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Mystical Ethics of the Quran with a Focus on Allamah Tabataba'i's View*

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Abstract

In this paper, we give an account of Quranic ethics, which can be called “mystical ethics of the Quran” and then compare it to mysticism, particularly practical mysticism. In his interpretation of certain Quranic verses, Allama Tabataba'i points to three types of ethics: “material-philosophical,” “general prophetic,” and “specifically Quranic” ethics. A reflection on the nature, principles, and goals of the latter type of ethics reveals that it bears remarkable similarities to practical mysticism. Thus, in this research, we delineate the nature of the specifically Quranic ethics and compare it with theoretical and practical mysticism, because they have striking commonalities in their principles, methods, and goals.

Keywords

ethics, mysticism, the Quran, monotheism, monotheistic ethics.

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Introduction

Ethical and mystical contents constitute a considerable bulk of Quranic verses, which have been the main sources of the thought and works of Muslim ethicists and mystics. Allama Tabataba'i is one of the scholars who were greatly concerned with moral and mystical issues in their works. In his commentary of the Quran, *al-Mizan*, and under verses 153-157 of Sura al-Baqarah, he discusses three major types of ethics: the material-philosophical, the general prophetic, and the specifically Quranic ethics. The first goes back to philosophers, particularly Ancient Greek philosophers, the second to general teachings of prophets, and the third is specific to the Quran.

On the one hand, like other ethicists, Allama believes that there is only one way to achieve human perfection and virtues, which is to repeat, and persist in doing, virtuous actions. With persistence on a virtuous action, its effect will be impinged upon and solidified in the soul in such a way that it cannot quickly disappear; in the jargon of Muslim ethicists, it will turn into a *malakah*, or an acquired habit (Tabataba'i, 1364 Sh, 1:534).

He mentions that the main motives for moral behaviors and their repetition may be either happiness in this world, salvation in the afterlife, or the pleasure of God. A morality inspired by the latter motive converges with mysticism and spiritual journey. Thus, the main question of this research will be the following: what is the nature of the specifically Quranic ethics, and how is it related to Islamic mysticism? We also need to deal with other issues, such as the three types of ethics, particularly the specifically Quranic ethics, the notion of mystical knowledge, and its grounds, degrees, and goals, dimensions of human existence and degrees of its perfection, and a comparison between the specifically Quranic ethics and mysticism.

Although the term "specifically Quranic ethics" has been suggested

only by Allama Tabatbai in his *al-Mizan*, it can be frequently found in mystical and ethical works of Muslim scholars. Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Awsaf al-ashraf* and Jawadi Amuli's *Marahil-i akhlaq dar Quran*, which is a commentary on Khwajah's book, can be pointed out as remarkable works concerning Quranic monotheistic ethics.

Three Principles of Morality

Under his commentary of verses 153-157 of Surah al-Baqarah, Allama Tabataba'i mentions three exclusive principles of human moral behaviors:

A. Material-Philosophical Principle

When people want to do something, they often consider the other people's judgments regarding its praiseworthiness or blameworthiness. Thus, some philosophers hold that the principle of human moral behavior is their acceptance or rejection by people. Allama Tabataba'i calls this type of ethics "material or philosophical ethics":

The main motive for material ethics consists in this-worldly interests. It notifies people of the material benefits and effects of their behaviors, and thus compels them to observe moral virtues; for example, by saying that chastity and contentment and ignoring the possessions of others make one honorable and highly regarded by people, whereas greed leads to humiliation and distress. (Tabataba'i, 1364 Sh, 1:534).

However, philosophical ethics as developed by Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and pursued by Muslim philosophers is grounded

in virtues and vices in human actions. In their view, moral virtue and vice result from the way the main three human faculties—*appetitive*, *irascible*, and *rational*—function. The appetitive faculty (*al-quwwah al-shahawiyyah*) seeks to gain benefits and good that are harmonious to human desires, such as eating and drinking. The irascible faculty (*al-quwwah al-ghadabiyyah*) repels harm; it motivates us, for instance, to defend our life and properties. And the rational faculty guides us to our ultimate perfection and happiness.

Each of these three faculties has a middle or moderate state, as well as two extreme states of excess (*ifrat*) and deficiency (*tafrit*). The virtue of each faculty consists in its middle state, and both states of excess and deficiency count as vices and blameworthy. For example, for the appetitive faculty, the moderate state is chastity, the state of excess is greed, and the state of deficiency is indolence. In philosophical ethics, people are praised if they develop habits of chastity, courage, and wisdom, which are moderate states of their faculties, and their fall into excess or deficiency makes them blameworthy. If one wants to be praised by people or be immune from their reproach, one needs to develop these moderate habits within himself, and to refrain from any excess or deficiency.

