The Islamic Approach to Ethics in Virtual Space: Distinctions and Methods

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Introduction: The Possibility and Meaning of an Islamic Approach to Ethics in Virtual Space

Abstract

The ethical codes in virtual space according to Western societies (and its followers in other domains) have been compiled based on secularist presupposition. This presupposition has different principles in comparison with the Islamic attitude which can lead one to take a different approach toward ethical instructions. This paper is an attempt to propose the main foundations of the Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space upon which we can introduce special codes of ethics, having evident characteristics of an Islamic approach that are distinguished from secularist views. After a prefatory study on the background of the Islamic attitude to ethics, these characteristics will be propounded under four categories: fundamental and content dimensions, spiritual dimensions, legal dimensions, and penal dimensions. Under these categories, themes such as giving importance to agent goodness, the basic difference in one's goal of living an ethical life, the relation of reason and revelation, and the basis for the legitimacy of the penal justice system will be discussed. Needless to say, this paper does not seek to prepare arguments for this model, and such arguments can be discussed in other philosophical explanations.

Keywords: agent goodness, action goodness, God's commands, duty, right, the penal system

For those for whom the substratum of ethics lies in "divine command," verbalizing religious ethics is a simple practice, because all ethical criteria return to divine commands (Richler, 1387, P. 74-5). However, the quandaries these individuals face on the way, including how to refer the good attributes to the divine, confront them with arduousness. This is because there are no criteria outside of divine commands that we can ascribe these attributes to God and negate some other negative attributes, This quandary is identical to the one that the Ashʿarite perspective grappled with in the world of Islam.

In contrast, if we consider the criterion of ethical injunctive authorizations to be independent of God, we face the notion that divine omnipotence is restricted and His

sovereignty circumscribed. Some Muʿtazelites hold such a view. In the debate between the two sects (the Asharites and the Muʿtazelites), the first was accused of having an invalid perspective on God's unity in attributes, and the second was emphatically described as being suspicious of elaborate dedication to the view of God's unity in action (Mutahhari, 1382, P. 24-8). In the midst of this, the Shia school of Islam—inspired by edifications of immaculate Imams—did not go to either extremes and chose the middle way to be free from mental harm to one of the doctrines of unity in attributes and unity in action in verification or elucidation of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* (intrinsically goodness and badness or rationally goodness and badness). In Shia mentality, *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* do not designate a partial or prejudiced view, as is the case with Platonic forms or ideas. Despite their certitude or conclusiveness, such as the principle of non-contradiction, these concepts are conventional or relative. Hence, they are not made by ingenious action so as to have an engenderer. The secret of the includeness of Divine justice in the main principles of Shia doctrine lies in this insight (P. 29).

If we maintain that ethics is rationally good or deplorable, it is vested in reason to go on a quest of understanding the good and lamentable nature of human thought. Consequently, the viewpoint of divine command will not be communicable. In the meantime, those who study ethics as a secular discipline consider the human mind to be adequate for the procurement of ethical injunctive authorizations. Now, given these considerations, the question can be raised as to whether one can verbalize religious ethics from a general perspective and Islamic ethics in a particular context. In such a case, what prompts us to designate a practice as being derived from Islamic ethics? And what is the distinction between Islamic ethics with a Shia approach and secular ethics?

Applied ethics in the West is based on some foundations that are evaluated and accepted by a secular perspective. What is certain is that the Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space will have many commonalities with the mundane secular ethics in virtual space. However, what are the differences between the two ethics—as pointed out earlier—that can show us the special feature of an Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space?

In many ethical philosophical types of research, investigations have been conducted into the relationship between religion and ethics, but no comprehensive approach covering all dimensions has been presented. In this paper, the major elements distinguishing Islamic and secular ethics will be presented. Predicated on special beliefs about the relation between religion and ethics, this distinguishing line will be the special feature of an Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space (from a Shia perspective). Therefore, to present codes

of ethics in our society, special characteristics of Islamic ethics must be noticed so that it may be called Islami ethics.

