Islamic ethics: An outline of its principles and scope

Abdurezak A. Hashi*

Department of Biotechnology, Kulliyyah of Science,
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

Abstract

Islamic ethics is the ethical system formed by the teachings of the Qur'ān and explained by the Prophet (*s.a.w*) through action and words. This paper aims to offer analytical study of Islamic ethics based on the Qur'an and *Sunnnah*. The paper also attempts to offer an introductory exposition on the conceptual framework and scope of Islamic ethics. To present the conceptual framework and scope of Islamic ethics, the Qur'ānic terms and the Prophetic pronouncements related to the subject are exposed, and the opinions of the Muslim exegetes of the Qur'an as well as the opinions of Muslim jurists related to the subject are unveiled.

Keywords: Islamic ethics, principles, scope, analysis

Abstrak

Etika Islam ialah sistem etika yang dibentuk berasaskan pengajaran daripada Al-Qur'ān dan dijelaskan oleh Nabi Muhammad (*s.a.w*) melalui peri laku dan kalam. Kertas ini bercadang mengemukakan kajian secara analitikal terhadap etika Islam berdasarkan Al-Qur'an and *Sunnnah*. Kertas ini juga cuba mengemukakan pengenalan kepada kerangka konsep dan skop dalam etika Islam. Jadi, istilah tertentu dalam Al-Qur'ān dan perisytiharan Nabi yang berkait dengan kerangka konsep dan etika Islam akan dikupas. Ulasan daripada golongan cerdik pandai Al-Quran dan juri Muslim juga akan dipaparkan.

Kata kunci: falsafah moral, kerangka konsep, sumber, analisis

Introduction

Ethics deals with those standards that prescribe what man out to do. It also addresses virtues, duties and attitudes of the individual and the society. In addition, ethics is related to customs, traditions as well as beliefs and worldviews. Notably, there are other fields, such as law, human feeling and culture, which address the same subjects that ethics address. So one may wonder, what is the different between ethics and law? What about the relationship between ethics and human feelings? Can we consider ethics as a synonymous term to culture?

Though ethics is closely related to law, feelings and culture, however, it is hard to equate ethics with all of these.[i] For instance, it is true that ethics and human feelings are closely related to each other. However, being ethical is not to follow one's feelings and desires. Indeed, human feelings might

**Corresponding author: Abdurezak Abdulahi Hashi
Department of Biotechnology, Kulliyyah of Science
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Jalan Istana,
Bandar Indera Mahkota, Kuantan 25200, Pahang, Malaysia
E-mail:* hashi@iium.edu.my*

frequently go against ethics and deviate from moral standards of right and wrong. Hence, it is not true to equate ethics with one's feelings. Similarly, law and ethics are principle-guided fields. Both of these fields prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society or fairness.[ii] Though 'law' covers a wide spectrum of ethics, nevertheless, being ethical does not necessarily mean to follow what the conventional law requires.[iii] There are cases where the conventional law deviates from what is ethical. Good example of this is the ongoing debates on the United Nations' charter that limits the Veto Power to the five Permanent Security Council or P5. Today, the Veto power wielded solely by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council,[iv] is a subject of political and ethical criticisms. The question here is why only five countries, out of more than 192 nations of the world, enjoy with the veto power on given issues? On what moral grounds these countries are privileged? What made the voice of other countries of the world insignificant compare to P5? For instance, if France and Britain can enjoy with veto

power, why India, Japan and Germany cannot? This charter is now a law for the United Nations to function; however, it became an example of how conventional law and ethics are not similar.

In addition, ethics is also not confined to the standards of behavior (culture) which our society accepts. It is true that in any society majority of them accepts standards that are ethical, but being moral does not necessarily mean the same as doing whatever the society accepts. Good examples are to be found in the cases of drug abuse, smoking, bribery and dictatorship. This is because these habits are practiced by some societies or subgroups, but regardless of how many societies practiced, these habits are immoral in the eyes of many ordinary human beings and societies. So if ethics is not equitable with the conventional laws, nor culture or feelings, what is ethics then?

