame of morality. He also demonstrates several contradictions in the book. This book does not provide an elaborate discussion on ethics in time space context.

*The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (1975) by Muhammad Abul Quasem presents the moral theory of al-Ghazali. This book beyond any doubt uses ethics and morality as interchangeable. Hence, the author focused more on moral theory instead of discovering the ethical discourse of al-Ghazali. According to Abul Quasem, ethics in the eyes of al-Ghazali is a study of certain religious beliefs, and of rightness and wrongness of action for the purpose of practice, and not for the sake of mere knowledge (1975: 22). Abul Quasem concludes that: "Thus the scope of al-Ghazali's ethics is very wide, and this is a characteristic of sufi ethics" (1975: 22). Abul Quasem made this conclusion based on al-Ghazali's study of action which "includes the study of actions directed towards God, of actions directed towards one's fellow-man in family and in society of purification of the soul from vices and of its beautification with virtues" (1975: 22). All these aspects are dealt with in moral discourse not in ethics. This book 'is a revised version of a Ph.D. thesis.' It was supervised by Professor William Montgomery Watt, and he contributed a foreword to it. Both seem to miss the real issues of ethics and deal with morality.

George F. Hourani's work *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (1985) is the result of his serious efforts of 25 years of involvement in the study of Islamic ethics. Naturally one investigates it with enthusiasm. He includes in Islamic ethics law and morality. His thrust is to study under Islamic ethics the moral concepts such as the good, the right and the just. He discusses some important questions of ethics such as can an independent reason discern what is right, good, just etc.? We can never know what is right by independent reason, but only by revelation and derived sources. Still his book remains within the limited boundary of religious thinking. He did not raise more fundamental ethical questions such as the origin of life and universe; purpose of life; limit of reason and role of revelation in the process of understanding fundamental questions of life. It can be a good reference for second category questions of ethics.

*Ethics of Islam* by Muhammed Hadimi (1998) discusses under the first chapter entitled Islamic Ethics subjects such as 'vices and methods of cleansing oneself from them'; 'unethical behavior or immorality and its remedy'; 'greed for wealth, power, ranks, or positions'; 'the fear of being accused of having faults'; 'love of being praised'; 'following the desires of the soul'; 'hypocrisy'; 'worldly ambitions' etc. All these

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subjects do not constitute a discourse on ethics but rather they reflect the issues of morality. Like other books on Islamic ethics this book also fails to explain Islamic ethics.

*Ethics in Business and Management: Islamic and Mainstream Approaches* edited by Khaliq Ahmad and AbulHasan M. Sadeq (2001) is no more different from other books on ethics. This book discusses ethical issues involved in business and management from a moral point of view. One of the editors of this book under 'Islamic Ethics in Human Resource Management' asserts that "Ethics may be defined as a set of norms and values by which we distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what we should do and what we should not." [p. 285] This quote shows that the overall approach of this book under ethics is moral. Naturally, this book does not cover the issues which need to be discussed under ethics. This book's discourse remains within the framework of interchangeable use of ethics and morality. *Ethics and Fiqh for Daily life: An Islamic Outline* by Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef (2008) and others follow the same moral approach under ethics. These are some of the examples of the writings on Islamic ethics who have not elaborated Islamic ethics in time space context maintaining its universal character.

#### **Islamic Ethics: its scope and role**

- Abdul Haq Ansari occupies the highest place among all those scholars who have written on Islamic ethics in modern times. His position on Islamic ethics remains within the framework of ethical discourse. He argues that Abu Ali Miskawayh [936–1030 AD], the father of Muslim ethics, was the first Muslim philosopher who worked out an elaborate system of ethics in Islam. Miskawayh gave an independent status to ethics and made it a part and parcel of Islamic sciences. Ansari presented an account of ethical views of Miskawayh in *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawayh* (1964). Ansari considers "the ethical system of Miskawayh as the most outstanding achievement of philosophical ethics in Islam" (1964: x). However, Ansari argues Miskawayh also did not break the Greek tradition of focusing ethics on morality. Happiness, virtue, and character occupied the highest place in his elaboration on ethics though he touched on some basic issues of ethics such as metaphysical foundation of ethics. But according to Ansari Islamic ethics was not developed further. Hence, Ansari complains that the "Islamic ethics as a discipline or a subject does not exist at the present. We do not have works that define its concepts, outline its issues, and discuss its problems" (1964: x). Ansari further argues that Muslim philosophers, in their ethical works, have mostly rehashed Greek ethics. They have introduced within the framework of Greek ethics some Islamic terms and concepts and modified some notions. Hence, Ansari

