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Islamic Ethics in Search: An Analysis

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Abstract:

There is no any iota of uncertainty that ethics occupies an integral part of man as a distinct creature honored to be the vicegerent on earth. The issue of ethics is as old as man on earth. From the dawn of civilizations, scholars (philosopher and thinkers) have approached the concept of ethics differently with no substantial unanimity reached. This article is an attempt to address ethics in an Islamic perspective. With the aid of an exploratory method, the study delved into the divine revelations (the Qur'an and Sunnah) and the interpretations of Islamic philosophers and intellectuals with regards to the concept of ethics. The findings showed that the majority of Islamic scholars view ethics as morality, while others understand it as the intellectual power with which man distinguishes between the nobles and vices. Moreover, through the study of concept of ethics, its scope, significance, principles and characteristics, the divine revelations (the Qur'an and Sunnah) were found as the original sources of ethics.

Keywords: *Concept of ethics, Islamic scope of ethics, significance of Islamic ethics, principles of Islamic ethics, sources of Islamic ethics, characteristics of Islamic ethics*

1. Introduction

Indubitably, ethics represents an important aspect of human life. Over the years, it has gained the attention of philosophers who delved into its concept from different points of view. In fact, the discrepancy in views designates the fact that ethics is a complex issue in human life. This article presents the theoretical background of ethics in Islamic perspectives. It also explicates the scope of Islamic ethics and its application. Among of the areas covered in this study is the relationship between Islamic ethics and the SharĒ'ah. The Islamic thoughts on ethics from different perspectives such as Islamic theology, Islamic philosophy, Islamic jurisprudence, and Islamic mysticism are also analysed. Then, the scope, significance, and characteristics of Islamic ethics are discussed.

2. The Concept of Ethics in Islam

In the process of searching for the meaning of ethics, the work of the prominent scholar, Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al- Attas has been discovered. It is found that Syed al- Attas contends through his elaboration on the meaning of ethics that ethics in Islam has quintessence from Allah. Al-Attas makes it clear that to be an ethical being, all actions done by such a person must rely on what has been ordered by Allah. He affirms,

The purpose and end of ethics in Islam is ultimately for the individual; what the man of Islam does here he does in the way he believes to be good only because God and His Messenger say so and he trusts that his actions will find favour with God.¹

From the above said excerpt, Al-Attas argues that in this world, Muslims' deeds depend on their creed to God. Claiming that an attempt will never be made on doing such practice without having a clear knowledge on doing it. If it becomes known by them that it does not contradict with the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, then they will not do it. So, following this rule as a guidance in Muslims' life leads to acquisition of Islamic ethics.

Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman in her book entitled "Understanding Islam: Contemporary Discourse" explains what is meant by Islamic ethics. She explicates that having good character is inevitable in Islam, for it is an essential part of faith (al-ĒmĒn).² From this point, it is understood that without good character, there would not be faith, and if there is no faith, (i.e. believe in God as our Creator) Who from Him we are and onto Him we return, there would not be ethics.³ She added that to be a Muslim, there is need of personal good character building.⁴ Besides that, this can happen if he behaves well, in polite and gracious, respectful of and considerate to others. So, in her view, all these attitudes must complete in a person

¹Muhammad Naguib Al-Attas, "Islām, the Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality,"Islamic Council of Europe, 1976, p. 50. In the challenge of Islam

²Kamaruzaman, Kamar Oniah. Understanding Islam: contemporary discourse. (Saba Islamic Media, 2009), 194.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

before it can show that he or she has Islamic ethics. She quotes one of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to support her point to show that good character is part of Islamic faith which is Islamic ethics. "The best among you are those who have the best manners and character"⁵ Also, Kamar Oniah gives more emphasis claims that an ethical man should not be superficial.⁶ This means that such a personality will avoid showing-off and control his ego. He or she needs to see himself or herself in the way he or she sees others. She also asserts that ethics must be an essential part of a person with honesty, faith and God-consciousness.⁷ Consequently, from Kamar Oniah's point of views, Muslim code of conduct must be reflected by this kind of disposition. When this is done, that is what is called Muslim ethics.⁸

