

Ethics, Arab Islamic Values, and the Creation of Civilization

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Abstract

Technology is a double-edged sword. The first edge is positive, beneficial to humans, providing them with comfortable working conditions, while the other edge is negative; causing harm through behaviors and actions that deviate from what is familiar. Humans, as creators of machines and technology, can harm themselves and corrupt their nature, transforming it into evil traits. Today, the world stands on the threshold of the twenty-first century in a completely new, if not strange, situation, represented by the growing challenge posed by science and its applications to ethics and moral conscience.

Keywords: Creation of Civilization, ethics, Arab Islamic Values

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What has sparked, and continues to provoke, reactions that can be described as a "call for ethics" are calls to subject science and its products to ethical values and standards. This is in stark contrast to what was the case in Europe at the same time last century, where movements advocated for establishing ethics based on science, posing an age-old philosophical problem—the issue of "the foundation of ethics."

The need for Arab Islamic thought in creating its own civilization is not to dismantle its cultural world, relativize its values, and destroy them, as our problems are not fundamental in nature. Rather, our issues are the result of circumstances and the civilizational context, which is also a product of these circumstances. Thus, our modernization project lacks disintegration but rather requires integration—a methodical integration that does not fragment the modernization process nor prioritize its elements. This includes building a system of critical and integrative sciences that reestablishes the totality and restores the fragmented individual elements to their infinite and diverse nature, organizing them into comprehensive, orderly frameworks. Therefore, we must purify our intellectual projects and our ethical and social frameworks of destructive elements that serve no benefit, so that the environment becomes clear for elements that are vital and life-affirming. For this, the peak of modernity in civilization requires an ethical principle and a value-based questioning and normative explanations to be able to effect change and a civilizational renaissance. It is necessary to deeply challenge the power of reason to refine the harmful ethical residues that hinder civilizational progress, as civilization is based on ethics and values. When values deteriorate and collapse, and shameful phenomena proliferate in a country, its problems and calamities multiply. This leads to the emergence of social ills, diseases, ignorance, illiteracy, and the absence of awareness and rationality. The public becomes distracted by entertainment rather than seeking knowledge and wisdom. Tyranny by the ruling class over the masses becomes prevalent, and

injustice and oppression spread, delaying the country's progress in joining the wheel of civilization. Values are of great importance, especially in the Arab world, as they are derived from the Quran and the Sunnah. The absence of these values has led to clear failure, regression, and incapacity.

Al-Jabri, in his writings, has highlighted a key point he refers to as the "decay of ethics," meaning that the end of true ethics and the collapse of values inevitably lead to the downfall of nations and civilizations. He argues that the loss of ethical principles causes nations to submit and regress, seeking refuge in written destiny. Al-Jabri observes that the rise of Sufism in the Arab and Islamic world, dating back to Al-Farabi, led to a shift away from thinking about the future and working toward it. He viewed the Crusades as a punishment from God for the Muslims losing their way, a reflection of the ethics of decay. The ethics of decay do not just lead to the destruction of morals but also to the destruction of nations, which is why the modern reform movement focused on combating this trend.

The centrality of values and their foundation can empower ethical action, influencing all segments of society. Since humans are eager to demonstrate moral strength, ethics form a major part of building nations on solid and strong foundations. Nations will not perish as long as they maintain their values and authentic heritage. A study of history shows that civilizations revered ethics and values because they built their civilizational witnesses upon a solid fortress of firmly rooted values, closely tied to their religions and laws. These civilizations prioritized human ethics and interpersonal dealings as foundational to distinguishing their civilizations from others.

The functional role that occupies many minds in establishing the link between ethics, logic, and abstractions before normative judgments, which are considered behavioral rather than cognitive activities, reveals that in political philosophy, ethical values drive society. Values like justice, fairness, and equality between individuals and groups prevent oppression and foster equality. When ethical life is connected to reason, it establishes fixed principles that guide the

individual, offering the opportunity for practical field applications of ideas that move beyond abstract reasoning and cognitive faculties like imagination and memory. These can assist in the application of changeable normative judgments that become relative. This reflects the intellect, not in opposition to it.

Historically, wars have been a driving force that strengthens social cohesion, and hence ethical systems had to consist of two completely distinct parts: an individual's duties toward the "group" they belong to, and their duties towards individuals or groups outside that group. What I want to address now is ethics within the group, specifically as they relate to facilitating social cooperation. The most important requirement is finding a way to determine "who owns what," with the two systems that civilized societies have used to address this issue being law and property. The moral principle that governs both of these systems is justice, or what public opinion can accept as justice.