This paper aims to address the Islamic understanding of what ethics means? What is the relationship between ethics, human nature and law (*fiqh*) in Islam? While offering some introductory expositions on Islamic ethical standards, the paper highlights the source and the scope of Islamic ethics and in some cases compares (Islamic ethics) to conventional theories of ethics. Both the Qur'anic verses and Prophetic narrations related to the subject would be analyzed.

Islamic Ethics: A conceptual analysis
The Arabic term: *akhlaq* (singular, *khuluq)* is laterally translated into English as "ethics".[v] *Khuluq* comes in the *Qur'an,* two times, (al-Shu'ara: 137, and al-Qalam: 4). According to the Muslim exegete of the Qur'an, al-Qurtubi (d.1273 C.E),[vi] the word *khuluq al-awalin* as mentioned in the Qur'an means: "their ancient customs and it includes religion, character, ideology, or doctrine."[vii] Another Arabic word which is employed as a literally interchangeable to *akhlaq* is *adab. Adab* means manner, attitude, behavior,[viii] and the etiquette of putting things in their proper place.

Though these two terms are in some cases used as interchangeable words in Arabic language, some scholars argue that there are some essential differences between *akhlāq* and *adāb* in terms of application and source.[ix] This is because; *akhlāq* (ethics) indicates the "moral philosophy", while *adāb* (morality) signifies the actual practices of moral philosophy. In this case, the former address the theoretical background of human conducts, while the later is more on the actions and manners. The later addresses what is the proper, or improper, behaviour of man, while the first addresses why such actions are proper or otherwise. As such, these

two terms are complementary terms, and in some cases serve as interchangeable words, that describe what man out to do.

Conceptually, *akhlāq* includes two meanings; *first akhlāq* (ethics) means the science (*'ilm*) that deals with the standards of right and wrong of human conducts, particularly "what humans out to do".[x] Ethics as science refers to the study of the ethical conduct and behaviour; and in this case, ethics means the human effort of studying moral standards and conducts to ensure that man possesses the right understanding of moral behaviour.

Second, *akhlāq* means "good character" or good human behaviour (*al-akhlāq al-fāḍilah*). In this understanding ethics is the human character that prescribes to refrain from immoral conducts such as cheating, corruption, discrimination, lying, stealing, murder, assault, slander, rape, fraud, and etc., and enjoins virtues of honesty, compassion, sincerity and loyalty.[xi] As such, Islamic ethics (*akhlāq*) are those universal standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans *ought to do* as taught by the Qur'an, and demonstrated in the exemplary life (actions and words) of the Prophet (*s.a.w*).[xii] In this sense, *akhlāq* (ethics) "subsumes all actions that are characterised as *'amal ṣāliḥ* (virtuous deeds) in the terminology of the Qur'an".[xiii]

It is important to underline few things about the definition of ethics in the Islamic perspective; *first,* ethical actions are those conducts which are characterized as *'amal ṣāliḥ* (good deeds). Good conducts (*'amal ṣāliḥ*) are those conducts which are in line with the primordial human nature (*fiṭrah*). Islam holds the belief that human beings are born with good character (*fiṭrah*) that disdains from immorality and instils morality,[xiv] thus good morals are equivalent to human nature.[xv] When the Prophet (*s.a.w*) was asked how to determine the moral quality of human conducts, particularly, how to know which human conduct is right and which one is vice, he replied: "righteousness (*al-birr*) is a kind of human disposition (*husnul khuluq*) and vice (*ithm*) is what rankles in your heart and you disapprove that people should come to know of it."[xvi] In this understanding, as man's nature is good, not evil in the view of Islam, Islam holds that a person will not feel comfortable to do things which are not in line with human nature such as stilling, lying and corruption. Therefore, actions which are in accordance with the primordial character of man, such as equality, integrity, telling the truth, and etc., are known as *ṣāliḥāt* (proper), while human conducts which are not in accordance with human nature, such as discrimination, envy,

selfishness, and etc., are categorized as *sayyi'āt* (improper). In this understanding, *akhlāq* (ethics) is equated with human nature (*fiṭrah*), unless the human nature is corrupted.