contends that “This does not make their ethics Islamic. They do not raise many issues that Islamic ethics must raise, and many ideas they have set forth cannot be considered to be Islamic unless they are seriously modified” (1964: x). According to him, there are some important ethical questions in Islamic ethics that must be raised and answered. For example: What/Who is the source of ethical knowledge? Are there any ethical terms in the Quran? Can one develop ethical theory based on the Quran? What are the fundamental principles of ethics? He further claims these answers must be given from an ethical point of view. Despite his clarity of thought on Islamic ethics he also did not provide any clear definition of Islamic ethics. He did not touch on the fundamental questions of ethics. For him, Islam is the answer to the metaphysical questions of ethical concern. Islamic worldview is accepted as an alternative to philosophical presupposition. Therefore, he argued that the meaning, definition, and scope of Islamic ethics can only be explained in terms of the role/task of Islamic ethics. Hence, he explained the task of Islamic ethics in the time-space context.

### **Task of Islamic Ethics**

According to Ansari, there are four tasks of Islamic ethics. They cover the following areas:

#### **1. Vision of life**

According to Ansari, the first task of Islamic ethics is to understand and expound the ethos of Islam, that is, one needs to explain what is the vision of life which is ethically approved as conceived in the Quran and elaborated in the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]. He quotes Majid Fahkry who argues that the Quran does not contain ethical theories but “it embodies the whole of the Islamic ethos. How to go about eliciting this ethos thus becomes of paramount importance to the student of Islamic ethics” (Ansari, 1989). His contention is that the Quran and the Sunnah do embody the original core of the Islamic ethical spirit. However, elaboration of Islamic ethos is not as easy as one can understand. Naturally it may be a very vague and elusive concept for someone. For Ansari it is not very difficult. The Islamic ethos may include the following dimensions. For him the role of Islamic ethics is to clarify what life and good life is.

#### **1. The view of life and good life**

- Various components of that life need to be explained.
- The traits and characteristics of that good life.
- The motives and attitudes, feelings and emotions, actions and reactions, relations, and associations in that good life.
- It must determine the place of human necessities and material conditions in the realization of that life.

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- It must define the priorities: What goods are higher and what are lower.
- It must explain what is the ultimate end of life, and how are various goods related to that end?
- It must study the relation between knowledge, action, and feelings; between personal attainments and social concerns; between devotion to God and commitment to humanity.
- It must determine the place of aesthetic values in life, the pleasure of the body and material goods.
- It must show the value of individual work and collective action.
- In all the above-mentioned things, it must be viewed in the context of normal life, as well as in extraordinary and stressful situations.
- It also needs to explain what is right and what is meritorious, and, opposingly, what is wrong and what is punishable by God?
- What is the place of motive and intention?
- What are the degrees of obligation, and what are the personal and collective duties?
- How do the circumstances of the individual and society affect the degree of obligation?

#### **2. General terms of ethics**

Ansari elaborates the second task of Islamic ethics and argues that it must clarify some of the terms which are used in Islamic ethics. The scholars of Islamic ethics are bound to explain.

- The general terms used in Islamic ethics, such as good, bad, right, wrong, meritorious, non-meritorious, responsibility, and obligation.
- To determine and explain what these terms, or the terms used in Islamic sources communicating these ideas, mean.
- What are their degrees or levels, and how are they determined?
- What part is played in their knowledge by reason, intuition, and revelation as incorporated in the Quran and the Sunnah?
- Inquire into the ways the language of the Quran and the Sunnah expresses or suggests the degree of good and right, evil, and wrong.
- To determine what act and practice of the Prophet [pbuh] are the Sunnah to be followed, and what is a personal habit or preference, or what incidental actions and practices are not meant to be followed.
- What is the place of convention of a given society?
- What is the place of mystical intuition or inspiration?