To present a code of ethics in virtual space in our society, these categories should be enforced so that one can verbalize an Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space. In this paper, endeavors have been made to show the main elements of an Islamic approach to ethics that will be considered in compiling the Islamic perspective about virtual codes of ethics,. It is hoped that in this way, one can provide ethical codes predicated on an Islamic approach in virtual space that have both prevalent elements of ethical codes and value-oriented elements from an Islamic perspective.

Some Dimensions for an Islamic Approach to Ethics in Virtual Space

Sustentative and Content Dimensions

1-The importance of both goodness of intent of the moral agent and goodness of action and priority of intent of moral agent.

In secular applied ethics, what counts is the practical result or evaluation, predicated on the positive or negative result of the action. Despite obligation-oriented philosophies of ethics, the order governing technological ethics (in general terms and ethics of virtual space in particular) is influenced by the results derived from moral behavior and the evaluation of the goodness or badness of action, predicated on practical criteria and social and individual gains and losses.

Customarily, in formulating a secular code of ethics, fundamental principles (between three to eight principles) constitute the substructure for the composition of ethical codes, and the remaining ethical codes are framed accordingly. In all these primary principlesgoodness of a moral agent that is the intent and purport of the agent performing it, are not considered. For instance, codes in secular medical ethics are not concerned with any of the four substantive principles applying to the goodness of moral agent action. It appears that only the goodness of the results of an action is noticed to the judgment of that action to be ethical (e.s., The principle of utility is exhaustively result-oriented. In this perspective, the intent of the agent is not considered.) The absence of loss and justice are assessed on perceived objective realities. The attention of the agent of moral action to liberation and the free will of others is merely predicated on practical paramountcy for laying the substratum of ethical must and must not.

In an Islamic perspective, apart from the paramountcy accorded to the results of an action, the value of an action is not judged simply by its positive results. "Intent" and inner purport can greatly increase the degree of the virtue of an action or eradicate it (Sobhani, 1379, P. 192-4). "اِنَّ اللهَ لاىَنظُرُ اِلى صُوَرِكُم وَ اَعمالِكُم اِنَّما یَنظُرُ اِلى قُلوبِكُم وَ نِیّاتِكُم" Verily, God does not visually perceive the outward aspect of your action and its practical reflection, but rather considers your hearts and intentions." 1

In secular ethics, one can narrowly find a way to discern the inner intention of individuals and one can ascribe an incentive to an agent of an action merely through objective and superficial reasoning that may greatly differ from the agent's inner intent. Hence, raising the idea of good moral agent action that cannot be assessed quantitatively and is unattainable was brushed aside from the commencement. In fact, if a yardstick cannot be applied, it will be useless to raise it as a criterion.

Meanwhile, even if the intent of performing an action finds paramountcy in the duty-oriented philosophy of ethics, this motive will differ on the various goals and orientations in life. Ethics for ethics will be merely a diminutive goal that makes the value of good agents in a particular limit. If the goal of life is the elevation of humans and proximity to God, one can bear in mind no higher goal for action. In Islamic ethical orders, by bearing in mind good agent action and by considering the highest goal of life (proximity with God), ever more preponderant good agent action in contrast to good action becomes paramount.

Another paramount point is that knowledge of the Almighty and the expedient to know human intentions is one of the most important notions in Islamic thought, and before Him, all obscured angles of human thought and intent are worthy of precise assessment. Consequently, citing this criterion is not only unusable but can also betoken the different manifestations of ethical action.

In moral conduct in virtual space from an Islamic angle, one cannot be content with the positive consequences of one's activity. Very genuine programming projects are required to improve moral activity with regard to the intents of agents'. As an illustration, the standard moral teachings in technology are restricted to indicating ethical norms or training users or designers of technology to act in light of those standards. Some other independent training and instructive methods may be expected to extend good action and elevate its recognition among numerous recipients in the virtual space, so that the two strategies achieve the moral development of authorities involved in cyberspace.

In the meantime, in rewriting ethical recommendations, one should endeavor to specify an instruction for the procedure of an individual's intent besides each instruction on the

goodness or badness of an action. If unassumingness in the presentation of information and respect for the privacy of individuals in virtual space is a good rule to which all officials should be committed, the individual's intent in being committed to this ethical adherence should also be considered. These two exercises (action and intent) guarantee that the action is ethical in a cohesive setting.