Second, in chapter 78 verse no. 4, the Qur'an equates ethics and religion,[xvii] while in chapter 30 verse no.30, the Qur'an, likens human nature (*fitrah*) to religion (*din*);[xviii] as such, religion and ethics are part of the human primordial disposition (*fitrah*).[xix] In Islam, having good morality is seen as a reflection of religious faith, while lack of good morality is a sign of weak religious faith; hence, proper personality is a rudimentary part of faith in Islam. The Prophet (*s.a.w*) said: "the best among you are those who have the best manners and character."[xx]

Third, the Qur'anic account of human character consists of two dimensions of the human persona; the first dimension includes those positive attributes of man, such as a*l-bayan* (intellectual discourse),[xxi] a*l-Ilm* (knowledge and understanding),[xxii] a*l-taqwim al-hasan* (natural disposition)[xxiii] and a*l-nazar and al-itibar* (reflective power),[xxiv] and the Qur'an associates these attributes with the human nature (*fitrah*). The second dimension is the negative behaviours of man such as *dha'if* and *al-ya'us* (weak and easy give up),[xxv] *halu' and manu'* (selfish and egoist)[xxvi] '*ajul and qatur* (haste and niggard),[xxvii] *zalum* and *jahul* (forgetful and injustice)[xxviii] and *jadal* and *halu'a* (argumentative and impatient).[xxix] According to the Qur'an, positive attributes of human persona are part of the human disposition which is given to man by Allah (*s.w.t*), while the negative behaviours are attributed to the human desires which man develops in the subsequent ages of his life.

Fourth, in Islam *akhlaq* (ethics) is understood as a disposition which is both internal as well as external; ethics is not just a personal affair but it is also interpersonal as well as social matter. On one hand, Islamic ethics enjoins *takiyah al-nafs* (self purification), which is continuous process of intellectual and spiritual enhancement of human psyche. While on the other, Islam ethics calls the individual to improve his or her relations with other members of the community, and other creatures of Allah (*s.w.t*) in general. In this respect, the personality of a Muslim should make him a well-liked and respected person. A person is only well-liked and respected if he behaves well, is polite and gracious, respectful of and considerate to others. Thus, a Muslim is advised, among others, to be friendly, forgiving, compassionate, generous and helpful, and also to be inclined towards chivalry and gallantry, to give rather than to take, to sacrifice rather than to grab, to make way for others' need, to say kind motivating words, to be humane to one and all.[xxx]

Islamic ethics: Source and origin

In Islam, while the Qur'an lays the foundation of ethical concepts and standards, the *sunnah* (way of life) of the Prophet (*s.a.w*) contains the actual practices of such concepts. For instant, in chapter 68 of the Qur'an, verse 4, the Qur'an states that: "You (Prophet Muhammad) are on an exalted standard of character". When Aishah (*r.a*), the spouse of the Prophet (*s.a.w*), was asked about the personality (character) of the Prophet (*s.a.w*), she replied: "it was a reflection of the Noble Qur'an".[xxxi] As ethical concepts taught by the Qur'an are embodied in the way of life of the Prophet (*s.a.w*), both the Qur'an and *sunnah* are the source of the Islamic ethics. Various *Qur'anic* verses and number of Prophetic narrations provide a code of ethics, which covers the dimensions of human behaviour, some of which are the followings.

To begin with, according to the Qur'an, belief in Allah (*s.w.t*), humility, better communications and continuation of good deeds are the foundations of good morals. The Qur'an states that the best person is the person who upholds these moral foundations and invites others to practice these values.

"Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend."

[The Qur'an, 4:125]

"*Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, I am of those who bow in Islam"?*

[The Qur'an 41:33]

Furthermore, the Qur'an associates good morality with fair and compassionate behaviour towards parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours, while arrogance and vainglory have no place in the Islamic morality.

"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious."

[The Qur'an, 4:36]

Similarly, the Qur'an prescribes the behaviour of being truthful in speech and actions. Truthful actions and sincerity illuminates the heart and improves the conditions of the mind, which eventually enhances the person's outlook and worldview.

