

Islamic Ethics: Doctrine and Praxis

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Part 1

Islamic Doctrine

- Based on three foundational declarations
- There is only One Supreme Being and Creator (monotheism/*tawheed*)
- The Finality of Prophethood in the person of Muhammad
- The reality of the Last Day (of Judgment)

The Doctrine of Monotheism in Islam

- God's existence is eternal and necessary
- He has beautiful and magnificent names and attributes that are eternal
- Nothing is binding on Him (according to Sunni theology, not *Mu'tazalite*)

Two Major Theological Sects

- Sunnis and *Mu'tazalite*
- Sunnis have three camps: *Maturidi*, *Ash'ari*, and *Athari*.
- Basic premise is that Revelation should not be overridden by human intellect and nothing is binding on God.
- *Mu'atazlite*
- Basic premise is that human intellect and rationale should contextualize meaning of revelation and that Divine Justice is binding on God

The Doctrine of the Finality of Prophet hood in Islam

- God reveals His Word to human beings whom He appoints as messengers and prophets
- Prophets are role models for other human beings in matters of worship; moral conduct and following the Divine Law. Prophets are infallible.
- God appointed thousands of prophets – Muhammad being the last.
- The revealed word is known as *Wahi* (revelation). Prophets are obligated to follow *Wahi* in all matters that are pertinent to salvation.

The Doctrine of the Last Day in Islam

- All human beings will be resurrected (physically according to the Sunnis)
- All beings will be judged in some way or another by God Himself. God decides on everyone's salvation
- The purpose of wahi (revelation) to prophets is to inform human beings what is necessary and pertinent to their salvation.

Islamic Epistemology

- Muslims believe there are four major sources of (salvational) knowledge in Islam
- The Quran (also referred to as recited Wahi)
- The Sunnah or known practice of the Prophet Muhammad (also known as non-recited Wahi)
- *Ijmaa'* or the consensus of Muslim scholars
- *Qiyas* or legal analogy
- Muslim theologians and jurists look into all four sources for evidence and inspiration

The Role of Islamic Ethics in Jurisprudence

- Two words are used to represent ethics in Arabic: *Aadab* (etiquettes); *Akhlaaq* (moral behavior),
- The former is used for formal behavior and the latter is more general. Ethics as applied to a practice were always assumed to be part of law (*hukm*) and not a separate concern. Muslim jurists would consider theological/ ethical/legal evidence in order to make rulings on issues.

The Role of Islamic Ethics in Jurisprudence

cont.

Examples

- Theological evidence/reasons
- Who has the prerogative to create human beings? (Based on God's Name: The Creator)
- Can human beings facilitate unconventional ways of procreation?
- Who has the prerogative to give life and death? (Based on God's Name: The Life Giver)
- Is there a role for human beings to participate in God's creativity?

Ethical/Islamic legal evidence and reasons

- Islamic law considers human blood impure outside of the body. How does this affect the issue of blood transfusion?
- Extravagance is morally reprehensible. How does a Muslim look at cosmetic surgery?

Methods of evaluating wahi-based evidence

- Methodologies based on Theological Differences
- The *Mu'tazalite* Approach
- God must act in the best interest of His creation.
- Are good and evil absolute?
- The Sunni Approach
- God acts in the best interest of His Creation
- Are good and evil conceivable by the human intellect?

Methodologies based on Jurisprudential Differences

- The principled approach (*usooli*) – deontological or perhaps consequentialist (Islamic) approach.
- The basic guiding principle is whether or not a certain act carries a sin or not
- The utilitarian or necessity based approach where the main criterion is to either facilitate human life and
- Minimize pain and suffering. Sometimes promoting a better standard of living. This approach is known as the *maqasid* (legal objectives) based approach in contemporary Muslim jurisprudence.

Part 2

Islamic Praxis

- An overview of how Muslims incorporated their understanding of ethics in matters of health and medicine

Following the examples of Prophets as role models

- The Prophet Ayyub (Job)
- The perfect patient
- How the Prophet Muhammad advised patients to behave
- Seeking Divine assistance for cure.
- Seeking human assistance for cure.
- Seeking validation for being sick.
- There is no cure for death!

Following the examples of Prophets as role models *cont.*

- Jesus
- The perfect healer (Dr? 😊)
- How the Prophet Muhammad advised healers (tabeeb)
- Who can treat?
- What kind of treatment can be given? (halal/haram)
- When to treat and when not to.
- Types of diseases/illnesses based on diagnosis
- Types of treatment

How Muslims responded to the call of the Prophet Muhammad in matters of health and medicine

- Muslim health care practitioners based on various methodologies and philosophies

Spiritual

- Incantations/ amulets

Psychological

- Counseling
- Therapy through meditation/music

Physical Treatment

- Treatment based on four humors
- Ibn Sina and others

Conveniences and Facilities for patients

- Hospices and Hospitals
- Nurses and Doctors
- Medicine (Drugs?)
- Research into cures...