2-Goodness in ethical actions is intrinsic but—due to the limits of human reason—humans are in need of divine revelation in order to designate its limits.

From an Islamic point of view, ethics in virtual space should be heeded, as religion is not the basis for an action being good or bad. The theory of divine command cannot be applied as a yardstick for the good and evil nature of an act. Ethical acts are inherently good and, because they are good, they have been made liable to divine command (Tousi, 1367, P. 327). Therefore, humans can get to know the good and evil nature of acts on the basis of their inner nature. Nevertheless, this same human intellect admits its inability to exhaustively perceive the good and evil nature of acts (Sobhani, 1382, 32). Intellect should practically intervene in many factors in order to know whether an act is good or bad, thus calling for various viewpoints to make a judgment. On the other hand, inspired by their primordial nature, humans cannot cling to relativism, because they find themselves to be strongly in need of transhuman intellect to help them inevitably choose either of the two options.

Numerous activities in specific conditions had all the earmarks of being great in the eyes of some mainstream secular scholars. However, after several or hundreds of years, their unfavorable concomitances have surfaced (mechanical and human-arranged ecological outcomes in utilizing science at the beginning of the twentieth century were not under any condition paid notice to by humans, while in the twenty-first century, the criteria for good and abhorrent environmental results altogether changed the meaning of scientific advancement). Because of their restricted information, especially on the results of their behavioral future, humans still need the intellect to empower them to have knowledge of the future and its outcomes for the entire human race, in a harmonious and integrated order of desirable and good things. This type of knowledge of the future lies only within the realm of divine affairs; therefore, humans stand in need of revelation in order to perceive exhaustive cases, and revelation should be a criterion for the knowledge of good things.

Arrangements for the formulation of moral directions in virtual space rely on human judgment to compendiously express the good and evil nature of works. To clear things of obscurity, divine revelation and religious directions are called for to confirm the goodness or badness of those works. Hence, the Islamic way of dealing with morals in virtual space

does not contrast with the secular approach, in many cases being founded on primary and essential contemplations of intellect. In this appreciation, we can well profit from the secular experiences to detail a moral codes archive in virtual space by non-Islamic groups. In any case, it ought to be noticed that these moral codes archives do not adequately treat other fundamental issues, which are appreciated by an Islamic approach.

3-Revelation offers general instructions and a collation of a divine perspective on minor issues is feasible through human intellect.

Understanding revelation is liable to certain rules, made possible in light of proof that is intellect. Since revelation itself refers certain aspects to scientists' intellect, one should obey the intellect as far as those aspects are concerned.

After ethical instructions were evaluated with regard to revelation and were not found to be outside of the authorized realm of revelation, in order to discern more particular cases, revelation itself has recommended humans to refer to their human intellect. Hence, despite the necessity to confirm revelation, knowledge of revelatory matter is attainable by *ijtihād* (independent reasoning and diligent endeavor in performing a certain activity). In such cases, one cannot discover the compatibility of a case with revelation simply through the superficial aspect of revelation. Different requirements—such as intellect in the realm of revelation and human expediencies confirmed by the intellect—are indispensable for practicing *ijtihād* to find out what revelation has actually demanded that humans do. Consequently, the presence of different experts, scientists, and technologists in virtual space plays a determining role in *ijtihād*-oriented discernment. This *ijtihād* should be the result of the intellectual cooperation of religious scholars, officials and experts in virtual space, law experts, scholars of ethics, and philosophers.

To designate particular cases or new questions in ethical matters in virtual space, the presence of a set of the above-cited experts is of utmost necessity. The decision should be made to ethically assess particular actions, revolving around religious scholars, and spot examples, with officials of virtual space serving as an axis. In such cases, the formation of special ethical commissions in scientific and technological circles is of paramount significance.

4-Belief in God, the omnipotent and the all-powerful, triggers the discovery of natural causes, showing the order of divine wisdom while also enabling humans to overpower nature. However, this favorable ground does not count as permissible for any form of science or technology to be outside of divinity.