"O ye who believe, fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right, that He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins: He that obeys Allah and His Messenger, has already attained the highest achievement".
[The Qur'an, 33:70-71]

In another chapter, the Qur'an prescribes the moral duty of authenticating received reports and narrations. The intellectual attitude of classification and scrutiny of given information is part of the moral duty of every man and women.

"O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done."

[The Qur'an 49:6]

In addition, making decisions and judgments on given issue, based on doubts (*shakk*) and speculations (*zann*) is morally wrong and unacceptable in the Qur'an. The Qur'an teaches that unfounded information cannot be the basis of claiming the truth (*haqq*). Truth claim must be established beyond reasonable doubts.

"But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against truth. Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do."
[The Qur'an 11:36]

In the Qur'an, abetting or helping transgression is tantamount of doing it; therefore, the act of supporting or inclining towards immorality is prohibited. Thus, the Qur'an teaches its adherents not only to refrain from unethical conduct but also to disassociate themselves from those immoral conducts.

"And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you; and ye have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall ye be helped."
[The Qur'an 12:113]

The Qur'an requires Muslims to refrain from cheating, misuse and betrayal (*yaghlul*) of trusts, as these misappropriate conducts would eventually lead to injustice and distortion of rights.

"If any person is so false, He shall, on the Day of Judgment, restore what he misappropriated; then shall every soul receive its due,- whatever it earned,- and none shall be dealt with unjustly."

[The Qur'an, 3:161]

With regards to trust, the Qur'an states that man and woman need to uphold trusts and responsibilities (*amanah*) that are bestowed upon them. According to the Qur'an, those in a position of trust including company managers, political leaders, decision makers, householders (husband and wife), and etc., are required to uphold and discharge their duties in the best possible ways.

"Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things."
[The Qur'an 4:58]

According to the Qur'an, corruption (*fasad*), which basically means misappropriate and mishandling, leads to destruction of life; hence, the Qur'an commands Muslims to avoid *fasad*, instead it calls them to do *ihsan* (doing good or better).

"Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good."
[The Qur'an, 7:56]

The Qur'an promotes the moral behaviour of kindness, generosity, self discipline and the culture of forgiving.

"Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for Allah loves those who do good."
[The Qur'an, 3:134]

Ethics in the Prophetic tradition

The Prophet (*s.a.w*) mentions that the aim of his mission (*bi'thah*) is to complete the good morals. For the Prophet (*s.a.w*) was sent to upgrade and inculcate better moral values taught by all prophets, religion of Islam aims to uphold and perfect good

universal values of human conducts. As such, the entire religion of Islam aims to serve good morality. The Prophet (s.a.w) said: "I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals."[xxxii]

Furthermore, the Prophet (*s.a.w*) was asked who are those whom Allah (*s.w.t*) loves the most? The Prophet (*s.a.w*) replied: "those who possess good morals." [xxxiii] On another note, the Prophet (*s.a.w*), taught his companions to avoid indecency and immoral conducts, and stated that: "the best amongst you are those who are the owners of the best morality".[xxxiv] In another occasion, the Prophet (*s.a.w*) stated the defining attributes of the Muslim character. He (*s.a.w*) said: "A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands."[xxxv] Al-Qurtubi quotes in his exegesis the Prophet (*s.a.w*),[xxxvi] saying: "you cannot afford to win the hearts of people through your wealth, but you can win their hearts with smiling face and good morals". In other words, the real property that man owns and can share with and perhaps extend to others is the good character. As reported by Muslim, the Prophet (*s.a.w*) said: "in the eye of Allah (*s.w.t*), the worst amongst people in rank on the Day of Resurrection is one whom people abandon in order to avoid his indecency."[xxxvii] Generally speaking, ordinary people turn to avoid and abandon those indecent individuals, while those decent individuals are beloved by all.

These are some of the Qur'anic verses and Prophetic statements, which served as the foundations and millstones of Islamic ethics.

