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Muslim Moralists' Contributions to Moderation Theory in Ethics

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Abstract

Originally introduced by Plato and Aristotle, Moderation Theory in Ethics is the most prevalent theory of ethics among Islamic scholars. Moderation Theory suggests that every virtue or excellence of character lies in the mean between two vices: excess or defect. Every ethical virtue comes from moderation in actions or emotions and every ethical vice comes from excess or defect. This paper suggests that while Islamic scholars have been influenced by this doctrine, they have also developed and re-conceptualized it in innovative ways. Kindī, Miskawayh, Avicenna, Rāghib Isfahānī, Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭusī, and others are among the Islamic contributors to the subject. Some of their innovations in this theory are as follows: bringing together Aristotle's doctrine of the mean with Plato's psychology (by Kindī), dividing virtues into four higher genuses, dividing vices into eight higher genuses, setting various kinds of vices and virtues under these higher genuses (by Miskawayh), adding the vice qualitative criteria to Aristotle's vice quantitative

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criteria (excess and defect) (by Ṭusī), dividing various conceptualizations of justice (by Avicenna), adding religious and mystical virtues into the existing list of virtues (by Rāghib Isfahānī), and proposing a comprehensive model for curing diseases of the soul. This paper seeks to establish the main contributions of these Muslim scholars to Moderation Theory and elaborate on this theory's evolution within the Islamic world.

Keywords: Islamic Ethics, Moderation Theory, Doctrine of the Mean, Virtues, Vices.

Introduction

The doctrine of the mean is one of the versions of virtue ethics in normative ethics according to which all moral virtues lie between two extremes of excess or defect. To attain excellence of character, one must observe moderation in all actions and feelings. The doctrine of the mean (as introduced by Aristotle and Plato), was advocated by many scholars in the Islamic world, and developed in the course of history. The current study addresses the evolution of the doctrine of the mean in the Islamic world as devised by Islamic scholars.

1. Moderation Theory in Ancient Greece

1-1. Plato

Plato, as the founder of the doctrine, regarded human soul to be of three aspects or parts: reason, spirit, and appetite (Plato, 1968, 436b). Thus, reason seeks to find the truth; spirit seeks pleasure in obtaining power, glory, and fame; and appetite desires to attain advantage, enjoy eating and drinking, seek sensual pleasure, and acquire wealth (Plato, 1968, 581a, 580e).

Plato believes that happiness is a combination of the following: 1) intellective knowledge, 2) moral virtues, and 3) sensual pleasure (Copleston, 1993, 1, p. 218). In order to obtain moral virtues, two conditions are required: first, submissiveness of spirit and appetite to reason, and second, the moderation of these two aspects in practice. According to Plato, reason reaches perfection via external training, and the golden mean does not apply to it. An education of the soul and the body results in a harmony or concordance of reason and spirit. Reason is fortified by literature, music, and knowledge. Spirit is managed and kept under control in the light of

melody and rhythm. These two parts are to be trained before they can command the third part of the soul (appetite) which is the most insatiable of all parts. They are to stop appetite from enjoying itself too much, for otherwise it will gradually grow more powerful, seeking to rule over the two other parts. Appetite does not deserve to have the authority, for if this be the case, the soul will be obliterated (Plato, 1968, 442a). If these two conditions are observed, moderation in appetite results in "temperance", while moderation in spirit leads to "courage". By training reason, "wisdom" is accomplished. When these three aspects of the soul accomplish virtuous conduct, such a combination results in a forth virtue in the soul which is called "justice".

Regarding the two above-mentioned conditions, Plato thus writes on temperance: "For most people, temperance consists of obedience to authority and self-control in eating, drinking, and lust" (Plato, 1968, 388e).

Plato believed that temperance is "a harmony and self-control in pleasures and desires" (Plato, 430 e), and that it can only be accomplished by observing moderation. Next, Plato regards self-indulgence as the vice opposite to temperance (Plato, 1968, 405a). Plato also observes that moderation applies to courage and good temper and says: "violence is the origin of the will power. If it is trained appropriately, it will result in courage; when in extreme, it would become unbearable" (Plato, 1968, 410d) and "when in extreme, good temper turns into irascibility; yet if trained appropriately, it turns into kindness and compassion" (Plato, 1968, 410d).

Clearly, Plato uses the concept of moderation with regard to appetite and spirit, and not reason. His emphasis on appetite is stronger than spirit. Also, his emphasis on restraining the former is stronger than its defect. This is because most people are prone to self-indulgence.

1-2. Aristotle

Aristotle presents the doctrine of the mean more comprehensively and as an ethical theory. After regarding happiness as an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue, he contemplates on the nature of "virtue" so as to shed light on the nature of happiness. Clearly, Aristotle observes, the objective is the human virtue, for we seek man's happiness. Moreover, the aim is the virtue of human *soul* and not body, because we regarded happiness as an activity of the soul (Aristotle, 2009,

1102a). Thus, Aristotle first addresses psychology. He is not of the same opinion as Plato to regard the soul to be of three aspects. Aristotle believes that the soul is composed of two elements: the rational element, which is responsible for thinking and reasoning, and the irrational element of the soul which is in turn divided into two parts. The vegetative element, which is responsible for eating and drinking and can be found in plants and other creatures which grow (such as seeds and embryos) (hence also called the force of growth). This element of the soul has no share of reason. The other irrational element of the soul is the erotic or animal soul which is responsible for appetites and desires. According to Aristotle, this element of the soul is capable of hearing the order of reason and obeying it, so it enjoys a share of reason. In continent man, this element of the soul obeys reason, but in incontinent people it refuses to obey reason. This irrational element of the soul can accomplish perfection. The rational element of the soul (or the rational soul) is what differentiates man from animals and the perfection of human soul depends on it (Aristotle, 2009, 1102a-1103a).

