

Ethics form an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: This essay titled 'Ethics from Islamic Perspective' includes morale and *akhlaq*. It intends to give awareness about the importance of ethics from an Islamic perspective. The essay is sufficient to give the reader a feel for its potential to encourage further research in the area of resolving ethical issues, specifically for those who are calling for universal ethical theories to avoid moral imperialism. The Islamic perspective of the ethical concept should be referred to based on the Holy Qur'an from the God and Ahadith of Prophet Muhammad. The ethical concept must be general and not too bias for others. The findings of this paper can be used as topics of discussion, it is because the Islamic Work Ethics has economic as well as moral/ *akhlaq* dimensions.

Keywords: *Islamic perspective, ethics, Islamic Work Ethics, moral and akhlaq*

Introduction

This essay discusses the ethical concepts from the Islamic perspective so that it should construct an axiom system that faithfully reflects the Islamic view of ethics. The axiom system here means by a proposition that either not proved or demonstrated but considered undeniable, or subject to a decision, so, the truth is assumed and became the starting point for concluded to the truth to another. This is an essential first step in determining the rules of economic behavior in an Islamic society. The Islamic view of the life process is unique not only for its predominant emphasis on ethical norms but also because of its being "complete". However, to turn it into an operational tool of scientific analysis, an ethical philosophy must be reduced to a set of axioms which is respect to Islamic valid rules of social and economic behavior.

In this case, we should answer some questions to make the subject more obvious:

1. **Academic planning of the subject:** The main purpose of writing this essay is to fulfill or obtain the criteria which the ministry of higher education has put in for Achieving Academic ranks.
2. **Importance of the subject:** Ethics is a very important issue in the contemporary world because many societies around the globe have lost this ethical value. They are not giving a price for this common issue, so we are obliged to overview and shine this phenomenon and to drive the people for observing and implementing this phenomenon.

3. **Reasons for choosing the subject:** As I mentioned previously it's both conventional and contemporary issues and discourse which many societies had lost in these values, so we need to resurrect it and to enlighten the benefits of the good deeds.
4. **Research questions:**

Main question:

 - 1- What are the Islamic commands toward this issue?
 - 2- What's the definition of ethics?

Sub questions:

 - 1- What is the difference between these concepts- ethic, moral, and Akhlaq?
 - 2- What are the principles of Islamic business ethics?
5. **Methodology:** In completing this essay, the secondary literature is used to enable an in-depth understanding of ethics from the Islamic perspective with the moral and akhlaq concept. The secondary resources are from readings on books and the web pages, so the major instrument that has been used is the literature review.

The Concept of Ethics, Moral and Akhlaq

The concept of ethics, morals and akhlaq it can be in various point of view from many resources of our readings. Ethical behavior is an order based on a value system of a particular society. More ethics is associated with science or philosophy because it is the standard of good and bad it is human intellect. When compared with morals, ethics is more theoretical while moral is practical. The former is more general while the latter more local or special.

Many terms are used by philosophers to give the meaning of akhlaq. But we can conclude that akhlaq is much related with the moral and ethics so much that have an opinion stating akhlaq is meant by moral and ethics. Put simply, akhlaq is referred to the natural habits that are owned by each individual. It includes behavior or nature owned by an individual as a feeling- irritable, quick to laugh, irritability, and so on. Also includes in this definition, a person belonging habits through training, education, discipline, and fitness to be a flesh and blood character and good familiarity to someone. Besides, akhlaq refers more to our natural habits.

Recently, in the western tradition, moral studies have long been existing and spreading out before the birth of Islam known as 'ethics' or 'moral' knowledge. In the context of etymology, the terms 'ethics' and 'moral' have the same meaning and also refer to the same field of study.

In brief, 'moral' is derived from a Latin word while the word 'ethics' is derived from a Greek word. Both terms are related to the practical activities relating to behavior, custom, lifestyle, ways of thinking, freedom and the tendency of a person engaged in an activity. On the other hand, the akhlaq was presented by the Muslims based on the al-Quran and al-Sunah. On Islamic perspective, the ethics and moral was different from the point of conception, objectives, and resources; it is called as akhlaq.