Mohd Zukifli Muhammad in his article entitled, an analysis of Islamic ethics in small and medium enterprises firstly looks at ethics from general point of view and defines it "as the system of rules governing the ordering of values."⁹ He also explains that ethics refers to the rightness or wrongness of decisions and behaviors of individuals.¹⁰ He concludes here that "the aim of ethics is to identify both the rules that should govern people's behavior and the "goods" that are worth seeking."¹¹ The author, in his explication of what ethics is all about, proclaims that "the aim of ethics is to identify both rules that should govern people's behavior and goods that are worth seeking" This shows that whatever that is right or wrong in people's decision and behaviors are caused by ethics. Therefore, generally, ethics is an inception of human characters which are confined to both "rights and wrongs." This definition is not completely agreeable for it narrows down ethics to rightness and wrongness only without considering other parts of human life.

Abdurezak A. Hashi, the author of the article titled, Islamic ethics: An outline of its principles and scope upholds that "Islamic ethics is the ethical system formed by the teachings of the Qur'Ēn and explained by the Prophet (PBUH) through action and words."¹² From this definition, it is explanatorily clear that Islamic ethics are rooted from the Qur'an and emphasized by the Prophetic tradition via action and pronouncements. Generally, the author avows that "ethics deals with all standards that prescribe what man ought to do."¹³ He further explicates that "ethics addresses virtues, duties and attitudes of individuals and the society,¹⁴ adding that it is related to customs, traditions as well as beliefs and worldviews."¹⁵ So from author's point of view, ethics encompasses in all aspects of human life. This definition is considered as comprehensive and reliable, for it does not leave any aspect in human life uncovered. So, as affirmed earlier, this definition shows that ethics covers all aspect of human life and it is rooted from the Qur'an and from the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH).

Sayed Sikandar Shah Naneef the author of the book entitled, "Ethics and Fiqh for Daily Life: An Islamic Outline," articulates that ethics refers to a science concerning the question of right and wrong in human conduct.¹⁶ He relates ethics to Islamic term 'ilm al-akhlĒq,¹⁷ explaining that the word al-akhlĒq is rooted from khalq which is "to create, to shape, and to give form."¹⁸ He cites a verse to buttress his point when Allah says to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) "And surely you have sublime morals."¹⁹ He further explicates that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described his mission as one of the endeavours towards establishing a perfect system of morality.²⁰ He quotes "I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals."²¹ When buttressing his point that ethics means morality, he quotes: "A man asked the Prophet: What is the best of what man has been given: "Good conduct." Replied the Prophet."²² From this author, it is comprehended that ethics simply means morality through his understanding of the aforementioned Prophetic tradition.

Abdurrazzaq Hesamifar, in *Islamic Ethics and Intrinsic Value of Human Being* (2012), explicates that Islamic ethics consists of moral commands which can be found in the Qur'an, the Prophetic tradition and the teachings of his Succeeding Imams.²³ Also Islamic ethics is considered to be one of the ethical systems which defines ethics in terms of Sacred and supernatural facts.²⁴ He cites Majid Fakhry's discussion on Islamic ethics and asserts that from Fakhry's point of view, Islamic ethics is divided into four parts: Scriptural morality, theological ethics, philosophical ethics and religious ethics.²⁵ So to Fakhary, for ethics to be defined properly, these four aspects need to be analysed. In addition, Abdurrazzaq highlights that Islamic ethics is dealt with in the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions, claiming that religious writers remained on

⁵This hadith was cited in this book by the author of this book at the footnote of this page in this book entitled, "Understanding Islam: Contemporary Discourse. We don't want to re-cite the same that was cited by the author. We can only refer our readers to see this book and look for details in page 194 at the footnote of this book.