Based on this distinction amongst the faculties of the soul, Aristotle divides virtues in two: intellectual virtues (including theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom) are of the intellectual part of the soul, while moral virtues (such as temperance and liberality) are of the irrational/animal element of the soul (Aristotle, 2009, 1103a).

Virtue, Aristotle holds, is a disposition which "is a result of willful choice". Hence, one must first know what to choose. Addressing this question, he refers to the doctrine of the mean and suggests that one must endeavor to observe it in all times. Since we regard best activities to be the most virtuous ones, and since ethical virtues are always in moderation, thus the best activity is observing moderation. All ethical virtues are in observing moderation and observing moderation leads to ethical virtue. On the contrary, over-indulgence or excessive abstinence in every matter leads to flaws and moral vices. Aristotle thus declares his account of the doctrine of the mean: "hence in respect of what it is, i.e. the definition which states its essence, virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme" (Aristotle, 2009, 1107a); "Now virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and being praised and being successful are both

characteristics of virtue" (Aristotle, 2009, 1106b).

Aristotle highlights the fact that the doctrine of the mean applies only to ethical virtues and not all virtues (including intellectual virtues) (Aristotle, 2009, 1106b). In Book II of *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle gives his account of virtue. In the next three books he presents more details on the subject: Courage is the mean with regard to the feelings of cowardice and imprudence (Aristotle, 2009, 1115a). Temperance (a matter of pleasure and pain) is a virtue that is the mean with regard to the feelings of self-indulgence and insensibility (Aristotle, 2009, 1118b). Liberality (a matter of giving and taking of wealth, and especially in respect of giving) is the mean with regard to prodigality and meanness (Aristotle, 2009, 1119a). Pride, which is intermediate between being vain and humble, is a virtue with regard to dignity, nobility and graciousness (Aristotle, 2009, 1123b). Justice is the virtue that is intermediate between acting unjustly and being unjustly treated (Aristotle, 2009, 1133 b). And thus Aristotle elaborates on ethical virtues and their excesses or defects.

2. Moderation Theory in Islamic Ethics

The doctrine of the mean originated in ancient Greece, yet it spread widely among the Islamic philosophers and scholars, who contemplated on its various aspects. Revisiting it in the light of a novel religious orientation, they have re-constructed it in accordance with Islamic perspectives and ideals. This happened because the doctrine of the mean was highly compatible with Islamic sources, The Qurān, and the Prophet's tradition (Sunnah). In various verses and narrations, moderation is encouraged while excesses and defects are prohibited. Examples include: "and do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you should [afterwards] sit down blamed, stripped off" (Qurān 17: 29); "eat and drink, but be not extravagant. He does not love the extravagant" (Qurān 7: 31). And the holy prophet of Islam said: "Observing the mean is the best of actions" (Majlisī, 1403, p. 211); and Ali, the first Imam of Shia, said: "The best in doing things is standing on the middle-road; the ones who have gone ahead will have to come back, and the ones who are behind, will have to catch up" (Tamīmī Āmudī, 1420, p. 404).

2-1. Yaʿqūb Ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī

Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī (ca. 800–870 CE) was the first self-identified philosopher in the Arabic tradition. He worked with a group of translators who rendered works of Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, and Greek mathematicians and scientists into Arabic. Al-Kindī was a member of the Arab tribe of Kinda, which had played an important role in the early history of Islam (Adamson, *2015)*. In the literature of Islamic ethics, Kindī is the first to have introduced the doctrine of the mean. In his treatise *Fī Hudūd Al-ʾAshyāʾ Wa Rūsūmihā* (*On Definitions and Descriptions of Things*), he briefly addresses ethical virtues. His approach to the virtue ethics is Platonic-Aristotelian one.

2-1-1. Psychology

In *Discourses on the Soul*, Kindī is Platonic one. Like Plato, he regards three souls for human being: rational, animal, and vegetative souls. Kindī believes that the rational soul comes from the divine light, and that on its departure from the body at the time of death, it gains knowledge on all things in the universe (Kindī, 1369 A.H., p. 274).

Kindī defines virtue as good moral qualities, which is of two kinds: the first kind is in human soul and the second kind is in human body which is created as a result of ethical virtues. Ethical virtues, in turn, are dived into three kinds: wisdom, courage, and temperance. In order to elaborate on these virtues he writes:

> Wisdom is the virtue of the rational faculty – and it is the universal knowledge of the reality of things and the knowledge of applying those realities. But courage is the virtue of the dominant faculty and its definition is to think lightly of death in order to draw what is ought to be drawn and dispel what is ought to be dispelled. But temperance is to eat whatever that is necessary to eat in order to keep the body healthy and avoiding the rest. Each of these virtues is the foundation for all other virtues (Kindī, 1369 A.H., pp.178-177).

2-1-2. The Doctrine of the mean

After he elaborates on the faculties of the soul and its virtues as introduced by Plato, Kindī refers to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean and defines two vices for each virtue (both excess and defect) (Kindī, 1369 A.H., p. 178). Yet Kindī is different from Aristotle in the sense that he applies the doctrine of the mean to the three faculties

of the soul. Also, he regards ethical virtues which are virtues of the soul as a result of a moderation in faculties of the soul, and ethical vices as a result of their excess or defect in their desires and actions. As the faculty of reason is utilized in excess, vices of imprudence, deception, and trickery appear. Kindī does not mention a defect for this faculty. The moderation of the faculty of anger is "courage", its excess and defect resulting in the two vices of audacity (rashness) and cowardice respectively. Although mentioning the virtue of temperance (chastity) Kindī does not mention appetite, he mentions the vices that are a result of failing to observe moderation in temperance: its defect results in the vice of abating passions *(kisālat)* and its kinds; its excess results in the vice of greed which has in turn three sub-categories. Greed in food and drinks is called covetousness *(sharah)*; greed in marriage and sex results in adultery and debauchery *(fisq)*; and greed in accumulating wealth which leads to jealousy. Kindī regards the virtue of "justice" as the comprehensive virtue of the faculties of the soul the opposite of which is the vice called "unfairness" (Kindī, 1369 A.H., p. 179).