In their study of the grounds for scientific progress, scientists have considered the bedrock provided by Abrahamic religions to be highly important, due to the belief in God as almighty and all-knowing as well as the encouragement and guidance of the prophets to understand the mysteries of the world. The natural world is subdued to divine knowledge and power. The presupposition of finding the intelligent order of the universe (stemming from a belief in God's absolute knowledge) and of powerful domination over it (arising from the belief in the omnipotence of God) provided the ground for humans' self-belief. However, this ground cannot permit a person to enact any type of mastery over nature. In practicing control over nature, a person ought to pay notice to revelatory guidelines notwithstanding religious teachings (Ayatollahy, 1383, P.71). This matter fuses moral issues of managing the environment with religious deduction, constraining humans to not doing whatever they wish on account of their religious way and conduct. Key religious teachings will work, additionally making one resolved to jurisprudence issues.

Spiritual Dimensions

1-The main value of ethical commands is proximity to God and humans' spiritual and material growth.

This attitude has led to the secular ethical order, in which the good and evil nature of acts is measured simply by the comfort and welfare of people, which cannot be counted as criteria for a comprehensive assessment.

One of the most important challenges of religious ethical orders in a secular value system is the attitude of each of them to humans and their needs and goals in life. This challenge has triggered many questions in religious ethical orders that are very different from a humanistic value system. For the ethical evaluation of the different affairs of virtual space, one cannot regard welfare, physical health, and the enjoyment of people only. In fact, programs should be worked out for an individual's total spiritual and material growth (Meshkini, 1383, P. 3). Since in the Islamic worldview, a person's most consequential goal in life is proximity to God, the administrators of virtual space ought to first carry out any ethical act with the intent of God's gratification (Mutahhari, 1362, P. 84-69). Second, the good or evil nature of all activities in virtual space should be assessed by the totality of spiritual and material magnification. For instance, if one speaks of protecting an individual's privacy in virtual space, this privacy should not provide for the individual's comfort and delectation while at the same time resulting in the eradication of the individual's spiritual life. When there is talk of the absence of injury, not only physical loss but also spiritual loss should be borne in mind. Consequently, no type of activity in virtual space can create an obstacle to spiritual growth, let alone result in the individual's religious

corruption. For this reason, when there is talk of screening sexually motivating images in virtual space, since they ruin spirituality in the individual, privacy for the one who has shown these images attains a different meaning. This privacy cannot then be respected.

2-To discern that a special act is ethical in virtual space, one should evaluate the results, which should both consider the individual's comfort and welfare and pay attention to his/her spiritual growth.

Any sort of decision-making about the good and evil nature of particular acts hinges on a rational examination of the results obtained for the individual and society, while considering expediencies stemming from the result of the action. This process is reflected in *ijtihād*. In discerning the good or evil nature of an action (not an actor or agent), it is not possible to content oneself with mere moral instructions. Rather, these instructions should be measured by the outcomes of that action in society. Therefore, detailed examinations of the results of an action should always be conducted by a group of experts so that the social and individual impacts of an instruction are carefully summed up. Although the ethical perspective in the Islamic mentality is not simply outcome-oriented, this mentality assigns importance to deontological considerations without pursuing the deontological way only. The ethical perspective recommended in the Islamic tradition is closer to a virtue-oriented approach to ethics. In a virtue-oriented approach, both individual differences and the social, intellectual, cultural, and economic grounds of society are given due attention. It is also not content with the designation of duty. Rather, education to train people in ethical values is seriously pursued. The totality of religious teachings in this respect shows Islam's concern for the realization of ethics in society. This indicator is not the distinguishing line between religious ethics and secular ethics, but the assessing aspect of religious ethics.

3-In an Islamic perspective on ethics in virtual space, the world is viewed as the most important ground for humans' spiritual elevation. As a result, the individual's material growth is also important.