⁶Kamar Oniah, 194

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Owoyemi, Musa Yusuf. "The concept of Islamic work ethic: An analysis of some salient points in the prophetic tradition." *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 3, no. 20 (2012), 3

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Hashi, Abdurezak Abdulahi. "Islamic ethics: An outline of its principles and scope." *Revelation and Science* 1, no. 3 (2011): 122-130. P.122

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Haneef, Sayed Sikandar Shah. *Ethics and fiqh for daily life: an Islamic outline*. International Islamic University Malaysia, 2006.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Qur'an Chapter 68, verse 4 (Surah Al-Qalam)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. (He refers us to MishkĒt al-MasĒbih p. 389)

²² Ibid., p. 393

²³ Hesamifar Abdurrazzaq and et al, "Islamic Ethics and Intrinsic Value of Human Being", *Journal of philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 6, no.11 (Autumn & Winter 2012): 110

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 112

Qur'anic concepts like faith, piety and obedience, and frequently, in buttressing their moral and religious ideas, the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions are quoted.²⁶ He continues by explicating that the totality of the principles of Islamic ethics are grounded in the Qur'an in which good and evil are determined by God and by the Hadith.²⁷

Ataullah Siddiqui explicates the term ethics in his article entitled, *ethics in Islam: key concepts and contemporary challenges*. He looks at ethics from two perspectives: philosophical and religious.²⁸ In his description of ethics, he claims that the sources of philosophical ethics are human reason and human experiences, while the main source of religious ethics is the divine revelation.²⁹ Therefore, the guiding principle of ethics in Islam is the sense of God's presence or the sense of God's guidance.³⁰ He ratifies that the suitable and correct word for ethics in Islam is *AkhlĒq* and it is constructed as morality.³¹ Conversely, he admits that the terms "ethics" and "morality" have different origins in Western vocabulary. To him, ethics is derived from the Greek "ethos", while morality is derived from the Latin "mores" or "morals", and both mean habits or customs.³² We can see a clarification between ethics and morality that is made by the author when he says: "morality means what is commonly felt and done, while ethics is what is appropriate and rational." Hence, he concluded that in Islamic thought, the predominant feature is Science of Morality (*Ilm- al-AkhlĒq*) and "science of ethics."³³ So, what we comprehend from the author is that the word "ethics" does not mean anything other than *Akhlaq* which means morality.

Al-Hasan Al-Aidaros, Faridahwati Mohd Shamsudin and Kamil MD Idris in *Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective* (2013), illustrate that Islamic ethics can be defined as the good principles and values based on Islamic sources. They add that these ethics are consistent with the ability of human beings and cover all aspects of life.³⁴ They further assert that Islamic worship which can be defined as religious deeds and actions ordered by Allah (SWT) to get His acceptance are designed to improve and protect ethics.³⁵ They relate ethics to faith (*ĒmĒn*), claiming that *ĒmĒn* is the power that protects and improves ethics. They also argue that in Islam no ethics without good behaviour. For someone to be ethical, he or she need to have a good character and good deeds.³⁶ These authors' explanation of ethics can be addressed in three ways. Firstly, this definition is considered as comprehensive for it depicts ethics as covering all aspects of human life. Secondly, they admit that through worship ethics will be protected and improved. And thirdly, it is accepted because it relies on good principles and values based on Islamic sources in one hand. So, with this emphasis, we conclude that this definition is good and suits the Islamic point of view. Although, it might not totally touch all aspects of ethics, at least it covers the most important aspects.

According to Bashir Ahmad Dar in his book entitled, *"Qur'anic ethics"* ethics either from psychology or from sociology deals with multifarious glitches of human demeanour.³⁷ To him, whenever ethics is mentioned, it refers to human conduct. Additionally, the author further discusses ethics from psychological aspects and explains that ethics from psychology is a subject that deals with "human behaviour" for it has connection with mental process which is metaphysics.³⁸ In contrast, from the sociological point of view, ethics deals with physical and social environment in which individual is placed.³⁹ Generally, after studying the two bodies (psychology and sociology), the author concludes that ethics deals with manifold problems of human conduct.⁴⁰ Besides, Bashir explains that the eccentricity of Islamic ethics lies in giving this religious basis to morality.⁴¹ It is derived from this explication that Islamic ethics is the root of Islamic morality. That is, there is inter-connection between ethics and moral in Islam. Or we can say both ethics and moral seem to be synonyms. Nevertheless, the author has made a slight emphasis on the difference between ethics and moral. He clarifies that in Islamic ethics, faith is the basic supposition in a personal God, while the attempt of individuals and society to approach God as much as possible is morality.⁴² However this definition is not really satisfying because it confines ethics to morality alone. Whereas in Islam, ethics has to be present in every aspect due to the universality of Islam.