Thus the first turning point in the literature of the doctrine of the mean in the Islamic world is bringing together Plato's psychology with Aristotle's moderation rule. Although Plato highlighted observing moderation in the two faculties of appetite and spirit, he did not apply this rule to the faculty of reason. Plato does not mention the excess and defect of the faculties and the soul's major vices. Neither does Aristotle apply the doctrine of the mean to the actions of the faculties of the soul. It is Kindī who first applies the moderation rule to the actions of all three faculties of the soul. Since then, all Islamic scholars have done the same, bringing together Plato's psychology and Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. The rationale behind such innovation by Kindī might be that, Islamic philosophers generally regard the soul and its faculties as the major source for man's actions, be they noble or evil. This is to say that man's deeds reflect his inner desires. Hence, ethical reform may be attained by a reforming of faculties of the soul. If man can restrain the faculties of the soul, he can hope to stand on a more solid ethical ground. This can explain why Islamic ethics often endeavors to dissect the soul and its faculties.

2-1-3. Defining Justice

When it comes to defining justice, Kindī is influenced by Plato as he regards justice

as the comprehensive virtue of the soul and a result of the harmony and moderation of all the faculties of the soul the opposite of which is merely injustice. But he does not define justice as a social virtue intermediate between acting unjustly and being unjustly treated (like Aristotle does). Moreover, while Plato and Aristotle applied the golden mean only to ethical virtues and the faculties of anger and appetite (and not to the intellectual virtues and the faculty of reason), Kindī applies the moderation rule to the faculty of reason and regards its excess and defect to be a vice. In effect, Kindī regards all faculties of the soul to be equally responsible for man's deeds. While excess in appetite and anger may lead to ethical vices, an excess in reason could also result in ethical vices. Like the two other faculties, reason should be exercised moderately, for reason is also capable of being subject to excess and defect. Certain schools of thoughts, in fact, have failed to observe this rule: al-Ashʿariyya and Akhbāriyya, for example, rejected reason and regarded it as an obstacle in itself, while certain philosophers (as in Muʿtazilī) have exercised reason excessively to the point of extreme fallacy.

2-2. ʾAbu ʿAlī Miskawayh

ʾAbū ʿAlī Miskawayh (932–1030) was an Islamic Persian philosopher and historian. As a Neoplatonist, his influence on Islamic philosophy is primarily in the area of ethics. He was the author of the first major Islamic work on philosophical ethics entitled the Refinement of Morals (*Tahdhīb al-ʾAkhlāq*) focusing on morals, ethical virtues, and refinement of vices. He separated personal ethics from the public realm, and contrasted the liberating nature of reason with the deception and temptation of nature.

In the history of the doctrine of the mean, Miskawayh (941–1030) is the first Islamic scholar who has had a significant role in transforming the explication of the doctrine. In psychology, and the main ethical virtues, his approach is Platonic. He regards human soul to be of three parts (reason, appetite, and spirit) and four main virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice) (Miskawayh, 1426. A.H., p. 38). Arguably, then, Miskawayh has effectively systematized the moderation theory to transform it from a theory of Islamic ethics to a doctrine of Islamic philosophy. Thus moderation theory is fortified both on ethical *and* philosophical grounds.

2-2-1. The Higher Genuses of Virtues and Vices

Miskawayh's maim invention in moderation theory was dividing ethical vices and virtues into major and minor ones, systematically defining four higher genuses for virtues and eight higher genuses for vices; he puts other ethical vices and virtues under these main categories, presenting a comprehensive system of vices and virtues. Elaborating on the opposites of the major vices, he first adopts a Platonic perspective and regards them as four (and not eight). Thus he holds: "and the opposites of these four virtues are four, which includes ignorance and covetousness and cowardice and unfairness" (Miskawayh, 1426. A.H., p. 39).

In continuation, however, Miskawayh draws on Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, regarding to extremes of excess and defect as well as two opposing vices for each of the major virtues. As a result, the number of the major vices mounts to eight (Miskawayh, 1426 A.H., p. 25). He is the first to consider four major virtues and their eight opposing vices as higher *genuses* of ethical vices and virtues. His other contribution is that he places various kinds of *minor* vices and virtues under each of the higher genuses of vices and virtues (Miskawayh, 1426 A.H., p. 24). Most Islamic scholars are thus influenced by Miskawayh's paradigm. He thus elaborates on his broad paradigm which includes the higher genuses of virtues and their subdivisions:

1. "**Wisdom**" (*Ḥikmah*) which is the virtue of reason—which means a knowledge of creatures regarding their existence or a knowledge of divine and human affairs, the fruit of which is knowledge of ineligibles (ibid., p. 40). Wisdom is intermediate between idiocy *(safāhat)* and senselessness *(balāhat)*. Idiocy means applying reason in whatever which is not just or in the way which is not just. Most scholars have called this "audacity" or "imprudence". Senselessness means a deliberate abandonment of reason and refusing to utilize it in resolving affairs. Here senselessness is not synonymous to mental retardation or being unintelligent (ibid., p. 46). Miskawayh places six kinds of wisdom under the higher genuses of wisdom which are as follows: 1. Astuteness (rapid deduction), 2. Superior recollection, (clarity of the images which are acquired by reason or imagination of affairs and things) 3. Reasoning, 4. The speed and power of comprehension, 5. Acuity of mind, 6. Being capable of learning quickly (ibid., pp. 40-41).

