



## Characteristics of an Islamic View of Cyber-Ethics

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### Abstract

Original Research



The current Cyber-ethics in Western societies (and its followers in other societies) 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 problems. This paper is an attempt to propose principles of Islamic cyber-ethics upon which we can prepare answers for the problems of cyber-ethics, having evident characteristics of an Islamic approach that are distinguished from secularist answers. After a prefatory study on the background of the Islamic attitude to ethics, these characteristics will be propounded under four categories: fundamental and content components, spiritual components, legal components, and penal components. 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 investigations.

### Keywords

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

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## Introduction

The possibility and meaning of an Islamic perspective to ethics in virtual.

**space:** For those for whom the substratum of ethics lies in "divine command," verbalizing religious ethics is a simple practice because all ethical criteria come back to the divine commands (Richler, 1387, p. 74-75). However, these individuals are confronted with many difficulties; for example, a reference to the good attributes of the divine, because there are no criteria outside of divine commands so that God would be associated with those attributes, being taken as glorified from other attributes. This quandary is identically tantamount to the one the *Ash'arite* perspective grappled with in the Islamic world.

In contrast, if we consider the criterion of ethical injunctive authorizations to be independent of God, we will be faced with the notion that divine omnipotence is restricted and His sovereignty circumscribed. Some of the *Mu'tazelites* hold such a view. In the debate between the two sects, the first one was blamed for holding an invalid perspective on God's unity in attributes. The second group was emphatically described as being suspicious of elaborate dedication to the view of God's unity in action (Mutahhari, 1382, p. 24-28). However, the Shia school of Islam, inspired by the edifications of immaculate Imams, abstained from going into either extreme and chose the middle way to prevent any mental harm in relation to unity in attributes and unity in action in verification or elucidation of *husn* and *qubh* (intrinsically good and indecent deeds or rational good and indecent deeds). The secret of the inclusiveness of Theodicy or Divine Justice in the Shia doctrine lies in this insight. (p. 29).

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

Applied ethics in the west is constituted on a substratum evaluated and accepted with 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 differences lie in the

two ethics – as pointed out earlier – to show the special feature of an Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space?

In many ethical philosophical types of research, investigations have been conducted about the cognition of 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 the subsisting notions regarding cognition of religion and ethics, this distinguishing line will be the special feature of an Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space (from a Shiite perspective). Some of these categories appraise the Islamic approach and some others assess it.

As the result, to present the code of ethics in virtual space in our society, these categories should be enforced so that one can verbalize the Islamic approach to ethics in virtual space. In this paper, efforts have been made to show the main elements of an Islamic approach considered in compiling ethical codes documents, not to mention the points highlighted in composing the above-cited ethical codes documents. It is hoped that in this way one can provide for ethical codes predicated on an Islamic approach in virtual space to have both the prevalent elements of ethical codes and the value-oriented elements of an Islamic perspective.

## **Categories for an Islamic Approach to Ethics in Virtual Space**

### **1. Sustentative and Content Categories**

1-1. Importance of both good moral agent and good moral action in moral action and value-oriented priority to moral agent:

In secular applied ethics what counts is that the practical result or evaluation predicates the positive or negative result of actions. Despite obligation-oriented philosophies of ethics, the order governing technological ethics (in general terms and ethics of virtual space in particular) is under the influence of the results derived from a moral department and evaluation of the good and evil nature of an action predicated on practical criteria and convivial and individual gains and losses.

Customarily, in formulating a secular code of ethics, fundamental principles (between 3 to 8 principles) constitute the substructure for the composition of ethical codes and the remaining ethical codes are framed accordingly. In all these primary principles, a good moral action that is the intent and purport of the agent for performing the action is not given due attention. For instance, such codes of ethics in secular medical ethics are not concerned with any of the four substantive principles applying to good moral agent action. It appears

that only good results of an action predicate the judgment of an action being ethical.

The principle of utility is exhaustively result-oriented. In this perspective, the intent of the agent is not considered. The absence of loss and equity predicated on perceived objective realities out of action is assessed. The attention of the agent of moral action to the liberation and free will of others is merely predicated on it being practically paramount for laying the substratum of ethical do's and don't's.