B. General Prophetic Approach

The most general way to refine the soul and develop a praiseworthy moral character is to rely on the judgments of the comprehensive reason with reference to two things: (1) the advantages and disadvantages of actions in the afterlife, and (2) divine providence. This method, deployed by prophets in general, is used by the Quran as well. Allama Tabataba'i has classified relevant Quranic verses into two groups. The first consists of Quranic verses that try to refine and correct moral traits through

other-worldly ends, all of which are true perfections, rather than speculative or imaginary perfections, and the second includes the verses that try to correct morality and refine the soul through the preliminary principles of these perfections, which are true and real in their own right, such as the belief in providence and assuming moral divine attributes, since humans are successors of God and should thus exemplify and display His attributes.

There are many Quranic verses that seek to correct moral traits via other-worldly ends, such as “Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise” (9:111); “Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account” (39:10); and “Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment” (14:22).

There are also many Quranic verses that seek to refine moral traits by emphasizing the preliminary principles of perfection, such as divine providence or assuming divine moral attributes, as ways to achieve other-worldly happiness: “No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being—indeed that, for Allah, is easy” (57:22). This verse prohibits people from sadness for what they lose and delight for what they gain, saying that all that occurs takes place under divine providence; in other words, people will have what they are supposed to have and will lose what they are supposed to lose, so it is wrong to be sad or delighted for losses or gains. The same idea appears in the following verse: “No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah - He will guide his heart” (64:11).

C. Specifically Quranic Ethics

As implied by Allama Tabataba'i's remarks, this type of ethics is based on two important foundations: knowledge and love, which will be briefly sketched in what follows.

i. The epistemic foundation

People do what they do for a purpose, such as gaining honor or escaping a disaster. The Quran restricts honor to God: “Indeed, honor belongs to Allah entirely” (10:65), as it restricts power to Him: “All power belongs to Allah” (2:165). Obviously, if one believes in such teachings, one’s heart will have no place for showing off, fear of people, or hope in them. If one has certainty that these teachings are true, then all evil will be wiped off his heart and will be replaced by virtues such as fear of God, honor, self-respect, and contentment.

According to God’s words in the Quran, the whole world, the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, are owned by God. The reality of this ownership is such that it leaves no autonomy for any other being—autonomy is exclusive to God. Therefore, nothing is independent of God in any way; everything together with its essence, attributes, and actions is owned by God. If we truly believe in this, we can never find a trace of autonomy in ourselves or our belongings. With such faith, everything will lose its autonomy in our view. A person who reaches this level of understanding cannot want anything other than God; there is no motivation in such a person to want, fear, hope, be occupied with, trust, or submit oneself or one’s affairs to anyone other than his Lord (Tabataba’i, 1364 Sh, 1:540-41). Such a person does not reject or escape from anything but falsity, which is everything but God, since everything other than God is perishable. A person with such faith does not attribute any independence to his own existence as opposed to God’s existence, and does not care about his own desires as opposed to God’s. This is, indeed, the practical monotheism par excellence.

In the premises of the above argument, Allama Tabataba’i draws upon three divine attributes: Almighty (*‘aziz*), Omnipotent (*qadir*), and Sovereign (*malik*). Having heartfelt faith in these attributes generates a full-fledged monotheistic motive for action. Allama has also cited some other Quranic verses, in which other divine

attributes and names appear, so as to show that, in the specifically Quranic ethics, a willing agent has no motive other than God: "Allah—there is no deity except Him. To Him belong the best names" (20:8); "That is Allah, your Lord; there is no deity except Him, the Creator of all things" (6:102); "Who perfected everything which He created" (32:7); "And [all] faces will be humbled before the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence" (20:111); "All are devoutly obedient to Him" (2:116); "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him" (17:23); "But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (41:53); "He is, of all things, encompassing" (41:54); "And that to your Lord is the finality" (53:42); and "give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return'" (2:155-156).