Islamic ethics: Scope and principles

Islamic ethics is founded on the worldview that man is trustee and holds responsibility of being vicegerent (*khalif*). In this understanding man existed as a result of the divine-plan of Allah (*s.w.t*), based on which man is delegated to manage and improve live on earth (*ta'mir*) according to the divine laws (*wahy*) of Allah (*s.w.t*).[xxxviii] To do so, the Qur'an, mentions that Allah (*s.w.t*) has empowered man with the qualities of intellect, knowledge, freewill and guidance, which raise man into a unique position above other creatures of Allah (*s.w.t*). While the Qur'anic term *khalif* signifies commissioned for a duty and responsibility, the concept of *ta'mir* means constant improvement of life. As a *khalif* (vicegerent) whose duty is *ta'mir* (improvement of life), man is inaugurated to be the steward and guardian (*musakhar*), who will manage human and natural resources, to improve life and make earth inhabitable place. Thus, within the framework of

khalif (trustee), *ta'mir* (improvement) and *musakhar* (steward), man, has an ethical duty to constantly upgrade the efficiency and the quality of life. Based on this understanding, human conducts are ethical only when they (conducts) contribute to the improvement of life, and in line with divine teachings of Allah (*s.w.t*). This makes Islamic ethical system divine, transcendental, universal, and principle guided. As such, among the features that make Islamic ethics unique, are the followings;[xxxix]

First, Islamic ethics is transcendental; this is so, because the determination of what is ethical and what is not or what is proper and what is improper, all comes from Allah (*s.w.t*). In Islam, the source of morality transcends human desires and culture. It is a divine code which descended from the divine realms. Legislation of moral conducts or otherwise, depends on the divine scripture (*al-wahy al-Ilahiyi*) which transcends the limits (changes) of time and culture. This make Islamic ethics vary from conventional ethics in which ethical conducts are characterized as bad or good based on their utilitarian outcome and gains.

Second, in the Islamic ethical system, man's nature is not evil nor graceless, but good (*fitrah*). Man is born with good natural disposition; evil traits are acquired and additional to the human nature. Upon birth, man is innocent and his nature is not ungracious which requires redemption or baptism to wash his original sin; every person begins his life ethically sane and sound, not weighed down by any original sin. In fact, at birth man is already above the zero point in that he has the revelation and his rational equipment ready for use, as well as a world all too ready to receive his ethical deed.[xl] In this understanding, man and the world are either positively good or neutral, but not evil. In due time, this good character might become obscured by envy, hate, ego, jealousy, utilitarian and prejudice.

Third, as a universal code of conduct, Islamic moral standards teach universal justice and human equality. First of all, ethical propositions do reflect universal moral truths regardless of culture, race, religion, nationality, or any other distinguishing feature; thus moral relativism has no place in Islam. Second, human beings are equal and there is no favouritism of any ethnic groups over another; no individual is closer or nearer to Allah (*s.w.t*) except through good deeds. As such, discrimination and division of mankind into good or bad, intelligent and less intelligent, privileged or otherwise, based on ethnicity and kinship, have no place in the Islamic ethical system. Moral quality (*taqwa*) and educational qualifications (*ilm*) are what

differentiate man.^{xli} [removed] In this conception, tribalism is replaced with *ummatism*, while ethno-centrism is replaced with universalism. Concepts like Cast System of Hinduism, Original Sin of Christianity and Chosen Community of Judaism have no place in the Islamic ethics. In this understanding, regardless of race, skin color, language, region, age and social class, man and woman are good only when they command good and prohibit evil (*al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar*).[xlii]

Fourth, human conducts are judged to be ethical or otherwise, depending on the intention of the individual and in accordance with the divine texts (*nusus al-shari'ah*). Human conduct is considered morally good (*amal salih*) by fulfilling two conditions. First, the conduct must be done with good motives (*niyyyah hasanah*). Second, must be in accordance with the norms of the *shari'ah*. In this case, both the motive and means (way) of conduct must be good. Good intentions cannot turn immoral actions into good, while good outcomes cannot justify the morality of immoral means; as such, Islamic ethical system is neither consequential nor utilitarian.[xliii] Thus, a person's behavior can be wrong even if it results in the best possible outcomes. For instant, stilling or roping the wealthy of others to feed needy people is immoral. The reason is because, though feeding needy people is good, however, stilling is immoral in itself and nothing can justify it. Similarly, an act can be righteous even if it results in a negative outcome. For instant, to defend your wealth and family is morally good even if that results your death.