Current related issues

Ethics is usually defined by a written code of ethics. In the Middle East, not many organizations and professions have written codes of ethics (Mudawanat Alsuluk) and a violation is a norm rather than the

exception. Behaviors that conform to those written codes of ethics are considered ethical and whatever violates the written standards is considered unethical.

It can be simply concluded that people are not too concerned about all this matter when they talk about ethics, They usually do not recall the moral and akhlaq. This is because they set their mind, the term ethics is used just as used in the business, or information technology such as computer accessibility. As a Muslim, they should also think about that moral and akhlaq.

Besides, the new code of ethics was created, which is the Islamic Work Ethics (IWE). This philosophy was created to an orientation that shapes and influences the involvement and participation of believers in the workplace. It implies that work is a virtue in light of a person's needs, and is a necessity for establishing equilibrium in one's individual and social life. IWE views work as a means to further self-interest economically, socially, and psychologically, to sustain social prestige, to advance societal welfare, and reaffirm faith. The concept has its origin in the Quran and the sayings and practice of Prophet Mohammed.

Definitions and concepts of ethics from an Islamic perspective: Moral and Akhlaq

There are various definitions of ethics, morals, and akhlaq. The various definitions are produced from various reading materials, such as books and articles. So, there are divergent opinions from the philosophers. Ethics from an Islamic perspective is more concerned to the religious behavior, code, etc.

Islam is supposed to be a complete way of life. A Muslim is bound by Islamic rules and hence is obliged to follow the instructions as prescribed in the Quran and Hadiths. Islam is a religion based upon the surrender to God (Allah). The very name of the religion, al-Islam in Arabic, means submission and peace, for it is in submitting to God's will that human beings gain peace in their lives in this world and the hereafter. Islam is considered to be a comprehensive religion and its ethical system is considered to be one of the major ethical systems. Realizing the importance of establishing an ethical system in all fields, especially at our present time which is witnessing an ever-increasing ethical problems, several specialist organizations have prepared codes of ethics to be complied with by members of those organizations.

Generally, in Islam ethics have two dimensions: first, ethics toward Allah, the creator. A Muslim has to believe in Allah and has to worship Him. Second, ethics toward others- a Muslim business person has to deal ethically with others by maintaining good treatment and good relationships. Ethics provide an essential foundation for business transactions. They are essential for organizational effectiveness and are necessary for interpersonal relations. [2/87]

Definition and Concept of Ethics

Ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy that deals with moral behavior. Morality refers to whether something is right or wrong, good or bad. Although morality is a complex concept, it can be defined in terms of both means and ends. Means is the process that occurs, while Ends refers to the consequences. Ethics may also be defined as a systematic inquiry into the beliefs we have and the management we make about what is morally right or wrong and morally good or evil. It is an inquiry that attempts to

answer the following questions: What kinds of conduct are morally right or wrong? And what things are good and what things are evil?

Ethics is also defined as the code of moral principles that sets standards of good or bad, or right or wrong behavior. Ethical behavior is what is accepted as good and right as opposed to “bad” or wrong in the context of the governing moral code. [3/32]

Islamic ethics is defined as the code of moral principles that are prescribed by the Quran and Sunnah (Hadith or sayings of Prophet Mohammad). Islamic ethics is based on rational methods as well as revelation. Revelation provides the truth which rational methods lead to understanding and appreciation of truth. Hence, Islamic ethics is based on tawheed, or unity principle, which determines the unique relationship between God and man; man and man; and man and his environment. Within the Islamic culture, the term that is mostly associated with ethics is referred to in the Holy Qur’an as Khouloq. Allah in the Quran has described Prophet Mohammad as a Prophet of good ethics

Definition and Concept of Moral

According to Peter Baelz, morals and ethics often have the same meaning. However, it is very useful if we could distinguish between them, even though we often failed to make such a difference. In form of etymology, the English words ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ are exactly the same. Because of that, the study of ethics and morals just one, and the same.