These verses indicate that divinity, creation, and lordship in the world all belong to God, and a monotheist should, in addition to the belief in God's being the Almighty, Omnipotent, and Sovereign, which is the main foundation of monotheistic motivation for human behaviors, have the heartfelt belief that he has no god other than God; He is the creator of everything, more manifest than anything, and All-Encompassing, and it is to Him that everything and everyone returns.

ii. Love

Humans are under God's rule, and this does not mean that they have no way but to acquiesce to it. To the contrary, such submission to the divine rule and guardianship is a choice, arising from deep knowledge of God and love for His absolute perfections. At this stage, humans are well aware that God is "the most powerful of judges" and yet He is "the most merciful of the merciful." If God is "Omnipotent," "observer," "severe in retribution," and so on, He is nevertheless "the most merciful of the merciful," "accepting of

repentance,” “forbearing,” “the best of judges,” “full of mercy,” “the possessor of great bounty,” “kind,” “all-benign,” “appreciative,” “forgiving,” “all-attentive,” “all-munificent,” “all-affectionate,” and “guider.” With faith in the system of divine attributes and names, one willingly and passionately submits himself to and sincerely obeys God, for he knows that the highest perfection for a human is servitude and submission to the Originator.

Moreover, according to a classification offered by Muslim scholars and mystics, divine attributes are of two types: attributes of beauty (*jamal*) and attributes of majesty (*jalal*). Attributes of majesty are those related to God’s omnipotence and dominance over the world, and attributes of beauty are those related to His grace and mercy. Al-Qaysari writes,

God’s essence has, in terms of the degrees of divinity and lordship, numerous contrasting attributes, such as kindness and might, mercy and wrath, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and so on. Contrasting attributes are included in the attributes of beauty and majesty, because whatever concerns kindness is an attribute of beauty, and whatever concerns might is an attribute of majesty. (Qaysari, 1387 Sh, 34)

Thus, in a monotheistic system, one submits to the divine attributes of majesty, and yet, one loves the divine attributes of beauty. By submitting to God’s might, sovereignty, and power, one obtains the ultimate grace, mercy, forgiveness, and happiness. By arriving at the stage of proximity to, and annihilation in, God, one finds that the attributes of beauty and majesty are one, and a person who is annihilated in God finds himself unified with both of these attributes. At the stage of proximity and annihilation, everything is beautiful, and this is why the mystic sees nothing there but beauty. It should be noted that no attribute of beauty is devoid of majesty, and no attribute

of majesty is void of beauty; that is, there is grace in God's might, and there is might in God's grace. Al-Qaysari says,

Every attribute of beauty has majesty, just as the infatuation (*hayman*) that appears by seeing God's beauty, and infatuation consists in the intellect's perplexity by God's beauty. And every attribute of majesty has a beauty in it, which is the grace covered by divine might. (Qaysari, 1387 Sh, 34).

Allama Tabataba'i holds that this approach results in love-based worship and that with such worship a human can attain divine proximity (as opposed to worshipping merely for the sake of heavenly pleasure or for salvation from hell). On the one hand, in his moral discussions, he emphasizes that the third approach—i.e., Quranic ethics—invites us to monotheism and thus leads to pure servitude (Tabataba'i, 1417 AH, 1:360). On the other hand, in his commentary of Sura Yusuf, he asserts that pure or love-based servitude results in divine proximity. In his view, people who do not worship God out of desire for paradise or fear of Hell but rather worship Him for His love will attain divine proximity, because there is no veil between them and God, since their criterion for what they do in their life is not this-worldly or other-worldly gains but divine satisfaction. Thus, they are not concerned with this world, Iblis, or personal desires, and so these things do not prevent them from servitude, and they arrive at the degree of divine proximity (Tabataba'i, 1417 AH, 11:162).

The Process of Attaining Love-Based Servitude

The main goal in specifically Quranic ethics is to attain divine satisfaction, which leads in its own right to constant remembrance of God, which in turn leads to God's mercy. Thus, the servant's faith in God will increase, and his heart will be occupied by his Lord. Such infatuation and passion lead to pure

servitude (love-based servitude). Such a person will arrive at a stage at which he seeks divine “face” and satisfaction, and he is set out to satisfy his eternal Beloved; he is not concerned with virtues or vices, with people’s praise or approbation, with this world or the afterlife, nor with heaven or hell. His provision is the servitude of God, and his guide is His love (Tabataba’i, 1364 Sh, 1:375).

It should be noted, nevertheless, that in specifically Quranic ethics, knowledge and love of God are obtained via the refinement and purification of one’s soul. The goal of the Quran’s monotheistic ethics is proximity to God and His pleasure, since the main goal of the purification and refinement of the soul is divine proximity and gaining absolute felicity.