Amilah Awang in *moral and ethical concepts in Islam*⁴³ defines Islamic ethics as a field that grooms man's personality and maintains harmonious living of man in this world.⁴⁴ From this definition, we can say that Islamic ethics, according to Amilah Awang, is a source of human character that shapes human ways of living positively. This means without Islamic ethics, the whole life, especially Muslims' lives will be faced by many hurdles. In addition, Islamic ethics has a significant ambition which is to cast human eccentric to be decent individuals who can fulfil their errands as vicegerents of Allah on this earth.⁴⁵ By pondering on this analysis, it can be inferred that the only thing which can make

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 114

²⁸ Siddiqui, Ataullah. "Ethics in Islam: key concepts and contemporary challenges." *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 4 (1997): 423

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Al-Hasan Al-Aidaros, and et al, "Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective", *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, vol. 4, (Dec 2013), 8

³⁵ Ibid., 9

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Dar, Bashir Ahmad. *Qur'anic ethics*. (Adam Publishers, 2000.),7

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 15-16

⁴² Ibid., 16

⁴³ This article was published in a book entitled: *Islamic Ethics and Character Building* edited by Fatimah Abdullah. This book was published by IUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia in 2014

⁴⁴ Abdullah, Fatimah. *Islamic ethics and character building*. IUM Press, (2014), 68

⁴⁵ Ibid., 69

human beings behave politely in this world is Islamic ethics. Failure to have Islamic ethics, man tends to be misled, misinformed, hoodwinked, deluded and misguided by other kinds of ethics. So, it is summed up by Amilah that Muslims understand this life as the preparation phase for the next life, (the life of real reward and chastisement). Thus, they follow Islamic ethics aiming to be successful in the test of Allah and to achieve His pleasure.⁴⁶ To Amilah, Islamic ethics is a prodigious gift to man. It is a faultless virtuous system. Its foremost aim is always more copiously sophisticated than any other ethical system either man-made or religious. It concocts man to be not only good man in the society but God-fearing man.⁴⁷

Azim Nanji, the author of the article entitled, *Islamic ethics: in a companion to ethics*, argues that the term "taqwa" refers to the human superiority that contains the notion of the ideal ethical value in the Qur'an.⁴⁸ It is added that this taqwa represents the moral grounding that causes human action.⁴⁹ Moreso, this taqwa indicates the ethical integrity which makes human beings aware of their obligations to God and society.⁵⁰ Also, taqwa has become the world-wide ethical mark of a truthfully moral community.⁵¹ Contemplating about this definition, we can observe that the author relates Islamic ethics to God consciousness (taqwa). This means that Islamic ethics is considered as a catalyst that promotes taqwa in man. That is how Islamic ethics is defined by the author.

According to Adibah Abdul Rahim in her article entitled, *Islamic Ethics and Character Building (2014)*, Islamic ethics is being defined as akhlĒq that means character, nature, and disposition.⁵² She claims that there is a close relationship among the word akhlĒq (good characters), the word KhĒliq (the Creator) and makhlĒq (the creature). She asserts that ethics refers to good relationship between khĒliq and makhlĒq and among makhlĒq themselves.⁵³ She buttresses her stance on ethics with the Qur'anic ayah in which Allah (S.W.T) says: "And You (Muhammad) are on an exalted standard of character."⁵⁴ So from this Qur'anic ayah, it is understood that ethics refers to character. This can be seen from how Allah (S.W.T) praises Prophet Muhammad (P B U H) that he is in a perfect state of good conduct.⁵⁵ Our comment on this definition is that it is agreed that character is a part of ethics but ethics is more than character. If ethics is narrowed down to only character, definitely, other part of human life will be free from ethics, and this is not Islamic. As agreed, upon by Muslim scholars that Islam is the code of life as well as the religion of ethics, therefore ethics needs to be present in all aspects of human life.

Luqman Zakariyah in *ethical considerations in Islamic marketing and promotion: a spotlight on the Islamic Bank of Britain* expounds that Islamic ethics is deeply ingrained in all Islamic concepts and is part and parcel of all Qur'anic commandments.⁵⁶ From this author's point of view, in Islam no place is free from ethics. All aspects in human life is governed by ethics. To him, ethics is very broad and covers both religious and social aspects of Muslims' lives. However, from our observation, we agree with this author for his definition of ethics is well defined and related to the Qur'an. As we know that no Muslim can dispute the authenticity of the Qur'an, therefore, this definition sounds good.