The moral issues are practical issues, but not all belong to the practical issues in the field of ethics. It is because, morals more specifically examine the good and bad, right and wrong, and how an individual should act in a particular situation. Therefore, moral refers to disciplines, knowledge that investigate the various about the human behavioral moral while ethics can analyze the action whether it is right or wrong; it can provide a clear line of distinction about acts and of an internal disposition, whether good or bad; or at least, be able to develop a knowledge of ethical guidelines that can be adopted to make various moral of judgments.

Definition and Concept of Akhlaq

Mohd. Nasir Omar, in his book ‘Akhlaq’ refers to nature, habits, customs, familiarity, values, and lifestyle of the individual or group of individuals. In fact, belief systems or religion of a person also often included under the definition of akhlaq by many researchers. It is because religion greatly influence the thinking and lifestyle of the individual. [4/405]

While according to Ibn Miskawayh, akhlaq is referred to the situation that forms in a human and it functions as an executive power that directs the individual through all his habits. Many philosophers agreed with the statement that akhlaq is related to the disposition that create in a person (al-nafs/soul). Spiritual dimension of the situation is very important because it is the cause of all acts done by humans.

Therefore, akhlaq is does not refer to the act of good or bad done by a person, but to someone’s spiritual dimension pressing to do an act, whether good or bad. Akhlaq is located in the interior of human’s soul and in the meanwhile, the act is referring to the exterior is made from morality. Hence, a good moral will of course realize that good deeds and vice versa. [5/267]

Principles of Islamic Business Ethics

Hanafy and Salam classified ethical principles of Islam into six categories such as- truthfulness, trust, sincerity, brotherhood, science & knowledge, and justice. [7/ 289-301]. In order to get pleasure from the Almighty, a Muslim should follow these principles of Islamic ethics while doing all the business or activities in their daily life. [6/149-164].

Truthfulness: Truthfulness is a basic ethical value of Islam and the meaning of Islam itself is, in a way, the other name of truth. There is no scope for cheating, telling lies, swearing too much, and providing false advertising in the Islamic framework of business.

Trust: Trust is another fundamental ethical principle of Islam and the essence of the trust is the sense of accountability which is the sense of having to appear before Allah and to account for one's action. All the activities should be conducted well without causing harm or damage to the society or the environment.

Sincerity: Islam attaches great importance to sincerity of intentions and actions in every walk of life. For example, ethical code results in more efficiency as well as a high rate of productivity. Sincerity also discourages manipulation or exploitation of others for personal reasons.

Brotherhood: Islam declares that all human beings are brothers to each other without the distinctions of race, colour, tribe, caste and language of an individual or group. Everyone is entitled to an ethical right behavior irrespective of distinctions of caste, creed, race, or territory.

Science and Knowledge: Islam makes it obligatory for Muslims to seek knowledge and obtain excellence in performance. Research and development is highly encouraged in Islam. In such concern about science and knowledge, the Islamic code of ethics had been highly fruitful for Islamic civilization in the past.

Justice: Justice is undoubtedly a prerequisite of business and trade as it encompasses the entire whole series of human life. The whole universe is based on the concept of justice and balance. Justice here means that everyone should be treated as he or she deserves, without any undue pressure or discrimination.

Challenges in encouraging Islamic ethics

Muslims' unethical behavior is influenced by several factors, such as stage of formal development, personal values and personality, family influence, peer influence and so on.

Personal value and personality: One who stresses honesty will behave differently from those who do not respect others' rights. The locus of control also affects individual ethical behavior (Robbins and Coulter, 2005, p. 112).

Family influence: The home is the place to start being a good Muslim. Children are likely to be ethical if they see their parents and other members of the family consistently adhere to high standards. In Islam, it is easier for a parent to teach his kids what is right (halal) and what is wrong (haram) than to teach them rules and principles of good conduct and behavior.

Peer influence: Children are influenced by actions of their peers with whom they interact. Islam urges people to be very selective of peers as they have very big influence on companions. This coincides with

the Arabic proverb “Birds of a feather flock together” or “A person is known by the company he keeps”.

Life influence: Key events like taking part in Alhajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) for example has a positive impact on Individual behavior. As the Qur’an states: “Whoever goes to Hajj comes back from his journey innocent and pure and white as of the day of birth”.