Miskawayh regards these virtues as kinds under the genus of wisdom, yet it seems that the terms "genus" and "kind" are applied here in a broad, non-technical

sense. In effect, being independent virtues alongside wisdom, all these virtues are associated with the faculty of reason – and they may not be considered as subdivisions of wisdom. Above all, the majority of these virtues are skills, gifts, or personal potentials that are for the most part innate and natural and cannot be taught or learned. Whereas, by definition, wisdom a sort of knowledge and perception, which can be acquired.

2. "**Temperance**" (ʿIffa) which is the virtue of the faculty of appetite, is intermediate between "*sharah"* (self-indulgence) and "*khumūdi*" (insensibility). Miskawayh places twelve kinds of virtues under the temperance genus which are as follows: 1. Graciousness, 2. serenity of the soul when it comes to urges (*daʿat*), 3. Patience 4. Generosity (*sakhā*), 5. Liberality, 6. Contentment, 7. Submissiveness towards the Sublime and swiftly moving towards it (*dimāthat*), 8. Discipline, 9. Appreciation of Guidance (eagerness to bring the soul to its perfection by fine adornments), 10. Concurrence (harmony in the soul as there is no desperation or apprehension in it), 11. Grace, 12. Piety (Miskawayh, 1426 A.H., pp. 41-42).

Generosity (*sakhāʾ*) is one of the minor virtues under the category of temperance, under which Miskawayh places various other kinds of virtues (ibid., p. 43).

3. "**Courage**" (*shujāʿat*) is the virtue of the faculty of spirit which is intermediate between cowardice and impudence and is accomplished through the submissiveness of spirit to reason. Virtues under courage include: 1. Magnanimity, 2. Serene self-possession, 3. Ambitiousness, 4. Sturdiness, 5. Endurance, 6. Fortitude, 7. Tranquility of the soul, 8. Grand expectations, and 9. Resilience (ibid., pp. 42-43).

4. "**Justice**" (*ʿIdālat*) is a virtue of the soul which is accomplished through the combination of all three major virtues. Justice is intermediate between acting unjustly and being unjustly treated. Acting unjustly, is acquiring wealth and possessions in a way that is not fair or justified. Treating oneself unjustly is to limit or deprive oneself from wealth and possessions in a way that is not fair or justified (ibid., pp. 42-43).

Miskawayh defines justice form both Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives. To begin with, he enumerates twenty-one virtues under justice, but then he goes on merely elaborating on eight of them. Some of these minor virtues include: 1) Honesty, 2) Intimacy, 3) Staying in touch with the next of kin, 4) *Mukāfaʾat* (reacting to a

kindness with a greater kindness), 5) Good Trading (trading in a way that it takes into account the interest of the all parties in a deal), 6) Good Reparation (Gratifying without a remorse) ,7) Amity, 8) Worshiping God, 9) Getting over a resentment, 10) Returning an evil action with a kind reaction, 11) Gentleness, 12) Being a gallant in all ways, 13) Abandoning an animosity, and 14) not following a person who fails to observe the golden mean (Miskawayh, 1426 A.H., p. 44).

It seems that Miskawayh's attempt to limit virtues under each of the major virtues and establishing a genus-kind relationship between them is in vain. Because, first, vices and virtues are innumerable – which makes it impossible to classify them all under a given major vice or virtue. Clearly, the list of virtues enumerated by Miskawayh is an inductive limitation and more virtues maybe added to the list. Second, the list of classified virtues is problematic, as for instance the virtues 9, 11, 12, and13 are a subdivision of anger and would more suitably be regarded as a subdivision of courage.

Higher Genuses and Their Subordinate Ethical Virtues

Wisdom	Temperance	Courage	Justice
1. Astuteness Superior 2. recollection 3. Reasoning 4. The speed and power of comprehension 5. Acuity of mind 6. Being capable of learning quickly	1. Graciousness 2. serenity of the soul when it comes to urges (*daʿat*) 3. Patience 4. Generosity (*sakhāʾ*), 5. Liberality, 6. Contentment, 7. Submissiveness towards the Sublime and swiftly moving towards it (*dimāthat*), 8. Discipline, 9. Appreciation of Guidance 10. Concurrence 11. Grace, 12. Piety	1. Magnanimity 2. Serene self-possession 3. Ambitiousness 4. Sturdiness 5. Endurance 6. Fortitude 7. Tranquility of the soul 8. Grand expectations 9. Resilience	1. Honesty 2. Intimacy 3. Staying in touch with the next of kin 4. *Mukāfiʿat* (reacting to a kindness with a greater kindness) 5. Good Trading 6. Good Reparation, 7. Amity, 8. Worshiping God, 9. Getting over a resentment, 10. Returning an evil action with a kind reaction, 11. Gentleness, 12. Being a gallant in all ways, 13. Abandoning an animosity, 14. not following a person who fails to observe the golden mean

2-3. Avicenna

Ibn-Sīnā [Avicenna] (ca. 970–1037) was the preeminent Iranian philosopher and physician of the Islamic world. In his work he combined the disparate strands of philosophical/scientific thinking in Greek late antiquity and early Islam into a rationally rigorous and self-consistent scientific system that encompassed and explained all reality, including the tenets of revealed religion and its theological and mystical elaborations (Gutas, 2016).