Mohd. Mumtaz Ali in his work on ethics entitled, *Subject Matter and Scope of Ethics: An Analysis (2012)* argues that the curbing ethics to morality is equivocal.⁵⁷ He contends that the ambivalence of the definitions of ethics given by other scholars is a repercussion of the relinquishment of some "crucial ethical questions."⁵⁸ He claims that people use both ethics and morality interchangeably which, according to him, is vague. As a result of this, he claims that ethics must cover all aspect of human life.⁵⁹ To him, "ethics is neither morality nor morals and manners can be studied under the ethics." However, he refutes ethics being confined to morality.⁶⁰ He also condemns limitation of ethics to any particular dimension of life. Instead, it is required to include all aspects of life. Referring to the sayings of some scholars, "ethics is a way of life", "a means to achieve good life."⁶¹ He also argues that ethics provides a rational basis and understanding of morality,⁶² claiming that a rational person would commit himself to morality.⁶³ It seems the author does not satisfy with all definitions of ethics given by other scholars. In his view, he claims that whatever level of knowledge of human beings is, they are unable to come up with true authentic knowledge. As a result, ethics must be something defined by the Creator of the whole universe Himself Who has unlimited knowledge and unlimited wisdom of everything physical and metaphysical.⁶⁴ It is logically and ethically right that there is a need-must in search for true and authentic knowledge through what was revealed from Allah instead of relying on human limited reason.⁶⁵ All in all, the author, after his agreement on the authenticity of the Qur'an as the only source of ethics and his denial of capability of human reasoning alone to be the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 70

⁴⁸ Azim Nanji, "Islamic Ethics, in A Companion to Ethics," in *The Institute of Ismaili Studies (USA: Peter Singer, Oxford Blackwells, 2000)*, 106–118.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Abdul Rahim Adibah. *Islamic Ethics and Character Building* edited by Fatimah Abdullah. (Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2014), 3

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Qur'an Chapter 68:4 and also in Qur'an Chapter 26:137

⁵⁵ Abdul Rahim, Adibal, 4

⁵⁶ Zakariyah, Luqman, *ethical considerations in Islamic marketing and promotion: a spotlight on the Islamic Bank of Britain* in *Handbook of research on Islamic Business Ethics*, edited by Abbas J. Ali (2015), 164

⁵⁷ Mohd. Mumtaz Ali, "Subject Matter and Scope of Ethics: An Analysis", *Journal of Islam in Asia*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (Dec 2012): 157-158

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 161

⁶¹ Ibid., 164

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 175

⁶⁵ Ibid., 177

source of ethics, defines ethics as "a rational search based on the True and Authentic Knowledge for knowing answers to the fundamental ethical questions concerning origin, nature, and role of man in relation to the Creator, who is all-Knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, to his own self, to the society, and to other creations on the planet."⁶⁶ It is concluded by the author that from this definition of ethics, it can be argued that ethics cannot be confined to the study of morality or to the science of morality alone. Instead, ethics in reality deals with origin of human life, purpose of life, code of conduct, mode of thinking and living.⁶⁷ He adds that ethics must be understood as a rational inquiry or rational search which intends to see the sound and logical reasons for the explanation and acceptance of any concept or theory of origin of life, its worldview, purpose of life, code of life, code of conduct, mode of thinking and living in accordance with truth and in line with reality of this world.⁶⁸ The exposition that has been achieved from the author is very interesting, for it establishes more fact about what ethics should be. Based on author's argument claiming that ethics has to cover all aspects of human life, it is agreed and accepted. This is because if ethics is narrowed down to one or some aspects of life, then, what will happen to the left ones. Definitely they will be out of ethics and that will show a deficiency in the given definition. Also, it is accepted because the author bases it on the Qur'an. For there is no one who can dispute the authenticity of the Qur'an as a revealed book from the Creator of the world, therefore, the author is right. Let us look at what Allah says:

YĒ-Sin, By the Qur'an, full of wisdom (i.e. full of laws, evidences, and proofs). Truly, you (O Muhammad) (P.B.U.H) are one of the Messengers. On a Straight Path (on Allah's religion of Islamic Monotheism). This is a Revelation sent down by the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful.⁶⁹

3. Sources of Common Principles of Ethics in Islam

According to M.A. Al-Bar and H. Chamsi-Pasha,⁷⁰ all nations have common principles of ethics. Also, in Islam, there are three main sources of common principles of ethics. These sources of common principles of ethics are: intuitive reasoning (al-fitra), faculty of reason (al-aql), and divine revelation (al-wahy, Tanzil).⁷¹

3.1. Intuitive Reasoning (Al-Fitra)

To begin our analysis with intuitive reasoning (al-fitra) or what to be called the basic innate constitution of all human beings. It is explicated by the authors that, there is an inborn intuition that guides human beings to the right or the wrong. For instance, without any dispute, it is known by human intuitive reasoning (all normal human beings whose innate constitution has not been slanted by wrong beliefs, practices, and attitudes) that killing an innocent person is repudiated and considered as an abominable and detestable crime.⁷² Their argument is supported by the Qur'anic verse when Allah says in Qur'an Chapter 2, verse, 138: Our Sibghah (religion) is the Sibghah (Religion) of Allah (Islam) and which Sibghah (religion) can be better than Allah's? And we are His worshippers. [Tafsir Ibn Kathir.]⁷³ In the prophetic traditions, several explications are made to prove that human beings have been given innate intuition. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Every child is born on Al-Fitrah [true faith of Islamic Monotheism (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone)], but his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism, as an animal give birth to a perfect baby animal. Do you find it mutilated?"⁷⁴ So from the above, it is undeniable that the uncorrupted nature can distinguish that mendaciousness, breaking promises, stealing and so forth are bad and wrong and that veracity, keeping promises, fidelity and honesty are good and right. As a result of this, it has become to be known that the rudimentary principles of ethics lie deep in every soul. It has to be concluded by saying that the hunch and inherent constitution guide those with normal immaculate nature to the right manner and keep away from malicious behavior.

3.2. Faculty of Reason (Al-'Aql)

The second source of common principles of ethics in Islam is the faculty of reason (al-'Aql). This source is defined as the aptitude to reason and descend a verdict by using one's cognizance.⁷⁵ Those who are wise, thoughtful and ponder over matters as a result of their accepting the call of the Prophets of Allah have been eulogized by the Qur'an.⁷⁶ Thus, then Qur'an says: "O you believe! If you obey and fear AllĒh, He will grant you FurqĒn [(a criterion to judge between right and wrong), or (Makhrāj, i.e. a way for you to get out from every difficulty)], and will expiate for you your sins, and forgive you; and AllĒh is the Owner of the Great Bounty."⁷⁷ It is obviously understood from the Qur'an how Allah praises those who use their minds to ponder in one hand. In another, the following Qur'anic verse shows how AllĒh will treat those who refuse to use their aptitude of reason. AllĒh in the Qur'an explicates that an abode in Hell has been prepared for those who refuse to use their knack of reason. This is due to their willingness to transgress the boundaries set by Allah's commands.⁷⁸ Allah

⁶⁶Ibid., 178

⁶⁷Ibid., 178-179

⁶⁸Ibid., 179

⁶⁹Qur'an Chapter 36, Verses 1-5 (SĒrah YĒ-Sin)

⁷⁰M.A. Al-Bar and H. Chamsi-Pasha, Contemporary Bioethics, the author of the article entitled the sources of common principles of morality and ethics in Islam. (2015) DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-18428-9_2

⁷¹Ibid. 19

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Qur'an. 2:138 (SĒrah Al-Baqarah). The Noble Qur'an: English translation of the meanings and commentary

⁷⁴(SahĒh Al-BukhĒrĒ, Vol.2 Hadith No. 467).