**We can therefore demonstrate the necessity of adhering to our divine Islamic law, which is characterized by ethics, guiding humanity to achieve "vicegerency" on Earth by implementing the noble principles of the Shariah that Allah has commanded us to follow. Al-Asfahani says, "The noble principles of Shariah include wisdom, establishing justice among people, governance, awareness, virtue, and the aim of reaching the paradise of eternal dwelling, near to the Lord of Glory, Allah." The role of deterrence, discipline, and reinforcement, as seen by Ibn Hazm, is to prevent people from committing acts like murder, which leads to the destruction of creation, or adultery, which corrupts lineage and inheritance, or oppression, which harms souls, wealth, and ruins the land. These are just a few of the vices that the Shariah seeks to prevent, including tyranny, envy, lying, cowardice, miserliness, slander, deceit, betrayal, and other vices."

The vices that emanate from the behaviors of individuals who have deviated into harmful societal paths choose unlawful means to claim rights, retrieve trust, protect honor, and commit shameful acts knowingly and affirmatively. This is not a

matter of choice; rather, it is an act of improper cleverness, which reflects on the actions of individuals through vices, ugliness, and despicable traits. This, in itself, is a form of deviation. Islam preserves ethics and strives to achieve a form of ethics that manifests in the actions of the Muslim individual. He believes in it firmly, knowing that good character will be rewarded both in this world and the hereafter. He complies with the commands of Allah, for good character promotes cohesion and harmony, eliminating wars, favoritism, and racism. Islam is a religion of moderation, peace, and harmony.

When comparing what has been mentioned about these well-known philosophers in the West, their views on ethics and its relation to their methodologies and schools of thought, we see that the original and correct source of ethics lies in faith, because our Islamic doctrine and the behaviors that stem from it are inspired by a strong belief in Allah, His angels, His messengers, His books, the Day of Judgment, and the belief in the good and bad that comes from Allah. This belief is derived from the Qur'an and the noble Sunnah, and it is reflected in the legal texts, which command individuals to adhere to the laws and actions prescribed for them. Human behavior must align with these teachings, which belong to the realm of ideal ethical values. Islam is a message of moderation, tolerance, and virtuous ethics that calls for peace.

There is no doubt that the ethics of any society at any given time are subject to a set of circumstances within that society, specifically in terms of "stability" and "development." When we assume that social reality is part of nature, we must also assume that it follows the general laws of nature and that it is, above all, subject to the principle of conditions for existence. This principle dictates that all beings whose internal and external conditions align continue to exist as long as this alignment persists. Human societies do not deviate from this rule, especially with regard to beliefs, emotions, and moral commands that dominate each society.

Thus, the role of society is naturally not a passive one; it is crucial in initiating change. However, society derives its orders from beliefs, with religion being the

primary mover and legislator of the values upon which that society relies. Here, societies differ from one another according to their own laws and the specifics of their customs and traditions. Ethics form half of society, and they are not outside the sphere of relationships and social matters. The core of religious legislation regarding individual behaviors is defined in terms of both the external and internal aspects.

In other words, a society cannot exist without a moral code. Practical, evolving ethics act as an obligation imposed on the individual to adhere to a moral framework that goes beyond ethical theory. This is because ethics must be practiced by the individual so that actions are grounded in a sound application, not remaining confined to abstract ideas but becoming real behaviors that align thought and action.

A question arises regarding the value of moral things: Are there things that have intrinsic moral value? What are these things? Actions stemming from conscience are responsible acts, independent of narrow self-interests. Most actions performed by individuals, not by states, are neutral, not intending harm to others. This implies that the value of actions is determined by their objectives and the design associated with them. In other words, how does the objective qualitatively shift from one ethical characteristic to another, with a clear intention and resolve? On the level of states, all actions must be intentional and deliberate, with no room for negligence or misjudgment. Mistakes affect the entire nation, and thus, the ethical content in international interactions tends to be limited to a level that avoids harming national interests.

Similarly, politics must follow ethical principles because a nation cannot lawfully act based on whims, desires, or personal preferences. If such a practice occurred, corruption would prevail, and major conflicts would arise between leaders and subordinates. Ethics would disappear, and evil and corruption would spread, leading to chaos and instigated strife. However, ethical life imposes a law

on all people, grounded in values because the relationship between politics and ethics is inseparable and cannot favor one over the other.