In contrast to Christianity (especially that of the Middle Ages), renunciation of the world is not a favorable practice in Islamic ethics. In the ethical system of Islam, fulfillment of all human instinctive and natural needs is considered in a balanced way. وَرُهبانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوها ماكَتَبنا "And we did not ordain renunciation of the world innovated by them" (Christians). (Q 57:27)

Any form of ethical planning ignoring certain aspects of human needs imbalances humans' natural forces. Therefore, Islamic instructions have shown the natural ways and easy fulfillment of all human needs, both material and spiritual. قُل مَن حَرَّمَ زينَةَ اللهِ الَّتى اَخرَجَ لِعِبادِهِ "Say who has forbidden (worldly) ornaments God has provided for His creatures?" (Q 7:32)

The fulfillment of humans' physical and material needs is viewed as an essential condition and necessary preparation for spiritual growth. For this reason, it is valuable to meet humans' mundane requirements. The world is known to be a farm for the hereafter. However humans' physical and material ability is enhanced, the course of their growth can become smoother (Mesbah 1384, P. 275-6). Therefore, ethical instructions in virtual space resulting in the suppression of any type of instinct or natural tendency or the destruction of physical growth cannot be a favorable thing. Rather, the fulfillment of instinct and natural need should be guided toward the course designated by religion.

4-In the Islamic perspective, being adorned with ethical instructions, executive and educational ways have been thought out. The most important of them is to enjoin people to do good deeds and forbid evil acts.

The materialization of ethical instructions should enjoy the necessary executive backbone. For this reason, in an Islamic society, all individual members are responsible for realizing ethical conduct or establishing an ethical relationship between all strata of society. They can accordingly realize, to a greater extent, a society adorned with ethical instructions that is eager and bound to do good things in virtual space and is fed up with indecent behavior. In this area, the Islamic command of urging good practices and forbidding evil acts enjoys paramount significance.

Legal Dimentions

1-Since humans are dependent on God as far as all their existence's dimensions are concerned, they enjoy all the rights granted by God within the limits of His permissions.

This proposition signifies that in no way (whether through the majority of people or interests of society or on account of the justice principle) can humans deprive themselves of their God-given rights. One can interfere with these rights only when permission has been given by God to another individual or community. Hence, humans are not subject to following anyone except God in terms of their rights.

The basis of according legitimacy to ethical instructions in secular orders is the consensus of the sages, the vote of the majority, etc.; this is why the principles of utility or justice cannot contain legitimacy to restrict the principle of the individual's freedom and free will. Therefore, punitive and criminal measures cannot bear legitimacy. In the Islamic legal system, the basis of these rights is divine ownership and divinity. However, the basis of the humanist perspective in the Western modern era is not a negation of God but a negation of His divinity.

Since God is the basis of human rights, humans' freedom and liberty will be confined to the limits authorized by Him (Javadi Amoli 1384, P. 85). This idea does not signify the negation of society's interests, the vote of the majority, or other sources of access to the principles of utility or equity. Rather, one should heed such tools in order to discover divine heavenliness in religious *ijtihād*. However, no other authorities save God can lend the legitimacy of those rights.

2-Due to the limitless wisdom of God, the rights laid down for humans have a philosophy behind them, and some of them can be discovered.

The divine rights and obligations based on the belief in unlimited divine wisdom and knowledge and His generous mercy to His creatures definitely have firm benefit or philosophy. However, this matter does not mean that humans can get to know all these benefits, given their limitations of time and place. Rather, humans can understand some facets of these benefits with their limited and expanding knowledge. In cases when people fail to perceive the expediencies and wisdom of some of these rights and obligations, this is not a reason substantiating that the commands are not based on wisdom.

3-In Islamic teachings, each individual human being has elevated dignity, and God has bestowed on every mankind whatever feature he has a value corresponding to all other human beings.

Attention to human dignity indicates the intrinsic value of human beings and the necessity of observing justice—in the sense of equal rights—among them, unless individuals have been eligible to receive greater rights in corresponding cases, in conformity with their specific features, or are being deprived of certain rights due to some behaviors. Obviously, being deprived of some rights does not necessitate the deprivation of other rights.