In the Islamic perspective, apart from the dominance accorded to the results of an action, the value of an action is not judged simply by the positive results of the action. "Intent" and inner purport can greatly increase the degree of action or eradicate it (Sobhani, 1379, p. 192-194).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ إِنَّمَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَنِيَّاتِكُمْ

"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 barely find a way to discern the inner intentions of individuals and can ascribe the incentive to an agent of the action merely through objective and superficial conditions, something that may greatly differ from one's inner intent. Hence, raising the conception of a good moral agent action that cannot be assessed quantitatively and is unattainable was brushed aside from the start. In fact, if a criterion cannot be applied, it will be useless to raise it as one.

In addition, even if intent for doing an act of performing obligation finds dominance in the obligation-oriented philosophy of ethics, this motive will differ predicated on the variants of goals and orientations in life. Ethics for ethics will merely be a diminutive goal that makes valuable good agents within the particular limits. If the goal of life is the elevation of humans and proximity with 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 given the fact that the knowledge of the Almighty and the advantage of knowing 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 not useless but can also betoken the different manifestations of ethical action.

In a moral conduct, in virtual space with an Islamic angle, you cannot be

content with the positive consequences of your activity. Very genuine programming projects must be proposed for the improvement of moral activity with regards to reason. As an example, the standard moral teachings in technology are restricted merely to indicate ethical norms or train clients users or designers of technology to act in light of those standards. Some other independent training and instructive methods may be expected for the extension of good action and elevation of its recognition in the midst of numerous recipients inside virtual space so that the two strategies would achieve moral development of the authorities involved in cyberspace.

Besides, in rewriting ethical command in all cases, one should endeavor to consider an instruction for the procedure of intervention of an individual's intent beside each instruction on ethical action. If being unassuming in the presentation of information and respect for the privacy of individuals in virtual space is a good recitation to which all officials should be committed, the individual's intent in being committed to this ethical precept should also be embedded. These two exercises (action and intent) guarantee the action being ethical in a cohesive setting.

1-2. Goodness in ethical actions is intrinsic but due to restrictions of human reason man is 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 to be 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, man can get to know the good and evil nature of acts on the basis of his/her inner nature. Nevertheless, this same intellect admits its inability in the exhaustive perception of the good and evil nature of acts (Sobhani, 1382, p. 32). Intellect should practically intervene in many factors to know whether an act is good or bad, thus calling for various viewpoints to make a judgment. On the other hand, inspired by his primordial nature, man cannot cling to relativism, because he finds himself to be strongly in need of a trans-human intellect to help him inevitably choose either of the two options.

Numerous activities in specific conditions had all the earmarks of being great in the sight of some mainstream secular scholars. In any case, after several years 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 was not under any condition paid heed to by man while in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the criteria for good and abhorrent acts altogether changed investigative advancement). Because of his restricted information, especially of the results of his behavioral future, man

remains needy of the abovementioned intellect to empower him to have knowledge of the future and its outcomes in the whole human group and 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, man stands in need of revelation for the perception of 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 in expressing compendiously the good and evil nature of actions. To make things clear and unambiguous, divine revelation and religious directions are called for to confirm them. Hence, the Islamic way to deal with morals in virtual space does not contrast with the secular approach in many cases; being founded on the primary and essential contemplations of the intellect. In this appreciation, we can well profit from the encounters to detailing moral codes archives in virtual space done by non-Islamic groups. In any case, it ought to be noted that these moral codes archives do not adequately treat other fundamental issues that are appreciated by the Islamic approach.

1-3. Revelation offers general instructions and the collation of the divine perspective to minor issues is feasible through human intellect.

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

After ethical instructions were gauged with revelation and were not outside of the authorized realm of revelation, in order to discern more particular cases, revelation itself has recommended man to refer to the human intellect. Hence, despite the necessity to confirm revelation, knowledge of revelatory matter is attainable by *ijtihad* (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. As such, different requirements such as the intellect in the realm of revelation and human expediencies confirmed by the intellect are indispensable for practicing *ijtihad* to find out what revelation has actually demanded man to do. Consequently, the presence of different experts, scientists, and technologists in virtual space plays a determining role in *ijtihad*-oriented discernment. This *ijtihad* 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 for the ethical assessment of particular actions



revolving around religious scholars and spotting examples with the 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.