It becomes clear that the fundamental ethical stances in morally ambiguous situations are not surprising, and some of them carry negative connotations. On the one hand, they provide an approach that leads to triviality and superficiality, allowing one to replace the disintegration of events with loyalty to oneself and others. It creates a being that does not fluctuate in the face of any shifting winds, capable of managing its existence. On the other hand, these ethical stances may lead to isolation and error, causing one to ignore all other calls and leading to a delusion of self-importance when in fact one is just an interesting entity.

Ethics, in general, endows humans with an independent existence and high ambition that enriches them, freeing them from trivialities. They do not follow the crowd, but rather take responsibility for their actions. However, when most individuals engaging in moral actions contribute to creating new methods and unconventional ways, these actions become precarious, fluctuating between balance and absurdity. The person who carries them out may be unaware of the seriousness of these behaviors, mistakenly believing they fall within the ethical domain, but in truth, they are veiled under a facade that guides the individual toward selfishness and the dominance of ego. Thus, ethical behavior appears virtuous outwardly, but often these actions, stemming from the ego, are in fact morally wrong, hidden from plain sight, and devised in secret, concealed within the depths of truth.

"The history of ethics suffers many shortcomings, not only in our countries but also in the Western world. There, there has been a dominant bias in writing the history of philosophy in general and ethics in particular. This writing starts with the Greeks and praises the Romans, filling pages and books with the true and imagined glories of Athens and Rome, their contributions to humanity, and the services they provided. When it reaches Asia, it condenses it into pages, sometimes even lines, making it feel as if it is written just to cover up some obvious gaps. This

is not just a scientific mistake but a significant failure in portraying events, and a clear inadequacy in thought." This is part of the criticism leveled at history books, particularly those that focus on ethics, as a major flaw in ethical writing, whether in the West or the Arab world. However, in Arab history, there are many exceptions concerning the history of Islamic ethics in the writings of earlier scholars and reformers, all of whom have addressed it and made it central to their research. They worked according to the teachings of Islam, which is a message of ethics legislated for every individual and writer in the Arab Muslim world.

Ethics are also linked to art, as beauty is associated with moral feelings by those who advocate the moral sense, with Shaftesbury at the forefront, who connected goodness with beauty and argued that the essence of morality lies in the harmony between the individual's units and the demands of society, i.e., the beauty of proportion and the balance between the feelings of individuals in their social relationships, excluding all deviant and unnatural tendencies that do not aim for a specific purpose. In other words, he believes that beauty, in fact, is a kind of harmony, and he criticizes those who base virtue on religion, which is built on reward and punishment, arguing that the possibility of virtue in itself is enough to prompt a person to do good.

There is a direct relationship between individual emotions, as they reflect in their reactions and concerns. Emotion is significantly responsible for human actions, if not moving them in most cases. Strangely, it is an inherent feeling, born with a person and not acquired, and it can disappear at any moment, especially in certain cases when reason and wisdom take over, and a person adheres to prudence and insight without letting emotion influence their thoughts and actions. However, emotions must align with the logic of morality to produce positive actions that strengthen relationships among individuals, groups, and nations, as this would be seen as a form of beauty and actions of authentic artistic taste.

This means that there is a connection between collective values and non-collective elements, and without a doubt, the acknowledgment of aesthetic values

leads to an implicit recognition of aesthetic feeling, akin to moral feeling. Both have their absolute commands and the rewards or punishments that come from a higher authority. The ancient belief that this higher authority, from which aesthetic and moral feelings emanate, issues these absolute commands helped shape these ideas.

The explicit recognition of the authority of ethics in guidance and reliance on laws is the only way to change many corrupt and unjust laws that could lead a country to ruin. Furthermore, if properly employed, this authority could effectively manage nations and maintain the true purpose for which it exists, not hiding behind the veil of beauty and taste while neglecting the original and highest goal. This obstacle prevents values from manifesting in their purest form, which would allow them to spread tolerance, peace, and harmony.