The Notion of Mysticism and Its Types

The word “*irfan*” (mysticism) is derived from the root ‘-r-f, which means to know, to admit, to be well-known, and goodness (*Munjid al-tullab*, 1360 AH). The agent noun derived from this root is “*arif*,” which is close in meaning to “*alim*” (scholar, knowledgeable). The difference between the two is that the former and its cognates are used for a specific type of knowledge, which is gained with meticulousness and decipherment (as in “mysticism,” which comes from mystery). In fact, *irfan* is the knowledge that goes from the surface to the depth, from the exterior to the interior, or from the veil to what is behind it. It involves a kind of knowledge that cannot be obtained by everyone and is applicable only to particular objects of knowledge. *Irfan*, or mystical knowledge, is not a kind of knowledge that comes after ignorance; rather, it is a sort of knowledge that one always has, though one might be unaware of it (Muwahhidiyan ‘Attar, 1388 Sh, 58-60).

In its technical meaning, *irfan* (mysticism) has been defined in various ways. The plurality of such definitions implies that there is an ambiguity of some sort in the concept. What is obvious is that all

these definitions seek to unearth the same truth. A comprehensive and careful definition of mysticism is that given by al-Qaysari:

Mysticism is the knowledge of the Exalted God with respect to His names, attributes, and manifestations, and of the origin and the resurrection; the knowledge of the realities of the world and how they go back to one and the same reality, which is the Unitary Essence; the knowledge of the path of spiritual journey and striving for the purification of the soul from the limitations of particular restraints and its connection to its origin and its assuming the attribute of absoluteness and universality. (Qaysari, 1381 Sh, 7)

The Relationship between Theoretical Mysticism and Quranic Ethics

Theoretical mysticism has a function similar to that of philosophy: seeking to understand the reality. Whereas the philosopher wants to know the reality via rational arguments, the mystic seeks an intuitive ontology via inner intuition. The mystic seeks not only to see the reality of the world with his inner eyes, but wants to be annihilated therein.

Quranic ethics is based on Quranic ontology, which is tremendously similar to mystical ontology, as it stands on a level higher than sense and reason. The Quran introduces three paths to knowing the realities of the world: sense, reason, and heart. Many Quranic verses recommend observing the world in order to gain knowledge of its creator. Some Quranic verses argue for the existence of God and His names and attributes through rational reasoning with certainly known or empirical premises. The heart as the only means for mystical observations is also mentioned in the Quran, and it is introduced as a means of knowledge.

Thus, Quranic ontology has stages beginning from sensory to heartfelt knowledge. With the elevation of one's knowledge of the world from the sensory to the rational and heart-based level, one's moral level will be likewise elevated. Monotheistic ethics of the Quran is a result of profound knowledge of the world and its stages, as well as knowledge of the human and his existential dimensions. Therefore, in order to assume God's attributes at this stage, one needs to be aided by intuitive and mystical knowledge.

Relationship Between Practical Mysticism and Specifically Quranic Ethics

There is a close tie between practical mysticism and Quranic ethics in their goals and methods, some of which will be sketched in what follows:

1. Unity of Goals

Although the practitioner's goal in both mysticism and general prophetic ethics is proximity to God, the goal of achieving this proximity is different in the two paths. In the general ethics of the prophets, the goal is to gain certain this-worldly and other-worldly benefits. In other words, this system of ethics is self-centered. In mysticism, however, the goal is union with God, witnessing the personal unity of existence, annihilation in God, and being with Him. In fact, a mystical wayfarer arrives at a stage of "divine proximity" at which he sees no position for himself and finds no "ego" to consider its gain or loss (Qaysari, 1381 Sh, 12; Ashtiyani and Rudgar, 1386 Sh, 180).

Likewise, in Quranic ethics, the wayfarer's goal is to gain divine satisfaction, remove all his egoism, and arrive at pure monotheism in which there is no trace of polytheism. This cannot

be obtained unless all material attachments and dark and bright veils within the wayfarer's existence are obliterated. This will result in annihilation in God, which is the mystic's goal in his mystical journey. The annihilation is nothing but ignoring everything other than God in one's motives for his actions. In such ethics, the wayfarer's motive is God's love, as well as absolute servitude to Him. Human perfection consists in the development of divine perfections in oneself. Thus, Quranic verses suggest that humans were created to go towards the desired perfection and acquire moral virtues. The ultimate human perfection is monotheism, and monotheism in action appears only when God is present at the beginning and in the end of every action: "My Lord! Cause me to enter wherever it be, with Truth, and cause me to exit, wherever it be, with Truth" (17:80).