1- 4. Although belief in God, the omnipotent and the all-powerful triggers discovery of the natural causes, shows the order of divine wisdom, and also enables man to overpower nature. However, this favorable ground does not count permissible any form of science or technology to be outside of the divinity.

In a study of the grounds for scientific progress, scientists have considered highly important the bedrock provided by Abrahamic religions due to belief in God 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 submissive to divine knowledge and power. Presupposition to find the intelligent order of the universe (stemming from a belief in God's absolute knowledge) and powerful domination over it (arising from the belief in the omnipotence of God) provided the ground for man's self-belief. Notwithstanding, this ground can't allow man to have any type of mastery over nature. In controlling nature, man ought to pay notice to the brilliant guidelines provided by religious teachings (Ayatollahy, 1383, p.71). This matter transforms moral issues managing the environment into religious deduction that binds human beings not to do whatever he wishes on account of the religious way and conduct. Key religious teachings will additionally work, making one resolved to take after *fiqh*-related issues.

## 2. Spiritual Components

2-1. The main value in ethical commands is proximity to God and man's spiritual and material growth. This attitude has caused the secular ethical order in which the good and evil nature of acts is measured simply by the comfort and welfare of people not to be counted as the criteria for a comprehensive assessment.

One of the most important challenges of religious ethical orders with a secular value system is the attitude of each of them to man and his needs and goal in life. This difference has triggered many questions regarding religious ethical orders being quite different from a humanistic value system. For the ethical evaluation of different affairs of virtual space, one cannot merely pay heed to welfare, physical health, and the enjoyment of people. In fact, programs should be worked out for the individual's total spiritual and material growth (Meshkini, 1383, p. 3). Since in the Islamic world view man's most consequential goal in life is proximity to God, firstly, the administrators of

virtual space ought to perform all ethical acts with the intention of attaining God's gratification (Mutahhari, 1362, p. 69-84).

Secondly, 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 verbalizes the forefending individual's privacy in virtual space, this privacy should not provide for the individual's comfort and delectation while resulting in the eradication of an 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 for spiritual growth, not even resulting in the individual's religious corruption. For this reason, when there is the talk of screening sexually motivating images in virtual space, since it ruins spirituality in the individual, privacy for the one who has shown the program will find a different meaning. This privacy cannot then be respected.

2-2. To discern a special act being ethical in virtual space, one should have an evaluation of the results that should consider both the individual's comfort and welfare as well as 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 advantages stemming from the result of the action. This process is reflected in *ijtihad*. In discerning the good and evil nature of actions (not the actor or agent), it will not be possible to content oneself with mere moral instructions. Rather, this instruction should be measured by the outcomes of that action in society.

Therefore, detailed examinations of the results of action should always be conducted by a group of experts so that the social and individual impacts of instructions would be carefully summed up. Although the ethical perspective in Islamic thought is not simply outcome-oriented, it gives importance to deontological considerations without merely pursuing the deontological way. Ethical perspectives recommended in the Islamic tradition are closer to the virtue-oriented approach to ethics. In the virtue-oriented approach, both individual differences and the social, intellectual, cultural, and economic grounds of society are given due attention. It is not also content with the designation of duty. Rather, education for training people in ethical values is followed seriously. 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 of religious ethics and secular ethics, but the assessing aspect of religious ethics.

2-3. In the Islamic perspective to ethics in virtual space, the world is viewed as the most important ground for man's spiritual elevation. As the result, the individual's material growth is also important.



In contrast to Christianity (especially in the Middle Ages), renunciation of the world is not a favorable practice. In Islam's ethical system, the fulfillment of all human instinctive and natural needs is considered in a balanced way.

وَرُهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَا

And we did not ordain the renunciation of the world innovated by them (Christians)

Any form of ethical planning ignoring certain aspects of man's needs imbalances all the human forces in man. Therefore, Islamic instructions have shown the natural ways and easy fulfillment of all human needs; both material and spiritual.

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ

Say who has forbidden the (worldly) ornaments God has provided for His creatures?