Fifth, Islam grants to all, the right of enjoying their natural rights such as freedom and liberty, but "not on the expenses of accountability and justice".[xliv] In this norm, it is possible to evaluate the individual's behavior based on the issues of accountability and public interest, and characterize his or her behavior as an immoral, even though such characterization might limit the liberty of the individual. Individuals are free to speak of their mind and act according to their freewill, however, their freedom and liberty ends where the rights of others begin. For instance, nudists might defend nudism based on the norms of the individual's freedom and liberty; however in the Islamic moral system, nudism is unethical and would remain immoral, simply because it contradicts with the moral principles of public decency (the concept of *awrah*). In this respect, apart from the Qur'an and *sunnah* which commands man and woman to cover their *awrah* (modesty), nudism violates also the rights of public decency and public order, therefore, it is immoral.

Sixth, Islam offers "an open system approach to ethics, not a self-oriented system".[xlv] As individual interest and personal satisfaction are very much related to the public well-fare and collective interest, egoism has no place in the Islamic moral system. The entire human race is considered as one entity; therefore, the interest of each and every one of this entity matters. The Prophet (*s.a.w*) states that: "He has not affirmed faith in me (i.e. he is not a true follower) who eats to his satisfaction and sleeps comfortably at night while his neighbour goes hungry and he is aware of it." This and other narrations, make Islamic ethics to transcend ego and personal gains. Islamic ethics is not just a personal affair, but it is also a social matter; it aims to serve the needs of both the individual and the society, as it aims to take everyone's right into account.

Seven, in the Islamic ethical system decisions that benefit the majority or minority are not necessarily ethical in themselves.[xlvi] In the Islamic conception, ethics is not a number game; therefore, Islam rejects the utilitarian contention that says, moral ethics is whatever brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. For instance, regardless of the number (percentage) of the people who approves corruption and bribery, both corruption and bribery are immoral, and would remain unethical in Islam. Similarly, despite the number of people who would support or vote for same-sex marriage, lesbianism and gays, these conducts are unacceptable and immoral in the view of Islam. Islamic ethics is characterized by principles and norms, not by numbers and hedonism.

Eight, it is true that in Islam, ethical values aim to bring human interest (*jalb al-maslahah*) and to prevent hardship (*dar' al-mafsadah*); however, this cannot be equated with ethical utilitarianism. This is because, unlike utilitarian theory of ethics where moral conducts are evaluated based on their utilitarian outcome, not principles or motives, in Islam the concepts of *jalb al-manfa'ah* (human interest) and *dar' al-mafsadah* (to prevent hardship) is principle-guided; permissibility of means (*wasilah*) to serve human interest and (what) type of interest are required. First, with regards to the permissibility of means (*wasilah*), the actions that are set to maximize the human interest (*manfa'ah*) are required to be permissible (*mubah*). Second, Muslim jurists (*fuqaha*) divided human interest (*maslahah*), into three portions; namely, accredited interest (*masalahah mu'tabarah*),[xlvii] discredited interest (*maslahah mulghah*)[xlviii] and unrestricted interest (*maslahah mursalah*).[xlix] In this regard, two

conditions are needed in order the action to be ethical. (1), human conducts have to be in accordance with the *shari'ah* rules. (2), the human conducts which are set to achieve (or maximize) the accredited and unrestricted interests are moral. As such, in Islam, interest (*manfa'ah*) in itself is not a criterion to approve or disapprove the action, but the rules and the type of interest are important. Therefore, Islamic ethical system understands the role of utilitarian motivations in the human behaviour, however, it approves only if the interest (*manfa'ah*) is approved (*manutah*) by the *shari'ah*. Hence, while the outcome of the action alone is not enough to justify the means, and means alone cannot justify the outcome, both the outcome and the means are required to be in accordance with the moral norms and the rules of the *shari'ah*.