Allama Tabataba'i emphasizes that the Quran considers the goal of the creation of mankind to be achieving the position of servitude: "I created the jinn and humans for nothing else but that they may serve Me" (51:56). Pure servitude is nothing but pure monotheism, or annihilation in God, so to speak. The ultimate goal of creation is the reality of servitude and worship—becoming detached from one's own self, as well as others, and remembering the Lord (Tabataba'i, 1364 Sh, 18:582).

Therefore, the goal in monotheistic ethics of the Quran can be said to be similar to the goal of the spiritual wayfarer in practical mysticism. They both aim at purification for the sake of God, assuming His attributes, observing His beauty and majesty, and annihilation in Him.

2. Emphasis on the Purification of the Soul and Refinement of the Interior (Asceticism)

The way to arrive at the goal in both practical mysticism and Quranic ethics is inner wayfaring and internal transformation,

which can be accomplished through purifying the soul and refining the inner self. In both, the path towards God is the refinement of the heart from any impurity and adorning it with virtues. With respect to morals, the Quran emphasizes the refinement and purification of the soul, and Quranic ethics is indeed based on this principle. There are numerous Quranic verses in which human salvation and happiness are said to be rooted in that: “He who purified himself shall prosper” (87:14), and “He who purifies it will prosper” (91:9). Moreover, there are verses in which the goal of the prophets is said to be the purification of human souls: “[O]ne who rehearses to them His verses, purifies their lives, and imparts to them the Book and the Wisdom” (62:2) and “[T]each them the Book and Wisdom and purify their lives” (2:129).

The terms “refinement of the soul” (*tahdhib al-nafs*) or “purification of the interior” (*tazkiyat al-batin*) are used by mystics and scholars of mysticism as the only mystical path towards God. There is no mystical book in which a path other than the refinement of the soul and the purification of the interior is introduced as the path towards the mystical goal. In fact, genuine mystics base mysticism on teachings of the Quran and its mysterious propositions. For them, any mystical journey outside the Quranic path is invalid. On this, both Shiite and Sunni mystics and scholars of mysticism agree. As is widely known, the majority of Sufis and Muslim mystics trace their mystical teachings back to an Infallible Shiite Imam, such as Imam ‘Ali (a), Imam al-Sajjad (a), Imam al-Sadiq (a), or Imam al-Rida (a), who were the true interpreters of the Quran and the Tradition.

At any rate, there are many cases in ethical and mystical texts concerning the underlying principle of the refinement of the soul and the purification of the interior, some of which are as follows:

The manners of the pious are mostly formed through refining the soul, taming the body’s organs, and purifying the heart, and observing God’s limits,

avoiding lusts and doubts, worshipping, and hastening to do good (Sarraj Tusi, 1382 Sh, 191).

The journey of piety and the toleration of hardships and refinement are three things: the refinement of the soul, the refinement of the temper, the refinement of the heart (Maybudi, 1383 Sh, 2:19).

The mystical foundation of this school is [this hadith:] “Verily, God has created the human upon His image,” which has occasioned a consideration of mystical union, unity, and revelation. ... If the mystic refines his soul, his heart will be the center of the manifestation of God’s lights, and he find himself as a reflection of the divine light (Suhrawardi, 1375 Sh, 537).

Asceticism and the refinement of the soul is to remove those veils, reveal those wonders and sciences, and arrive at that world (Furghani, 1379 Sh, 537).

3. Centrality of the Quran and Tradition

Islamic ethics and mysticism are both rooted in the Quran and Tradition, and both have been developed in the Islamic environment. Both Muslim mystics and ethicists have formulated the principles and ancillaries of their respective sciences in accordance with the teachings of the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet, and they have strived to derive the foundations of their theoretical and practical views from the Quran and Tradition. The works of Shiite mystics and scholars draw on moral and mystical teachings of the infallible Imams (a) as well.

In many Sufi works, emphasis on the Quran and Tradition as the foundations of ethics and mysticism is obvious. For instance, a Sufi master is reported to have said: “My ear heard a science of the sciences of the People of Truth. I did not let it inside my heart except after checking it against the Quran and Tradition” (Sarraj

Tusi, 1382, 377). Another Sufi master also reportedly said:

The Sufi is one who takes the Book of God in his right hand and the tradition of the apostle of God in his left hand, looks at Heaven with one eye and at Hell with the other, casts a glance at this world in between, puts the afterlife on his body as if it was clothes, and in the middle of the two, he calls the Lord, "Here I am at thy service O God; here I am at thy service!" (Shafi'i Kadkani, 1384 Sh, 209).