Fulfillment of man's physical and material needs is viewed as an essential condition and necessary preparation for spiritual growth. For this reason, it is valuable to meet man's mundane requirements. The world is known to be a farm for the hereafter. However, if man's physical and material ability is enhanced, the course of his growth can also become smoother (Mesbah 1384, p. 275-276). Therefore, ethical instructions in virtual space resulting in the suppression of any type of instinct or natural tendency or destroying physical growth cannot be a favorable thing. Rather, the fulfillment of instinctive and natural needs should be guided towards the course designated by religion. This indicator is the assersive aspect and not one that distinguishes Islamic ethics.

2-4. In the Islamic perspective, executive and educational ways of being adorned with ethical instructions have been laid out. Enjoining good deeds and forbidding evil acts with its conditions is the most important of them.

The materialization of ethical instructions should enjoy the necessary executive backbone. For this reason, in an Islamic society, all individual members of society are responsible for giving reality to 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 and eager and bound to do good things in virtual space and being fed up with indecent behavior. In this area, the Islamic command of enjoining to good practices and forbidding evil acts, in its extended concept that contains all mechanisms for the realization of what is good and avoiding what is bad, enjoys paramount significance.

### 3. Legal Components

3-1. Since man is dependent on God as far as all his existence dimensions are concerned, he enjoys all the rights entitled to be granted by God within the limits of authorization.

This proposition signifies that in no way (whether seen by the majority of people or interests of society and on account of the justice principle) can anyone deprive man of his God-given rights. One can interfere in this right only when the permission has been given by God to another individual or community. So, man is not subject to follow anyone else save God in terms of his rights.

The basis of according legitimacy to ethical instructions in secular orders is the consensus of rational human beings or vote of the majority, etc. and that is why the principles of utility or justice cannot be legitimate in restricting 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 new age is not a negation of God but a negation of His divinity.

Since God is the basis of human beings' rights, his freedom and liberty will be confined as far as the limit authorized by Him (Javadi Amoli 1384, p. 85). This idea does not signify the negation of society's interests or vote of the majority or other sources for access to the principle of utility or equity. Rather, such tools should be heeded for the discovery of divine heavenliness in religious *ijtihad*. However, no other authorities save God can lend legitimacy to it.

3-2. Due to the limitless wisdom of God, the rights laid down for man is due to some philosophy behind it; some of which 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 a firm reason or philosophy. However, this matter does not mean that man can get to know all these reasons given his limitations of time and place. Rather, man can understand some facets of these interests with his limited and expanding knowledge. In cases when man fails to perceive the reasons and wisdom of some of these rights and obligations, this is not reason enough to substantiate that the commands are not based on wisdom.

3-3. In Islamic teachings, each individual human being has an elevated dignity and God has bestowed man with whatever feature, 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 the individuals have been eligible for receiving greater rights in

corresponding cases in conformity with one's specific features or being deprived of certain rights due to some conduct. Obviously, being deprived of some rights does not necessitate 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 the entire humankind. This fundamental view of the dignity of humankind is much that nothing can be taken as its equivalent (Javadi Amoli, 1384, p. 289). The basis for decision-making on the ethical nature of a given conduct in virtual space will be with this outlook on human dignity. For this reason, none of the ethical instructions (like the protection of the dignity and 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, like free will, utility, the absence of loss, and justice.

Only God as the Sustainer of humankind can specify deviation from this right. Restriction in human dignity is also possible with God's command. For this reason, any restriction of rights in a matter will not deprive one of other rights. In this field, all human beings are equal.

3-4. Animals and plants each have rights proportional to their existence. Except for God, no one can deprive them of their right. 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 that cannot be dispossessed unless with God's permission. Even in cases when man provides the ground for the emergence of vegetation or animals, man has no right to their life because in this matter man is a numerical cause while life is entirely in flux thanks to the continuous grace of God. Preferring the life of man to 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 man with special conditions. Some people consider the secret of butchering animals in Islam by using the name of God is to give regard to the point that man should know that this practice has been made possible only by divine permission and that there is no independent right for man to kill animals. What is raised in Christian or Jewish ethics banning some bio researches due to being an intervention in divine affairs of creating animals appears to be unacceptable in the Islamic ethical perspective unless one presents the argument that the practice creates corruption on the land, resulting in unfavorable consequences in the research.