In all Abrahamic religions, there is a teaching that murder or restoring an individual human being is equal to murdering or restoring to life all human beings. This fundamental view of the dignity of humankind is so strong that nothing can be taken as its equivalent (Javadi Amoli1384, P. 289). The basis for decision-making on the ethical nature of a given conduct in virtual space will be this outlook on human dignity. For this reason, none of the ethical instructions (such as protection of the dignity of the honor of individuals) can deny this principle. The fundamental principle in any form of ethics in virtual space finds meaning in light of this principle, and also in the principles of free will, utility, the absence of loss, and justice.

Only God as the sustainer of humankind can specify deviation from this right. The restriction of human dignity is also possible with God's command. For this reason, any

restriction of rights in a matter will not deprive one of the other rights. In this field, all human beings are equal.

4-Animals and plants each have rights proportional to their existence. Except for God, no one can deprive them of their rights. For this reason, any form of action in virtual space associated with some sort of destruction of the environment is condemned.

Animals and plants, in proportion to the type of their existence, are entitled to certain rights which cannot be taken away except with God's permission. Even in cases when a person provides the ground for the engendering of vegetation or animals, people have no right to their life because, in this matter, humans are the preparing cause while life is entirely in the continuous grace of God. Preferring the life of a person to that of an animal in a time of conflict between the two or slaughtering animals or exploiting plants is a case of divine permission, which has been granted to humans under special conditions. Some people consider that the reason behind butchering animals in Islam by using the name of God is so that humans acknowledge that this practice was made possible only by divine permission, and that there is no independent right for people to kill animals. What is raised in Christian or Jewish ethics—banning some forms of bioresearch due to them intervening in the divine affairs of creating animals—appears unacceptable in an Islamic ethical perspective, unless the argument is presented that the practice creates corruption on the earth, resulting in unfavorable consequences of the research.

This attitude considers the protection of the environment as one of the ethical principles of any ethical codes document. As a result, any activity in virtual space should consider the protection of the environment.

5-Since many human beings cannot obtain their divine rights, Islamic society should exert all its efforts toward restoring the rights of these individuals, providing them with the right to live a healthy life.

Since the realization of ethical instructions needs penal supports and the warding off of oppression, and granting rights to each who is entitled to a right constitutes some of the duties of the Islamic government and are the most important feature of justice, the Islamic government must plan to take the necessary action anywhere where the rights of individual members of society have been denied in order to retrieve their denied rights (whether they are aware of their rights or not). Consequently, the Islamic government is bound to provide the necessary mechanisms to restore the rights of individuals in virtual space, so that they can provide the restoration of the rights in society using government tools.

Criminal Dimensions

1-The system of reward and punishment in Islamic view is not only a guarantee for good action but also applies to a good agent through the consent or dissent of God, as reflected in otherworldly reward and punishment.

In secular governments, criminal and encouraging incentives are considered to encourage ethical behaviors and are reflected in different frames. The supervisory, judicial, executive, and disciplinary orders safeguard the limits of ethical instruction. It is evident that any of these ways, however extensive, cannot cover all areas (such as unseenable human realms). These orders are a posteriori unable to access the intentions and incentives of individuals who commit an ethical act. However, in religious orders, there is a belief in resurrection and otherworldly rewards and punishments carried out based on humans' actions (in all moments of life and in all overt and covert areas of humankind) and all inner intentions of humans, never neglecting any time and place in humans' lives. Supervisory orders in secular systems are weak compared to the divine supervision of humans' actions and intentions—which are ascribed to divine knowledge in all aspects of human life—as secular orders are able to supervise only a limited scope of human life in ethical terms. فَمَن يَعمَل مِثقالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيراً يَرَهُ وَ مَن يَعمَل مِثقالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرّاً يَرَهُ''Everyone who does an iota of the good act will be rewarded and whoever does an iota of the evil act will be punished." (Q 99:7-8)

Subsequently, in religious systems, the most vital assurance for a moral activity to occur, whether it is remote from the mechanism of rewards and punishments in secular society or it is regarded from the perspective of goodness of agents (that is not at risk of supervision), hereafter remuneration has been considered the best way to ensure the committing of a moral act (Tabatabaei, 206).

