

The Basic Structure Of Ethical Norms

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Introduction

This book highlights the importance of ethics and moral values in human life, especially within the contemporary ethical problems of scientific knowledge. A great civilization can grow and flourish only based on two factors: knowledge and moral values. By means of knowledge man has been able to make great achievements on the material aspects of life, but only by moral values he was able to find unity of the Truth and build a peaceful human society. The divine scriptures and demonstrative reasoning are two indispensable methods of unfolding the reality of the world. Aided by these two means, man has been able to build great civilizations and to give meaning to his life. Along the course of history, God have sent prophets and messengers of peace to the human communities for moral perfection and reconstruction of the worldview. Supported by divine guidance, prophets have been leaders of humanity toward total progression of mankind. But, with constant scientific progress and negligence of revealed guidance, man may lead human community to disastrous ends. The holy Qur'an says: [*Allah has perfected mankind in proportion; then inspired him by knowledge of his wickedness and his piety* (91:7-8)]. The entire divine message is a plea for purposive change and development of the human potentials for recognizing the value and honour of himself and to discriminate between the essential and the incidental, or between the truth and falsehood in the process of life.¹ Both knowledge and moral values are essential means in the process of discriminating the truth from falsehood.

This work is designed to provide the basic knowledge of ethics and moral values. It introduces the moral philosophies of both classical and modern tradition. The book is not concern with applied ethics; it is a theoretical study on the basic structure of ethical norms from both Islamic and modern research perspectives. The central aim of the book is to expose students and researchers of ethics to the basic ethical theories

¹ Ali Unal (ed), (1998). *The Islamic Perspectives on Science* (Azmir - Kayank). 69.

and moral norms to understand their general framework. The content of the book is generally divided into two basic parts of equal chapters. The first part consisting of four chapters is fully dedicated to reflect the ethical thought in Islam. It presents the ethical discourse in the Qur'an from various dimensions, such as terminology, conceptual analysis, and classification. The important points highlighted by this part are: the major trends of Islamic ethical thought, classifications of ethical discourse in the holy Qur'an, and the final objective of the ethics in Islamic tradition. The central aim of this part is to introduce the researchers to the Islamic moral philosophy and its basic ethical norms.

The second part of the book discusses the basic structure of modern moral philosophy. It exposes researchers to the ethical theories as being essential to the conceptualization of the entire ethical research systems. The most important points highlighted by this part are: the major approaches of modern moral philosophy; and knowledge and values as two primary means to the right end. The most practical point of this part, however, might be found in chapter four which presents virtue ethics, especially from Islamic perspective as suggested by early Muslim theologians and philosophers. This chapter exposes the reader to practical steps how to deal with his own character to gain moral virtues. The method adopted in this work is moderate in nature; ideas are thoroughly presented to ease the ethical concepts of moral philosophy. Therefore, the book is deemed to suit for both academic teaching and ethical research purposes.

Objectives of the Book

The major objective of the book is to explain the basic structure of ethics and moral values from both Islamic and modern research perspectives. By studying this book, the students and researchers will be able to explain:

- The major classifications of ethics in Qur'anic discourse;
- Meaning of descriptive and normative discourse in the holy Qur'an;

- The major ethical works of Muslim philosophers, theologians, and jurists;
- The relationship between facts and values;
- The various classifications of values;
- Analytic and descriptive study of ethics;
- The major classifications of ethical theories;
- Virtue based ethical system.

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