2-3-1. Avicenna's Psychology

Avicenna (980-1030) is another Muslim philosopher who has contributed to the doctrine of the mean in some considerable ways. In psychology, he has proposed various classifications of the faculties of the soul that are original in some ways. He believes that there are five faculties for the soul: (nutritive, sensational, imaginative, will power and reason) (Avicenna, 1998b, pp. 360-361). In yet another classification in "*An Essay on the Soul*" which incorporates the most comprehensive classification of the faculties of the soul, he first divides the soul into vegetative, animal, and human souls. Vegetative soul is made of the three faculties of generative, force of growth, and nutritive. Animal soul has two faculties: locomotive and intellective. The locomotive faculty is in turn divided into two faculties: first faculty of aspiration, which is responsible for moving the physical body and is in turn divided into passion and anger; second, the faculty that has spread in the muscles and nerves in the body and moves the body around. And intellective faculty is of two categories: perception from outside and perception from inside. Perception from outside includes the five or eight senses that are: vision, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile. Tactile has in turn four faculties: the first senses wetness and dryness; the second senses coldness and warmness; the third senses softness and harshness; the forth senses smoothness and roughness. Internal perception includes the faculties of senses communes, representation, imagination, estimation, and retentive. And the human or rational soul is of two faculties: the knowledge faculty and the active faculty both of which are called reason. The active faculty, which is called practical reason, is responsible for perception of good and evil, knowledge of crafts, and controlling faculties of passion and anger. The active faculty, which is also called theoretical reason, is responsible for understanding of meanings, rational images, and the universals.

Theoretical reason is of four levels which include: potential intellect, habitual intellect, actual intellect, and acquired intellect (Avicenna, 2004, pp. 11-26).

Clearly, this classification by Avicenna is more comprehensive as compared to the classification proposed by Plato (reason, appetite, and spirit). It specifies the positions of the three faculties of vegetative, animal and human (Plato's classification was limited only to the animal and rational faculties. Such classification becomes more significant with regard to the fact that Nasir al-Din Ṭusī draws on it in his classic *Nasirean Ethics* in order to propose a novel elaboration on the doctrine of the mean: a new definition of justice as a virtue of practical wisdom (and not the virtue which is a result of the three virtues as proposed by Aristotle) (See Ṭusī, 1413, pp. 22-23).

Avicenna's third classification of the faculties of the soul is the same as that of Plato (Avicenna, 1998b, p. 355).

2-3-2. Stating the Major and Minor Vices and Virtues of the Soul

Like Aristotle, Avicenna divides virtues into intellectual and moral virtues (Avicenna, 1998b, p. 361). Although he discusses the four major virtues, regarding temperance as the virtue of the appetite faculty, courage as the virtue of the spirit faculty, wisdom as the virtue of the intellectual faculty, and the virtue that is a result of all these as justice, he never calls them as “major virtues” or “higher genuses”. Also, he discusses the vices as contrary to these virtues: temperance as the virtue between self-indulgence and excessive self-abstinence, courage as the virtue that is between excessive fear and foolhardiness, knowledge as the virtue contrary to ignorance, and justice as the virtue between acting unjustly and being unjustly treated (Avicenna, 1998a, p. 373).

Moreover, Avicenna mentions several minor vices and virtues. Patience, generosity, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, open-mindedness (openness of vision), persistence, and confidentiality are the minor virtues with regard to the anger faculty. Wisdom, ingenuity, valid speculation, prudence, sincerity, authenticity, companionship, compassion, strong will power, dedication, and humility are of the sort of the faculty of reason. Contentment and liberality are related to appetite (Avicenna, 1998a, p. 370). He also enumerated the minor vices (ibid., p. 373).

Unlike Miskawayh, Avicenna does not make a genus-kind relationship among the four major virtues and minor virtues. He hardly claims that the four major virtues are genus (or as good as genus) for the minor virtues. Neither does he regard minor virtues as a sub-category of major virtues, but he regards the minor virtues as the virtues associated with the each three faculties of the soul. Thus Avicenna's perspective is on a more solid ground as compared to that of Miskawayh's. The problem with Miskawayh's opinion is that there cannot be any logical genus-kind relationship between wisdom and acuteness of mind, or ingenuity and valid speculation; neither there can be a relationship between temperance and generosity or temperance and contentment.

Furthermore, Avicenna regards justice as a comprehensive virtue with regard to all faculties of the soul. Hence, unlike other Islamic scholars who have mistakenly categorized specific minor virtues under the category of justice (See Miskawayh, 1426. A.H., p. 44), Avicenna does not regard any minor virtue as a subdivision to justice.

2-3-3. Definitions of Justice

Avicenna presents three accounts of justice; one of these is his own definition of the subject and two others are elaborations of those of Plato and Aristotle. In his first account of justice, Avicenna regards justice as the transcendental state and disposition of the soul, as well as the submissiveness of the physical faculties (appetite and a) to the speaking soul (Avicenna, 1998a, p. 376). This definition (which was adapted by Ghazali soon after) regards justice as a matter of practical effect, and not merely of theoretical dimension. A theoretical account of justice is a matter of reflection and recognition, whereas the practical or *applied justice* is concerned with the *actions* carried out by man and all their consequences. Practical justice is reflected in deeds and exterior actions, whereas theoretical justice manifests in distinguishing right from wrong. Second, it is Avicenna's Platonic account of justice: justice is the comprehensive virtue that is driven from all moral and intellectual virtues (wisdom, temperance, and courage) (Avicenna, 1998b, p. 369). Third, it is Avicenna's Aristotelian account of justice: justice is the virtue that is between acting unjustly and being unjustly treated (ibid, p. 363). In this sense, justice becomes of a social significance as it addresses man's relationship with others in a society (Avicenna, 1998a, p. 373).