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

3-5. Since many human beings cannot obtain their divine rights; therefore, Islamic society should exert all its efforts to restore the rights of these individuals and provide the right to live a healthy life.

Since the materialization of justice and warding off oppression is one of the duties of the Islamic government and the most important feature of justice and granting rights to each one who is entitled to a right, therefore, the Islamic government plans to take the necessary actions where ever the rights of some individual members of society have been denied to retrieve their denied rights (whether they are aware of their rights or not). Consequently, the Islamic government is bound to provide the necessary mechanism for restoring the rights of individuals in virtual space so that he/she can provide for the restoration of the rights in society using the tools provided by the government.

#### 4. Criminal Components

4-1. The system of reward and punishment in the Islamic attitude is not only a guarantee for good actions but also applies to the good agent by the consent or dissent of God being reflected in otherworldly reward and punishment.

In secular perspectives, criminal and encouraging ways are considered for ethical behaviors being reflected in different frames. The supervisory, judicial, executive, and disciplinary orders safeguard the limits of ethical instructions. It is evident that any form of these ways, however extensive, cannot cover many of the areas (such as hidden human scopes). These perspectives are a posteriori more unable than accessing the intentions and incentives of individuals in performing an ethical act. However, in religious perspectives, belief in resurrection and otherworldly rewards and punishments are meted out based on man's actions (in all moments of life and in all overt and covert areas of humankind) and all inner intentions of human beings, never neglecting any time and place in man's life. Supervisory ideologies in secular systems are very weak compared to divine supervision over man's actions and intentions which are ascribed to divine knowledge in all aspects of human life, being able only to supervise a limited scope of human life in ethical terms.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

Everyone who does an iota of good acts will be rewarded and whoever does an iota of evil acts will be punished.

Subsequently, in religious requests, the most vital assurance for moral activity, whether being remote from the above component or from the perspective of good specialists (that is not at risk of supervision), is the supernatural

discipline and remunerate which has been considered as the best insurer of performing moral acts. (Tabatabaei, p. 206).

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

4-2. Since there is a right versus any duty, ethical obligations in virtual space should be framed in a way that everyone's rights can be fulfilled.

Designation of all the duties of the 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 virtual space, it is necessary to formulate duties of all elements engaged in virtual space on the basis of ethical instructions codified in this respect. Obviously, mere verbalization of the individuals' duties in this respect is not sufficient, because there is a right for each side in the face of every duty. Commensurate with that duty, the set of the rights of 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 ethical charters in virtual space, the duties of the beneficiaries in virtual space should be compiled in face of each other and in dealing with any other side.

For instance, in the charter of the rights of the user of a blog, in composing the rights of the user of a blog, the duties of the person initiating the blog should be specified. Likewise, in 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 will result in ethical deviation.

4-3. Actualization of the order to formulate duties designated on the basis of rights calls for criminal order.

Since in Islamic society the government is bound to defend the God-given rights of each and every creature and to apply all the necessary measures and capabilities required for restoring the rights of the individual members of society, therefore, it should designate the duties of each of those somehow engaged in the virtual space based on these duties. It should also provide for a penal order for violators of those duties and reward those fulfilling the duties along with the necessary tools for enforcing the system of punishment and reward. Finally, it should employ the necessary executive leverages for giving 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 side versus the first side

Designation of the duties of the first side versus the second side

Designation of the rights of the first party involved in virtual space

Designation of the rights of the second party in virtual space

Designation of the system of rewarding and punishing those acting according to the duties and those violating the duties

Designation of the mechanism for locating the persons fulfilling the duties and the violators

Determining the executive mechanism for reward and punishment

## Recapitulation

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

The Islamic view of ethics in its spiritual component does not consider ethics to merely be paying attention to man's material welfare and comfort. Rather, its main concern is man's material growth and spiritual elevation – that is like divine propensity – viewing both as equally significant in a balanced system.

From a legal aspect, it has also set up a Sharia (Islamic Law) that 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 divine permission. God is munificence to man; this benevolence is regarded as man's entire life and deference. Ethical instructions should be constituted on divine right.

To enforce ethics, Islamic 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 which is given due regard in Islam's penal order; the most important part of which is the system of otherworldly rewarding and punishing.



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