Conclusion

Islam offers an ethical system which is unique. In Islam, ethics and religion are rooted to primordial human nature which is innocent and good unless is corrupted. Similarly, ethics, religion and law (*fiqh*) are complementary and do not contradict to each other. In this case, what is morally wrong is also illegal, and the law permits only what is moral. Similarly, in Islam both morality and law are derived from religious sources and religious teachings are practiced through morality and law. Second, Islamic ethical system is unique, because its value-judgements transcend all worldly gains and relativism interpretations. Transcendentalism, universalism and normative character are among building blocks of Islamic ethics.

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[i] For further discussions on the relationship between law and ethics, see: Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, S.J., and Michael J. Meyer, *what is ethics*, available: http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/whatisethics.html (accessed: 21/10/2011) and *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, entry: the Natural Law Tradition in Ethics,* available at: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-law-ethics (accessed: 21/10/2011) and Velasquez, Manuel G., *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982).

[ii] For further discussions on the relationship between law and ethics, see: Velasquez, Manuel G., *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982).

[iii] We are referring specifically to the conventional laws which are basically man made rules. This is because, there are religious laws, including the Islamic laws (*al-shari'ah*), which do not contradict with moral ethics. The *shari'ah* approves only what is ethically acceptable. Law and ethics are the same in Islam, and Muslim jurists insist that Islamic law is codified universal moral standards of right and wrong.

[iv] The five Veto Powers are People's Republic of China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States, and it enables them to prevent the adoption of any "substantive" draft Council resolution, regardless of the level of international support for the draft.

[v] The English term *ethics* has the same connotations of the term *akhlaq*. The term ethics (Middle English *ethik*,

from Old French *ethique*, from Late Latin *Ethica*, from Greek *Ethika- ethics*, or ethikos, *ethical*, from ethos), literally denotes character, custom, habit, behavior, human conduct or attitudes. While on the other hand the Latin word "*mores*" which is the root of *morality*, is almost literally synonymous term with the word ethos. A.S.Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

vi Imam Abu Abdullahi al-Qurtubiyi, is a Muslim exegete and jurists, who is also known in the field of *hadith*. One of his famous works is his monumental exegesis of the Qur'an "*al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*". He was born and died in Andalusia (Muslim Spain).

vii Abi Abullahi al-Qurtubiyi, *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah), vol.14, p.85

viii Attitude is the individual behavior gained from the environment, not already in born, and is changeable. While custom is the collective attitude that is developed within a community, which cannot be built by only one individual. Whilst behavior is the habit and the internal attitude or '*tabi'ah*' that already in born, in individuals, for instance a person can get angry very quickly.

ix For further discussion see: Ahmad b. Muhamad Ibn Maskawayhi, *Tahzib al-Akhlaq Watadhir al-'Araq*, (Beirut: Maktabat al-Thaqafah al-Diniyyah, 2011).

x Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef, *Ethics and Fiqh for everyday life: an Islamic outline*, (Research Centre, IIUM, 2005), p.31. William Lillie, *An Introduction to Ethics,* (Methuen & Co Ltd, 3rd ed. 1971), p.1

xi Abdullah Hassan Zaroug, *Ethics from an Islamic Perspective: Basic Issues*, (The America Journal of Islamic Social Sciences), v.16, 1999, p.54. Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef, *Ethics and Fiqh for everyday life: an Islamic outline*, p.30. William Lillie, *An Introduction to Ethics,* p.16. Velasquez, Manuel G., *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982).

xii Abdullah Hassan Zaroug, *Ethics from an Islamic Perspective: Basic Issues*. (The America Journal of Islamic Social Sciences), v.16, 1999, pp.53-54.

xiii Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef, *Ethics and fiqh for everyday life: an Islamic outline*, p.31

xiv The Qur'an (30:30).