2-3-4. The Doctrine of the Mean and its Being Non-Universal

Avicenna believes in the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean and, he regards ethical virtues as essentially intermediate between excess and defect (Avicenna, 1998a, p. 374); however, the significance of his account of the doctrine is its being maximal (or non-Universal). This reveals his consciousness of the fact that it is impossible to generalize this doctrine to encompass all vices and virtues. According to him:

> "Indeed, the majority of the virtues are intermediate between the vices; and some virtues are intermediate between two vices—which are the same as excess and defect" (Avicenna, 1998a, p. 373).

Here Avicenna observes the non-universality of Aristotle's moderation rule, which is why he uses the term "majority" in the above quote. On the other hand, the phrase "the same as excess and defect" in Avicenna's words highlights his consciousness of the fact that the extremes introduced as the excess or defect for a given virtue are not of an exact border line, as it is possible to regard this as a general statement. Therefore, the more exact estimation would be to say that they are the same as excess or defeat. "Being unjustly treated" or "imprudence", for example, may not be said to be the excess or defect of the faculty of reason in the exact sense of the word.

To sum up, Avicenna seems to have had a significant contribution to the explanation of the moderation rule, definition of justice, and explication of minor and major virtues.

2-4. Rāghib Isfahānī

Rāghib Isfahānī (d.1108) was a Muslim scholar and theologian. He was born in Isfahān, Iran. His theological stance seems to have been close to that of the ʾAshʿarī school. In one of his works entitled *al-ʾIʿtiqādāt*, Al- Isfahānī attacks both the Muʿtazilite and the Shiʿa showing that questions about his adherence to either of these positions is groundless.

Rāghib Isfahānī, in his ethical book, *al-Dharīʿa ʾilā Makārim al-Shariʿa (The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of the Law)*, addresses like his predecessors issues on the three faculties, the major four virtues, the moderation rule, and the eight opposing vices (Rāghib Isfahānī, 2007, pp. 73-75; 88-89; 224). Influenced by Miskawayh, he divides moral virtues into major and minor virtues (Rāghib

Isfahānī, 2007, p. 115). Apart from minute differences between Rāghib and Miskawayh in the numbers and kinds of virtues enlisted in the higher genuses of virtues, the remarkable point in Rāghib's writings is the fact that he does not apply the terms "genus" and "kind", nor does he itemize under the higher genuses to differentiate between the major and the minor virtues. Instead, he applies the terms "mothers" and "daughters," or "giving birth" and "being born"—which is to say that major virtues are mothers of minor virtues and that they result in or give birth to minor virtues.

2-4-1. Adding "Divinely-Assisted" Virtues to Moral Virtues

Rāghib's major contribution to the subject of virtues is the adding "Tufīqī virtues" which means divinely-assisted virtues to the moral virtues. He adds the four virtues of: 1) divine assistance (Tufīq), 2) God's guidance (*rushd*), 3) *Tasdīd* and 4) affirmation (*ta'yīd*) as the divinely-assisted virtues to the virtues of body and the soul. According to him, no one can obtain to a given virtue without God's assistance and His mercy. Divine Assistance is the accordance of a person's will and action with divine providence. Guidance, is the divine aid which assists a person when dealing with his own affairs, leading him to act upon whatever which is for his best, and discourage him from acting upon whatever which is not for the best (and can lead to corruption). *Tasdīd* is a person's will power and determination towards his desired and proper intention so as to attain it in the shortest possible time. Reinforcement (*ta'yīd*) is fortifying a person's affairs from within by perceptiveness, and from outside by force and courage. Although Rāghib regards divinely assisted virtues as four, he then adds two other virtues to the list which include: divine intervention and innocence (here the quality which implies that a person never commits a sin) (Rāghib Isfahānī, 2007, pp. 119-120).

Given the fact that Rāghib was a mystic and an interpreter of the Qurān, his particular commitment to the theory of moderation resulted in including it in his book of ethics, which in turn encapsulates a remarkable emblem of Qurānic learnings and ethical studies. Rāghib's classic *Al-Dharī'a* incorporates the Qurānic inspirations that construct his contribution to Plato's theory of the four virtues. As it is often argued, Aristotle's theory of means also received particular attention in the Islamic world thanks to its compatibility with Qurānic lessons and Prophetic traditions.

2-5. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī

Ghazālī is one of the greatest Islamic jurists, theologians and mystical thinkers. He learned various branches of the traditional Islamic religious sciences in his home town of Ṭus, Gurgān and Niyshābūr in the northern part of Iran. He was also involved in Sufi practices from an early age.

Ghazālī (1058-1111) has the same approach as his predecessors towards the concepts of the three faculties and the moderation rule. He affirms the four major virtues and their two opposing vices, yet he believes in just one vice for the virtue of justice – which is acting unjustly (Ghazālī, 2004, 3, p. 67). Ghazālī also proposes the division of virtues into higher genuses and their subdivisions, yet he uses the terms majors and minors instead of genus and kind (Ghazālī, 2004, 3, p. 67).

Ghazālī is the first person to introduce narrative affirmations to endorse Aristotle's moderation rule. Islamic scholars before him—such as Kindī, Fārābī, Yaḥya ibn ʿAdī, Abu al-Hasan ʿĀmirī, and Avicenna—had introduced the theory of Moderation, but they had not ventured to look at the subject from an Islamic perspective, affirming it with verses from Qurān and Traditions. Ghazālī addresses the moderation theory and the four virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice before referring to the following verse from Qurān:

> "The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the Cause of Allah: Such are the sincere ones" (Qurān 49: 15).