Also, the relationship between ethics and education was explored by scholars, where the ethical education system depends on several objective and subjective factors. The nature and inclination of ethical education are tied to understanding the content of morality and its sources, along with knowledge of the essential components that define its nature, i.e., those that reveal fixed and non-relative truths. These matters, as is well known, belong to the science of ethics. In this context, the necessity of clarifying the connection between educational theory and the science of ethics arose. Some bourgeois researchers correctly expressed the close link between them, as the philosophy of education seeks to educate an individual with a specific moral stance appropriate to the desired behavior. This requires that both educators and learners know the right or necessary conduct and the ability to reveal the essence of moral value and the logical nature of dreams, which are primarily moral. As long as the science of ethics primarily addresses these matters, specialists in moral education consider the science of ethics to be the main aspect of the philosophy of education.

Therefore, we say that education transforms a person from one behavior to a better one. It changes a person's nature, corrects their mistakes, and continuously

refines their actions. Scholars have given it great importance due to its depth and its intersection with ethics; it is essentially ethics itself.

We also point to a more important and profound idea: ethics must be linked with reason, because moral actions stem from the orders of reason. Hume says, "It has been observed that there is nothing in the mind but its perceptions, and that all acts of sight, hearing, judgment, love, hate, thinking fall under this concept. The mind can never show any action unless we categorize it under the concept of perception. Therefore, the term applies equally to those judgments through which we distinguish between moral good and evil, from any other mental activity."

This is because reason is characterized by analysis, deconstruction, and storage, which means that it issues judgments as a converter through perception. The responsibility for scrutinizing and verifying moral actions separates them into either evil actions or good ones, and it builds moral actions on a rational basis because reason is fixed and foundational. Logic drives the emergence, stages, and rules derived from values and constants.

Jürgen Habermas believes that one can reach moral standards through free rational discourse, in which the results of each ethical standard are examined from its universal characteristic, i.e., public acceptance or satisfaction through rational persuasion, not force or coercion. This clearly demonstrates his bias toward modernity and his defense of it, as modernity requires that the ethical system be based on reason.

Thus, Habermas's theory of communicative action is connected to a developmental theory in language, work, and communication, all of which are part of ethics. He linked rational persuasion to communication because the process is interconnected, as it is a product and outcome of everything that is artistic, ethical, aesthetic, scientific, and more. Therefore, it is only fitting that humans be called "ethical beings," as they try to place the system of moral values within the framework of biological needs, striving beyond themselves to achieve perfection.

Dewey says: "The living being is a part of the world, sharing both its joys and its troubles, and is safeguarded from its dangers. This can only be achieved by unifying the human being and interacting with the surrounding things and environment."

Humans must be a participating part of their world because they are inherently part of it and interact with all its components. Thus, their effect on their environment is positive, and they may have a significant role in bringing about major change, creativity, interaction, and distinction. Here, moral values grow in their soul and manifest in their behavior, thereby achieving the desired outcome. There is a significant difference between a person who contributes to changing things from ordinary to ideal and another who transforms things from the ideal state to a worse condition.

Ethics are not just behavior that may be rewarded or punished, condemned or praised. They are, rather, an emotional existential experience that proves its effectiveness by achieving the human goal in life, which is change and making an impact. Therefore, the purpose of values and principles is the effect and the imprint, and this happens through social intelligence, which follows deliberate steps. This will motivate the building of the self, then society, and the construction of civilization.

Humanity is viewed in terms of its subjective unity embodied in its manifestations, while its opposite, unity, is defined by an individual's integration into a specific world, a particular time, and circumstances. It is understood that ethics studies the present human being and views him through the lens of his true reality, seeing him as a being striving to achieve a balance between various forces that divide his existence and consume his being.

If a person wants to live and impose a lifestyle based on his desires and tendencies, emotions and internal influences interweave with external influences. Therefore, achieving balance and stability between the imposition of existence and true values can be accomplished through a threefold equation where thought and

reality align, as well as what emanates from within the person in his good feelings, not the evil ones that must be restrained and not allowed to manifest in reality, as this reflects his personal freedom.

Thus, ethics is part of values, and criticism of values is related to the outcomes, i.e., all the consequences of moral actions and processes from evil actions that contradict and conflict with good actions that result in positive effects on individuals and society. Therefore, any behavior that involves negative distraction, fake events, and bitter realities will change a person's behavior if he responds to it and engages with its consequences. It is like a disease that gradually erodes the body's organs, weakening the individual's values, principles, and existence. The sensory and aesthetic experience of a human being is also subject to criteria, which must align with the sound nature and true proof, as anything contrary to that is an obstacle and a catalyst for cutting off sound relationships, spreading vices, and engaging in shameful acts that push a person to abandon their true self, succumbing to what weakens them and yielding to pleasures that destroy their life.