Situational challenges: It is the situation that sometimes makes one behave unethically. For example, a secretary may lie when answering a phone as the only way to turn away a client. She may simply lie by saying that the manager is not in the office while he is in fact in the office. On many occasions, the researcher has observed many Muslim secretaries quit their jobs simply to avoid being forced to tell such lies. However, to tell a lie is acceptable in Islam under three conditions: first, in wars; second, to solve conflicts between people; third, husband lying to his wife or vice versa for the sake of getting closer to each other and saving the marriage, e.g. saying “I love you” while it is the opposite (Hadith), or “you are the most beautiful woman in the world”. All this is meant to strengthen the ties between the couples.

Societal challenges: People try to conceal unethical behavior and always justify their actions as being ethical in order to please members of society. In Muslim culture, society places a heavy pressure on individuals to practice *wasta*, so a manager may have to deviate from the rules and regulations of the business in order to please a cousin, a friend or a neighbor. On one hand, *wasta* is considered as ethical and legal, e.g. in solving conflicts, while on the other hand, it can be viewed as illegal and unacceptable when it is used to override established laws and traditions, e.g. in obtaining favors like jobs. In Muslim culture, a business person is more concerned about what others might think of his decision than what he thinks himself.

Islamic prescriptions over that issue : In Islam, Allah emphasizes the following ethical guidelines as being outlined in the Holy Qur’an. These guidelines govern the Islamic code of ethics relating to a person’s daily life and business dealings. Muslims are required at all times to behave in an Islamic way because Allah himself is watching their practices. In response to these challenges, several guidelines are proposed as follows:

Be patient: Islamic business people should not get angry and should not be irritated (Holy Qur’an, Al-Imran :134).

Be fair and just: A Muslim business person has to be fair and just in all his dealings. He has to be fair with his employees; he has to give fair wages and has to be fair and kind with animals when slaughtering them.

Be humble: Being humble is the opposite of being arrogant. Being humble is a great characteristic of Muslims. Business people should be humble and down to earth.

Be complacent: Being complacent is another characteristic of a Muslim. Muslim business people should be satisfied with what Allah has allocated them. To Muslims complacency is not the enemy of progress as the West views it.

Be generous: Being generous is the opposite of being stingy. Alkareem is in fact one of Allah's magnificent names meaning being generous. Alkaram (generosity) is another characteristic of the Muslim business people. They should be generous in giving money and goods to the needy. Islam urges people to give legal alms or obligatory charity (Az-Zakat). Az-Zakat is an ordinance prescribed by Islamic law. Social responsibility is another important principle in management practices. Sadaqat (donations), not obligatory, are very much urged in the Holy Qur'an.

Be dignified: A business person in Islam should not indulge in investments that are not Halal. Halal is the opposite of Haram. Halal is ethical while haram is unethical. Examples of haram earnings for a Muslim include trading in alcohol,

Be trustful (Al Amaneh): Being trustful means giving rights to others. For example, if you borrow some money from someone, you are supposed to return it at the agreed time at no interest. A good loan with no interest is an example of Islamic financial dealings.

Be friendly: Muslims should be friendly and united at all times. No discrimination exists among Muslims, regardless of nationality, gender or color. The only difference between Muslims should be on the basis of piety.

Be equitable: Equity is the opposite of injustice. A Muslim manager should be equitable. In Islam people should be treated fairly and with equity.

Do not be involved in fraud: A Muslim business person should treat others the same way he himself would like to be treated.

Do not bribe: The practice of all kinds of bribes is forbidden in Islam (Holy Qur'an, II: 188). However, there should be differentiation between sadakat (donations), gifts, and bribes. Gifts are encouraged in Islam because they help gain friendship. The prophet encourages the use of gifts saying "Give more gifts so you be better liked" (Hadith). Bribes on the other hand are unethical. Bribes are used to influence decisions. There are two kinds of bribes: the "lubrication" bribe and the "white mail" bribe. The white mail bribe generally involves an elaborate system for concealing the use of large sums of corporate cash. This type of bribe is used to buy influence in high places [8/278-288].

From these key guidelines and principles of ethics, we can conclude that Islam is a religion of high-moral standards. Muslim business people are urged in Al Qur'an and Al Sunnah to follow certain principles and guidelines.

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