⁷⁵Ibid. 19

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Qur'an, 8:29 (SĒrah Al-AnfĒl)

⁷⁸Ibid. 20

says: "And they will say: Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing Fire!"⁷⁹AllĒh also proclaims in another Qur'anic verse the importance of intellect to be used to ponder on the creatures of AllĒh and His signs that are spread all over.⁸⁰"And in your creation, and what He scattered (through the earth) of moving (living) creatures are signs for people who have faith with certainty."⁸¹

3.3. The Divine Revelation (al-Wahy, TanzĒl)

The third source of common principles ethics in Islam is "the divine revelation (al-Wahy, TanzĒl). It is believed by Muslims that, Allah protects humankind by sending a number of Prophets to convey the revelation.⁸²According to these authors, a number of prophets (124,000) has been sent to guide humanity about their origin and final destination (return to God). These prophets receive the message from God and a SharĒ'ah (Code of Life) to organize the community of faithful (the Ummah), into a universal body of the believers.⁸³ Some of the Prophets were mentioned in the Qur'an. For examples: Nuh, Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Ya'qub, YĒsuf, MĒsĒ, Zakariyah, Isa, Yahya and YĒnus and so on. All these prophets belief in one God, the Supreme Power of all the worlds and creatures.⁸⁴ Every Prophet and Messenger of God proclaim the unity of God.⁸⁵ Allah says: "Invoke your Lord with humility and in secret. He likes not the aggressors." "And do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely, AllĒh's Mercy is (ever) near to the good-doers."⁸⁶ From the explication of the divine revelation, it is vividly understood that morality and ethics in Islam come from the revelation. Therefore, it is concluded that, revelation plays a significant role in human moral and ethics.

3.4. Characteristics of Islamic Ethics

The characteristics of Islamic ethics encompass four features or states according to the Qur'an and Hadith: ŌmĒn, Islam, Taqwa, and IhsĒn.⁸⁷ It is deduced from this that Islamic ethics, from the light of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition is branded by four previously mentioned physiognomies (ŌmĒn, Islam, Taqwa, and IhsĒn).According to the author, the first characteristic of Islamic ethics is ĒmĒn.⁸⁸ From the author's point of view, it is comprehended that before Islamic ethics could be attained by someone, such a person needs to have acquired ĒmĒn. This is because ĒmĒn acts like an anchor, a person's life and vision establishes a relation through the faith with one God.⁸⁹Furthermore, the author illustrates that the word ĒmĒn is derived from the root word a-m-n, meaning "to be at peace", "to have a sense of safety".⁹⁰ Not only that, he added, the same word in a dissimilar linguistic construction provides the ideal of "belief" or "faith in Allah".⁹¹ In addition, Ataullah Siddiqui expounds that, ĒmĒn is a matter of the human heart, and the Qur'an however inspires the acceptance of faiths with reason ('aql) and knowledge.⁹² This point is buttressed by the Qur'an chapter 39, verse 9 when Allah says:

Is such a person (preferable or he) who is obedient, and prostrates himself in the watches of the night, stands (in Prayer), is fearful of the Hereafter, and looks forward to the mercy of His Lord? Ask them: "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only those endowed with understanding take heed.⁹³

From the aforementioned Qur'anic verse, it is understood that for someone to be an ethical person, he or she needs to be obedient, subservient to Allah, fearful of the Hereafter, and optimistic for the mercy of Allah. So, with this, we can admit that having all these attitudes towards Allah is one of the two characteristics of Islamic ethics. The second characteristic of Islamic ethics according to the author is Islam. In the author's view, the word Islam is Arabic word and is rooted from s-l-m with the meaning "to be safe". As he explicates, Islam is the practical (exoteric) demonstration of ĒmĒn.⁹⁴ He proclaims that someone that surrenders himself/herself to Allah by obeying His will, revealed to mankind through Allah's messenger throughout the ages is a Muslim.⁹⁵ It explicated by the author that the inner conviction of ĒmĒn and the practice of Islam are intertwined in that faith and righteous conduct go hand in hand.⁹⁶ From this point, it is comprehended that having imĒn after being a Muslim shows having ethics which is Islamic. That is to say Muslim without imĒn is just like a body without soul. However, Muslim without imĒn is not ethical. The third characteristic of Islamic ethics according to Ataullah Siddiqui is taqwa. This word, according to him, is derived from the Arabic root word w-g-y and it means "to protect", or "to preserve".⁹⁷He adds that the word 'taqwa' in another linguistic construction means "to defend oneself from possible hazard or attack."⁹⁸ So for the author, this word is used by the Qur'an in the moral sense. What we