Based on this, he takes a faith to God and his prophet without a trace of doubt to be "certainty" (*yaqīn*) – which is the fruit of reason and the ultimate wisdom, and effort (*mujāhidat*) by one's possessions to be "generosity" (*sikhāvat)*—which is the perfection of the faculty of desire, and effort by self to be "courage"—which is the perfection of anger. Thus the above-mentioned verse from Qurān regards as well as features three virtues of the four virtues as the characteristics of the believers (Ghazālī, 2004, 3, p. 68). Ghazālī also regards the following verses and narrations as an affirmation of the moderation rule in various affairs. Verses such as:

> "And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, lest you should [afterwards] sit down blameworthy, stripped off" (Qurān 17: 29);

"Eat and drink, but be not extravagant. He does not love not the extravagant" (Qurān 7: 31);

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves" (Qurān 48: 29).

And a narration from the Islam Holy Prophet that says:

"Observing the mean is the best of actions" (See: Ghazālī, 2004, 3, p. 71).

Before Ghazālī, Rāghib has confirmed the moderation rule referring to the following narration: "Surah Hūd aged me" from the holy prophet which alludes to the following verse from Holy Qurān: "Therefore stand firm [in the straight Path] as thou art commanded" (Qurān, Hūd/ 112); It conveys the difficulties and hardships of observing moderation in affairs. Ghazālī mentions this verse since he is influenced by Rāghib, yet we consider him as the pioneer of such an approach, given the fact that he has accumulated a whole range of verses and Traditions in this regard. After Ghazālī, other Islamic scholars (Davānī and ʾUrmavī, for instance) have adapted the same approach, confirming Aristotle's moderation rule by means of more verses and Traditions. For example, Davānī points out a narration from Imam Ali, who was asked: "What is the Straight Path?" He replied: "It is finer than hair and sharper than sword". And the Holy Prophet said: "Straight Path is finer than hair, sharper than sword and darker than the night (Davānī, 2012, p. 102)". According to another narration, "Justice is God's Scale on earth; those who act based upon it He will lead to heaven". Also, we read in a verse in Qurān: "Thus we have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind" (Qurān 2:143) (See ʾUrmavī, 1972, pp. 229-230).

Thanks to his sophist background, Ghazālī has added yet another set of virtues to the set of four major virtues: divinely assisted virtues and mystical virtues. In divinely assisted virtues, he is influenced by Rāghib's *al-Dharīʿa*; in mystical virtues, he is influenced by mystics and Sufism (Ghazālī, 1989, pp.102-103). Mystical virtues are "station of the travelers of the spiritual path" or "*Sālikīn*" and "station of the mystics" or "*ʿĀrifīn*"—which the mystics will have to attain practically. These virtues include: repentance, endurance, gratitude, optimism (towards God's merci), apprehension (of divine wrath), essential poverty, renunciation (of the world), monotheism, confidence in God, love, zeal, attachment, cheerful submission (to God's will), intention, absolute sincerity,

integrity, observance, self-examination, and contemplation. Of course, the numbers of these virtues vary in Ghazālī's various works. Combining the four philosophical virtues and the religious or mystical virtues, we can conclude that Ghazālī regards both reason and religion as foundations for ethics. Some might argue that Ghazālī and Rāghib were less influenced by the ancient Greek philosophy than inspired by Islamic sources (Qurān and tradition). But the influence is evident and analogies undeniable. This has been the main argument of this paper, as it is an attempt to examine the evolution of the theory of ethics from Kindī's time to our cotemporary times.

2-6. Khāwaja Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī

Khāwaja Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (1201-1274) was a Persian polymath, architect, philosopher, physician, scientist, theologian. The Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) considered Ṭusī to be the greatest of the later Persian scholars. Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭusī was born in the city of Ṭus in medieval Khurāsān (in north-eastern Iran) in the year 1201 and began his studies at an early age. In Hamadān and Ṭus he studied the Qurān, Hadith, Shiʿa jurisprudence, logic, philosophy, mathematics, medicine and astronomy.

Ṭusī's approach with regard to the three faculties of the soul and its four major virtues is Platonic (Ṭusī, 1413, pp. 71-72). On the other hand, however, as he is influenced by Avicenna, Ṭusī has a justification different from that of Plato's for the four major virtues. Ṭusī regards the human soul to be of two faculties: the locomotive and the intellective-by-itself. The intellective-by-itself faculty is divided into the two theoretical and practical faculties; the virtue of the theoretical faculty is "wisdom" and the virtue of the practical faculty is "justice". The locomotive faculty, on the other hand, is also divided into two parts: the faculty of attraction or desire and the faculty of repulsion or anger—and the virtues of temperance and courage belong to them.

Since *Nasirean Ethics* is a translation and explanation of Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-ʾAkhlāq*, Ṭusī first adapts the same approach in the higher genuses of virtues and their sub-categories: he introduces four higher genuses of virtues and eights higher genuses of vices, underneath which are placed specific kinds of vices and virtues (Ṭusī, 1413, pp. 81-82).

2-6-1. Justice as the Virtue of the Practical Reason

Ṭusī introduces a new classification of the faculties of the soul—which can be regarded as a summary of Avicenna's comprehensive categorization of the faculties of the soul. To begin with, he divides human soul to intellective-by-itself and locomotive faculties; on a second level, he divides the intellective-by-itself soul into the two faculties of theoretical and practical; he divides the locomotive soul into the two faculties of desire and anger. The intellective-by-itself faculty is opposed to sensing by means (as by the five senses). The virtue of the theoretical faculty is "wisdom". The virtue of the practical faculty is "justice". The virtue of the desire faculty is "temperance", and the virtue of the anger faculty is "courage". Thus there are four higher genuses of virtues (Ṭusī, 1413, pp. 72-73). Based on this classification, the virtue of justice has no longer the Platonic definition of being the comprehensive virtue of the soul resulting from the combination of the three virtues. It is only the virtue of the practical wisdom that matters, the duty of which, Ṭusī believes, is responsible for understanding subjects, distinguishing between the finest and worst of actions, the knowledge of crafts and making a living.