xv Human conducts which are not in line with the human nature are immoral, while, those conduct which ordinary people feel convertible with are ethical.

xvi Reported by Muslim, *hadith* no: 2553.

xvii The Qur'an states: "And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character."

xviii The Qur'an states: "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah. That is the standard Religion: but most among mankind understand not."

xix These narrations equate good character (*akhlaq*) with the human disposition (*fitrah*), while immorality is equated to the human conducts which the human nature feels unconformable with.

xx Reported by al-Termiziyi, hadith no. 1162.

xxi The Qur'an (55:4).

xxii The Qur'an (96:5).

xxiii The Qur'an (95:4).

xxiv The Qur'an (59:2).

xxv The Qur'an (4:28), and (9:11).

xxvi The Qur'an (70: 19 and 21).

xxvii The Qur'an (17:100), and (21:37).

xxviii The Qur'an (33:72).

xxix The Qur'an (18:54), and (70:19).

xxx Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman, *Understanding Islam: Contemporary Discourse*, (Saba Islamic Media, 2007), pp227-228.

xxxi Reported by Muslim, *hadith* no.746.

xxxii Reported by Imam Malik in Muwata'.

xxxiii Reported by al-Tabrani.

xxxiv Reported by Imam al-Termiziyi, *hadith* no. 1975.

xxxv Reported by Imam al-Bukhariyi, *hadith* no. 10

xxxvi Al-Qurtubi, Ahkamul al-Qur'an, v.7, p.345.

xxxvii Reported by Muslim, in the chapter of *Bir* and *Silah*.

xxxviii The Qur'an, (11:61).

xxxix For further discussion on the characteristics of the Islamic ethics see: Abdullah Hassan Zaroug, *Ethics from an Islamic Perspective: Basic Issues*, The America Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, v.16, 1999. Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, E. J. Brill, Netherlands, 1991. Rafik Issa Beekun, *Islamic Business Ethics*, International Institute of Islamic thought, Virginia, USA, 1997.

xl Al-Faruqi, *al-Tawhid: Its implication for thought and life*, 8.

xli The Qur'an (49:13), and (58:11).

xlii The Qur'an (3:110).

xliii Consequential ethics is the belief that holds that the consequences of one's conduct are the ultimate basis for any judgment about the rightness of that conduct. In this contention, the outcome and the consequence is what determines the morality of the action or otherwise. In other words, no one knows the morality of the action until we see its outcome. Furthermore, utilitarian ethics holds that moral action is the one that maximizes the overall good or minimizes pain of the greatest number of individuals. Utilitarian gains, not norms, are what make our action ethical.

xliv Rafik Issa Beekun, *Islamic Business Ethics*, p21.

xlv Rafik Issa Beekun, *Islamic Business Ethics*, p22.

xlvi Ibid., p23.

xlvii Accredited *maslahah* is the human interest that is approved by the rules of the *shari'ah* (Islamic law) such as the interest gained from trade and other kinds of lawful business and professions. For further reading see: Ibn Ashur, Muhamad al-Tahir, *Maqasid al-Shari,ah al-Islamiyyah*, (Al-Basa,ir Lil Intaj al-Ilmiyyi, 1st ed., 1998), pp.210-211.

[xlviii] Discredited *maslahah* applies to interests which the *shariʿah* has nullified either explicitly or by an indication that can be found in its texts and general principles. The interest gained through corruption, cheating, bribery, gambling or transactions that contain an element of *riba*, and etc., are not acceptable in Islam. Ibn Ashur, Muhamad al-Tahir, *Maqasid al-Shari,ah al-Islamiyyah,* 211.

[xlix] This applies to any interest which is neither explicitly approved nor nullified by the *shariʿah*, but does not contradict neither the texts nor the general principles of *shariʿah*. Usually, this kind of *maslahahh* is recognized as a valid interest. The examples of unrestricted interest are like modern institutions of education and social administration, means of transactions, which don't contradict the texts and general principles of *shariʿah*. Ibn Ashur, Muhamad al-Tahir, *Maqasid al-Shari,ah al-Islamiyyah*, pp.210-211.