⁷⁹Qur'an, 67:10 (SĒrah Al- Mulq)

⁸⁰Ibid. 20

⁸¹Qur'an 45:4 (SĒrah Al- JĒthiyah)

⁸²Ibid. 22

⁸³Ibid. 23

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Qur'an, 7:55-56 (Surah Al- A'raf)

⁸⁷Ataullah Siddiqui, "Ethics in Islam: Key Concepts and Contemporary Challenges," *Journal of Moral Education* 26, no. 4 (1997), 424

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³(Surah Al-Zumar 39:9) Towards Understanding the Qur'Ēn: A bridge version of *TafhĒm al-Qur'Ēn*, by Sayyid Abul A'la MawdĒdĒ, translated and edited by Zafar Ishaq Ansari, MMI Publishers

⁹⁴Siddiqui, Ataullah, 424

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

understand here is that the Qur'an encourages man to avoid forbidden things or uncertain nature. It also inspires human beings to be watchful against what can jeopardize morality. Hence, it is concluded by the author that the role of taqwa is to provide a person with right tools to differentiate between the right and the wrong.⁹⁹The fourth and the last characteristic of Islamic ethic according to Ataullah Siddiqui is *ihsĒn*. He sheds light on the inception of the word and claims that *ihsĒn* is derived from the Arabic word *h-s-n* which means "suitable", "beautiful", "proper", or "fitting".¹⁰⁰ He added that this notion is the peak of Islamic ethics.¹⁰¹ More so, the author describes *ihsĒn* as love of Allah. *IhsĒn* represents a Muslim's piety.¹⁰²Consequently, it could be summarized that based on the view of Ataullah Siddiqui, for anyone to obtain Islamic ethics, such a person needs those four characteristics (*imĒn*, Islam, taqwa, and *ihsĒn*). It shows that without the togetherness of these four characteristics, definitely Islamic ethics could not be attained. This definition is good and considered as an accepted one. This is because of associating ethics to the Islamic inevitable fundamental physiognomies. If one of these four characteristics is missing, then Islam of such a person is not completed. The same thing goes to ethics from Islamic perspective, if all these features are not completed, then, any definition given to ethics is displeasing.

4. Conclusion

After several long voyage on the searching for the exact meaning of ethics in Islam, this article therefore, emphasized and concluded that there is no distinct delineation for the term ethics, because of its complexity in nature. The term means different things to different people, depending on the perspective of the viewers. Majority view ethics as morality while others analyze it in different ways. Nevertheless, through the investigation, the origin of ethics is traced to the sources of divine revelation (i.e. Qur'an and Prophetic traditions). Luqman Zakariyyah expounds that Islamic ethics is deeply ingrained in all Islamic concepts and is part and parcel of all Qur'anic commandments. Mohd. Mumtaz Ali argues that the curbing ethics to morality is equivocal. He contends that the ambivalence of the definitions of ethics given by other scholars is a repercussion of the relinquishment of some "crucial ethical questions." He also argues that people use both ethics and morality interchangeably which, according to him, is unclear. As a result of this, he claims that ethics must cover all aspect of human life. To him, "ethics is neither morality nor morals and manners can be studied under the ethics." However, he refutes ethics being confined to morality. He also condemns limitation of ethics to any particular dimension of life. Instead, it is required to include all aspects of life. Referring to the sayings of some scholars, "ethics is a way of life", "a means to achieve good life." He also argues that ethics provides a rational basis and understanding of morality, claiming that a rational person would commit himself to morality. It seems these two authors have different stances unlike others. Thus, it can be concluded that whatever level of human intellect is, it is unable to come up with true authentic knowledge. As a result, ethics must be something defined by the Creator of the whole universe Himself Who has unlimited knowledge and unlimited wisdom of everything physical and metaphysical. It is logically and ethically right that there is a needing-must in search for true and authentic knowledge through what was revealed from Allah instead of relying on human limited reason. Hence, Ethics in Islam means "Source of Inquiry" That means ethics is rational to think on what makes right to be right and what wrong to be wrong. Ethics does not mean morality.

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⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

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