Of course, this does not mean that other supervisory and criminal orders in religious systems have been disregarded. Religious orders command many mechanisms for the realization of morality in society other than otherworldly rewards and punishments, constituting a firm collection of supervisory, criminal, legal, and disciplinary systems.

2-Since there is a right versus any duty, ethical obligations in virtual space should be framed in such a way that everyone's rights can be fulfilled.

The designation of all duties of elements involved in virtual space based on the rights of other elements is of great significance. Since observing the duties of all elements associated with virtual space is based on codes of ethics in this virtual space, it is necessary to formulate the duties of all elements engaged in virtual space on the basis of ethical instructions codified in this respect. Obviously, the mere verbalization of individuals'

duties in this regard is not sufficient, because there is a right associated with each duty. Commensurate with the duty, the set of rights on the other side should also be specified (Javadi Amoli, 1384, P. 116), because no right—excluding the right of God—can be unilateral. Therefore, when formulating an ethical charter in virtual space, the duties of beneficiaries of this space should be compiled vis-à-vis each other and in dealing with any other party.

For instance, when formulating the charter of rights of a blog user, in composing the rights of the blog user, the duties of the person initiating the blog should be specified. Likewise, when compiling the rights of the owner of the blog, the duties of the user of the blog should be laid down. Going to both extremes by either side in duties and rights will result in ethical deviation.

3-The actualization of the order to formulate duties designated on the basis of rights calls for a criminal order.

Since in an Islamic society, the government is bound to defend the God-given rights of each and every creature and apply all necessary measures and capabilities required for restoring the rights of individual members of society. Therefore, it should designate the duties of each of those somehow engaged in the virtual space based on his/her duties. It should also create a penal order for violators of these duties and rewards for those fulfilling them, along with the necessary tools to enforce this system of punishments and rewards. Finally, it should employ the necessary executive leverages to give expression to the penal order (Javadi Amoli, 1384, P. 124).

Accordingly, the formulation of ethics in virtual space should be completed in the following order, from top to bottom:

- Ethical instructions.
- Designation of the duties of the second party versus the first party.
- Designation of the duties of the first party versus the second party.
- Designation of the rights of the first party involved in virtual space.
- Designation of the rights of the second party in the virtual space.
- Designation of a system that rewards and punishes those who act according to these duties and those who violate the duties.
- Designation of mechanisms for locating those fulfilling the duties and the violators.
- Determining executive mechanisms for rewarding and punishing.

Recapitulation

Despite the fact that in a Shia view on ethics, the rational good and evil nature of an action is the criterion, an ethical perspective in Islamic thought displays some differences with secular ethics in some affairs, making it distinct from secular, Christian, Asharite, and those who based their ethics on *Hadiths*. For the formulation of an Islamic attitude to ethics in virtual space, specific and fundamental considerations should be taken into account, so that its Islamic spirit is preserved. This approach pays attention to the good agent as well in its fundamental and content-related aspects, confirming in detail the inability of the intellect to assess all ethical aspects. Consequently, it finds itself in need of the guidelines of divine revelation. For more detailed cases, too, the intellect conducts *ijtihād* of based on the teachings of revelation. All these directions are expressed in accordance with God's divinity.

The spiritual component of an Islamic approach to ethics does not consider ethics to be mere attention to humans' material welfare and comfort. Rather, its main concern is humans' material growth and spiritual elevation—which is like a divine propensity—viewing both as equally significant in a balanced system.

From a legal aspect, it has set up *sharī'a* (Islamic law), which views the rights of all creatures in light of the divine and considers the base of the legitimacy of ethical activities to be divine governance and lordship. The negation of this right is not possible except through the course of divine permission. God points out munificence for humans; in which, lives and deference of each person are regarded as humans' entire lives and deference. Ethical instructions should be constituted on divine giving rights.

To enforce ethics, Islam is not content simply with admonitory advice; it has considered a penal system for actualizing the rights of human beings and adorning them with divine ethics that is given due regard in Islam's penal order, whose most important part is the system of the otherworldly rewarding and punishing.

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