#### **3. Relation between Reason and Faith**

The third task of Islamic ethics, as elaborated by Ansari, is:

To discuss and explain how Islamic ethics is related to and influenced by Islamic faith,

the idea of God, the life Hereafter, Prophecy, and revelation.

- To point out the different ways in which Islamic faith affects ethical life and concepts.
- To explain: What is the possibility of human freedom and responsibility in the context of Divine omnipotence and predestination?
- To show that the freedom of man, to the extent he is held responsible for his acts, is not contravened by the omnipotence and predestination of God.
- To explain what extent the norm of rationality, goodness, and justice, applicable to man, are equally applicable to God? Or is it that they only partly apply to Him?

#### 4. Judgments on Current Issues

The fourth task of Islamic ethics is:

- To pronounce judgments on problems that Islamic society faces and to say what is right or wrong in this case?
- To specify the values that are permanent and unchangeable, and those whose operational norms may change.

These are the tasks which must be explained in detail by Islamic ethics. This explanation of the task of Islamic ethics clearly shows how wide the scope of Islamic ethics is and different from morals. Hence, confining ethics to morals and conduct is equal to doing gross injustice to ethics itself. Ethics cannot be reduced to morality and conduct alone.

#### Conclusion

If ethical inquiry is not based on True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge [TAUK] then it is not authentic. Hence, it does not deserve to be called ethics. The search and acceptance of TAUK is the first principle of ethical inquiry as we cannot conduct any inquiry based on an uncertain foundation of metaphysical conjecture and philosophical speculation. The principle of TAUK is the basis of ethical inquiry which is not the result of blind belief, assumptions, speculation, and conjecture rather the consequence of ethical search. Despite this truth and fact, most philosophers followed conjecture and speculation in their ethical search and ignored the existence of TAUK. Most philosophers simply believe that there is no TAUK. They claimed we must discern our own knowledge. If our method is authentic, then knowledge is authentic. Hence, they claimed, they developed scientific methods. For them, this is the most authentic method thus knowledge developed based on scientific method is true and authentic knowledge. They did not realize that the scientific method is not free from speculation and conjecture on its metaphysical side. Hence, according to these philosophers, depending on God's guidance for ethics is logically unsound. They argue God cannot be used as a fundamental criterion for ethical inquiry, nor is God necessary for ethics (Johnson, 1984: 158). According to some other philosophers such

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as Aquinas and Aristotle, “we function best as humans when we are perfecting our human capacities, reason being the highest or most important of these capacities. Because moral law is embedded in human reason, our actions do not depend upon our perception of God’s will or commands at any particular moment” (Johnson, 1984: 161). But this assertion is not supported by observable happenings of the modern and contemporary world. Observable happenings suggest that there is always a big gap between TAUK and human speculation. No doubt, the sense of ethical inquiry is grounded in human nature, but it works, in a proper direction, when it is directed in the light of TAUK and submits to its guidance. By nature, humans are rational. It is only because God made humans as rational beings—in God’s image—that is why, to a certain extent, they can discern right from wrong. However, to be sure, they need TAUK’s light. This understanding is not the result of any human speculation, but rather serious ethical inquiry based on TAUK and human heritage. Despite this truth, most philosophers claim Human nature is free and autonomous (Johnson, 1984: 161) and ignore the fact that man is easily influenced by his desires and lusts which do not follow any rationality. Ethical inquiry, therefore, cannot be done simply with the help of “light of natural reason” no doubt that is part of our human nature. Based only on the light of natural reason, we are unable to discern ethical principles. Hence, it requires us to follow TAUK. The Knowledge drawn from TAUK becomes the source of further understanding up to the level of certainty- yaqeen- that is beyond any doubt.



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