One of the great characteristics of human existence is that humans are seen as moral beings, possessing an inner force—the moral feeling or conscience—that judges human actions based on what they deserve according to moral values. Humans have experienced this moral journey and their inclination towards good since the dawn of social life. They began making judgments about their own behavior and the behavior of others. While it is true that humans have biological needs and drives, which they seek to satisfy like all other creatures, they differ from all other beings in that they are the only ones capable of observing their own motives.

Islam is a comprehensive and complete belief system, not merely a doctrine, philosophy, theory, or personal viewpoint. What we want to emphasize is the need to avoid turning this belief into a mere heritage or a stage in human history. Islam is fundamentally beyond "stages" or what is typically called "stages of

development," and some even consider this as referring to the Islamic religious heritage.

Our values, which are part of our Islamic religion, must not be seen as something that is in transition or marginal; they are the essence and the foundation. They should never be a heritage or even a personal ideology or sect, as ethics are deeply rooted in our beliefs and religious foundations.

Our values must be transcendent and sublime, not just sequential, but much deeper and more profound, as the Quran has shown us. This means that value transcendence involves transcending one's self in the pursuit of various values, without being able to judge the value and transcendence individually. Instead, one tends to connect with others through this transcendence.

This transcendence stems from the human self, enabling them to innovate, establish, and produce numerous beautiful and useful inventions for their country, community, and family. This inevitably reflects back on the individual. The issue here is not one of establishing a philosophy of action or self-existence, but rather the true nature of the human being, revealing their degree of interaction with external influences. When an action is strong and profound, it leads to the establishment of many characteristics that elevate a person to higher morals and values, transcending trivialities and all the negatives and frustrations that hinder objectives and elevate civilizations.

In the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), there is evidence that love for God surpasses love for everyone, even the closest and dearest people. Preferring obedience to God's commands is one of the highest and noblest values. Prophet Ibrahim faced the toughest and most challenging tests, and his success in this trial was rewarded by the sacrifice of a great ram as a substitute for the sacrifice of his son. The stories of the prophets contain valuable lessons.

Here, "Louis Laviell" argues that true value always has to be referred to the human self. This self discovers either the evil of actions and stirs negativity, revealing aggression and evil within the act of creation itself. In other words,

humans act based on what their conscience dictates. The way they were raised shapes this, and they inherit either goodness or evil. Therefore, it is critically necessary to understand the conditions and environments in which these values were born, which served as the womb in which these values were conceived and distorted. Ethics should be viewed not only as a consequence but also as a cause, remedy, and motivation, and the understanding of these conditions must be unique and unprecedented.

What does an Arab writer write when national culture is his subject? He seeks to place it among the cultures of his time, keeping it aligned with the spirit of the era, while maintaining its distinctive identity. The least a writer can do is to engage with the concerns and problems of his time, as the main issues raised for discussion are the points of convergence where thinkers from all perspectives meet. What makes a particular intellectual era a unified one is not the agreement of thinkers on answers to questions, but the existence of persistent questions that unite everyone. If the main subject of research in one part of the world is one thing, and in another part it is something else, then the two parts are not part of the same intellectual world, even though they are geographically located within the same world.

Arab writers carry a great moral and value-based responsibility, first toward themselves and then toward the Arab world and even the Western world, in terms of reform and renewal. They must be aware of the challenges of change and put forward strategies and plans in various fields—whether economic, political, or social—because integration into various fields is crucial for aligning with the right decisions and achieving meaningful intellectual output and progress. The Arab writer must engage in numerous activities where his intellectual impact can be felt, presenting his ideas to his peers, participating in debates, sharing opinions, and benefiting from differing perspectives. This is how the intended goals can be achieved.

Finally, humanity has searched for values from ancient times to the modern and post-modern era. The contemporary human of the 20th century has become more mechanized. He has become overwhelmed by materialism, industrialization, and everything related to technological and practical development, resulting in the loss of many of his values and the adoption of foreign ones. Thus, the crisis occurred.

"It seems that science holds the highest place among the values that dominate our era. It is the source of every advocate's argument to justify and prove their claims. People trust it and depend on it in all their affairs, because its foundations seem solid, and because it is the source of all the progress humanity has achieved."

From this, we understand that science plays a significant role in programming the human mind for creativity and adhering to fixed Islamic ethics. When this is achieved, it is met with scientific breakthroughs, innovations, and discoveries.

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