2-6-2. Introducing the Concept of Obscenity (Radāʾat) as the Qualitative Deviation from the Mean

Ṭusī's main contribution to Aristotle and Plato's theories of moderation is introducing the concept of obscenity (radāʾat) as a "*qualitative* deviation from moderation". Although, it is clear that Aristotle or the Islamic philosopher's notion of moderation, defect and excess, has not been just a quantity, but also a quality. Ṭusī systematically introduces the concept to the moderation theory. Hence many virtues find a qualitative aspect in addition to their quantitative extremes. There is a gap for such criteria in Aristotle and Plato's theories of moderation; establishing criteria, Aristotle had merely suggested that moderation in actions and emotions is a virtue, and that a violation of this general rule would lead to vices. Thus, as far as Aristotle is concerned, virtue may be attained by moderation. Such statement of a rule, only instructs the moral person to regard moderation as a quantity, but it does not specify how virtue may be attained as a 'quality'. Ṭusī's contribution is that he introduces a systematic method for attaining the virtue of an act in both sides of quantity and quality. In other words, he adds a qualitative dimension to the

quantitative measurement of virtue. According to Ṭusī,

> "Deviations [from moderation], each are formed in two ways: either from an imperfection in quantity or an imperfection in quality; and their imperfection is either from a transgression of moderation in excess or a transgression of moderation in shortage. Thus the diseases of each faculty can be of three kinds either by excess or by defect or by radā'at (obscenity)" (Ṭusī, 1413, p. 131).

Thus, apart from introducing the concept of obscenity as a qualitative criterion of vices, Ṭusī also defines the three higher genuses of "excess", "defect", and "obscenity" for vices (Ṭusī, 1413, pp. 132-133). Moreover, since there are three faculties for the soul, the higher moral vices will make nine altogether, although Ṭusī does not state a number. Hence the higher genuses of vices are three (without regarding the three faculties) and nine (with regarding the three faculties).

2-7. Muḥsen Fānī Kishmīrī

Fānī Kishmīrī (died 1670) is one of the recent Islamic philosophers who wrote the *ʾAkhlāq ʿĀlam ʾĀrā* (also called *Muhsinī Ethics*). In this book he is influenced by Ṭusī and Davānī.[1] Kishmīrī presents various, minor criticisms on the moral theories of Miskawayh, Ṭusī, and Davānī (Kishmīrī, 1982, pp.17-18, 25). He regards the Islamic scholars' genus-kind perspectives of the vices and virtues as a broad generalization and prefers to apply the term "subordinates" instead (Kishmīrī, 1982, p. 24).

2-7-1. Number of Higher Genuses of Vices and Virtues

Like other Islamic Scholars, Kishmīrī first regards the higher genuses of vices as eight (as opposed to the four major virtues (Kishmīrī, 1982, p. 33), but then he regards them as twelve. Like Ṭusī, Kishmīrī regards moral diseases and vices to be a result of excess, defect, or obscenity. Unlike Ṭusī who had regarded the number of the higher genuses of virtues as three (in a sense, and nine in another sense), Kishmīrī regards them as twelve. Since there are four faculties of the soul altogether and the reasons for the formation of vices are the three factors of excess, defect, and obscenity, thus the number of vices will be twelve (Kishmīrī, 1982, pp. 74-75).

Kishmīrī's perspective on the opposing vice for the virtue of justice is original.

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[1]. *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī was a prominent philosopher and theologian from Shiraz (Iran), his ethical book, the Akhlaq-e Jalali (Jalalian Ethics), has been translated in English in 1839.*

He does not agree with the opinion of the scholars who regard justice as a virtue of one of the faculties of the soul and consider the two extremes of acting unjustly and being unjustly treated for it. Nor does he agree with scholars such as Ghazālī, Ṭusī and others who regard a single vice for the virtue of justice as named as cruelty or injustice. He believes that justice should be regarded as the comprehensive virtue of all the faculties, while its opposing vices include the excess or defect in all faculties. As a result, justice may be said to have two opposing extremes called acting unjustly and being unjustly treated while a new account of them is presented: acting unjustly is the excess of the three faculties and being unjustly treated is their defect. Therefore, as justice is the comprehensive virtue, its opposing vices (acting unjustly and being unjustly treated) are the comprehensive vices (See Kishmīrī, 1982, pp. 37, 59).

Because of its compatibility with the religious doctrines, the theory of moderation may be said to have remarkably influenced the Islamic scholars, as the majority of them seem to have referred to it in their works. Indeed, the spectrum of the Islamic scholars who have advocated the theory of the mean is larger than the ones mentioned here. To add to the list, we can mention Fārābī in his *al-Fuṣūl al-Muntaziʿa*, Yaḥya ibn ʿAdī in *Tahdhīb al-ʾAkhlāq*, etc. Since these scholars have merely mentioned the doctrine in their works without a substantial contribution to it, we obliquely mentioned them here (without a more extensive discussion of their works).

Conclusion

Although the doctrine of the mean originated in ancient Greece, it deeply influenced the Islamic scholars, who endorsed the doctrine while also contributing to its various aspects. Some of the contributions are as follows: dividing the vices and virtues into major and minor ones and establishing the genus-kind relationship between them, adding the criteria of obscenity and quality to the quantitative criterion of excess and defect, a new classification of the faculties of the soul, highlighting the role of the practical wisdom and regarding justice as its major virtue, contemplating on the various conceptions and setting it against injustice only, a maximal approach to the moderation rule, a confirmation of the doctrine with the Islamic Tradition and the verses from Qurān, adding the religious virtues to the philosophical, ethical virtues, and establishing a relationship between man's happiness with God and afterlife, to which we did not refer to extensively in this article.

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