Moreover, many terms in these two sciences are derived from the Quran and Tradition. In Quranic ethics, which is the same as the true Islamic mysticism and is a deeper aspect of Islam, all definitions and terms derive from the Quran and the sayings of the Infallibles (a). For instance, terms such as repentance (*tawbah*), turning to God (*inabah*), truthfulness (*sidq*), seclusion (*khalwah*), reflection, sadness, hope, thankfulness, passion, knowledge, certainty, peace, trust in God, submission, calmness, monotheism, unity, and union are all derived from Quranic verses or the hadiths of the Infallibles (a).

4. Shared Stages, Positions, and Stations

There is a distance between God and creatures that is divided into innumerable stages and stations. It is divided into three, seven, ten, forty, one hundred, and even one thousand stages in different mystical sources. Asceticism is the time taken for a spiritual wayfarer to cross these stations until he arrives at the destination. The main works on this include *Manazil al-sa'irin* (Stations of Mystical Wayfarers) by Khwajah 'Abdullah Ansari, *Awsaf al-ashraf* by Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and, among the contemporary works, *Marahil-i akhlaq dar Quran* by Jawadi Amuli.

From these and other books, in which mystical stages are enumerated, one can infer that what they mean by mystical

journey corresponds to what we have called in this paper specifically Quranic ethics, because they have outlined mystical stages and stations by drawing upon Quranic verses.

Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi expounded ethics on two levels. The first level is scientific ethics, which is taken from the philosophers, contains rational arguments, and deals with the human soul in that it has psychological habits and is the cause of voluntary praiseworthy or blameworthy acts. Knowledge of the soul, psychological faculties, and the perfection of the soul are preliminaries of ethics in this sense (Tusi, 1356 Sh, 48). The other level is practical ethics or mystical wayfaring, in which paths to perfection and its obstacles are discussed. In his *Awsaf al-ashraf*, Khwajah has explained every ethical or mystical stage or station by drawing upon a Quranic verse, which can be considered a trace of correspondence between practical mysticism and Quranic ethics.

The book *Marahil-i akhlaq dar Qur'an* (Stages of Ethics in the Quran) by Jawadi Amuli, which is a part of his thematic commentary of the Quran, tries to present the monotheistic ethics of the Quran, favors the style of Tusi's work, and elaborates the stages and stations according to his list.

In his *Sharh-i junud-i 'aql wa jahl* (Commentary on the Soldiers of Reason and Ignorance), Imam Khomeini also discusses mystical stages in detail. He tackles issues such as patience and its degrees, submission and its advantages, virtues of silence, humbleness, asceticism and its degrees, knowledge, trust in God, thankfulness and its degrees, and happiness with divine providence, which are main parts of any mystical book.

5. Emphasis on Remembrance of God (Dhikr)

Remembrance of God is a major solution offered in ethics and mysticism for repelling passing thoughts that constitute an

obstacle on the path towards God. The majority of ethical and mystical writings, especially those by accomplished mystics, are replete with dhikrs prescribed for different occasions. The purpose of dhikr is to obviate ignorance and keep the spiritual wayfarer vigilant. Thus, dhikrs have different functions in various mystical occasions.

Biographies of mystics and ethicists show that they constantly remembered God with *general* and *specific* dhikrs, and they encouraged their students and followers to do the same. In any case, dhikr can be considered an important commonality between ethics and mysticism. Thus, the bulk of many ethical, mystical, and exegetical sources is devoted to the divisions of dhikr; for example, it is sometimes divided into bodily, psychological, heart-based, secret, spiritual, essential, and “hidden-of-the-hidden” dhikrs (Bahr al-‘Ulum, 1415 AH, 178-79), and sometimes into bodily and psychological, and each into unqualified and qualified dhikrs (Bahr al-‘Ulum, 1415 AH, 162-92).

There are numerous Quranic verses in which the importance of dhikr is emphasized. Moreover, all Quranic verses count as dhikr, as the whole Quran is called “Dhikr” as well. Some verses command believers to remember God a lot, with an emphasis on the quantity: “Believers, remember Allah much” (33:41), and some emphasize the quality of dhikr: “And when you have performed your Hajj rites, remember Allah as you had been remembering your own forefathers, or even with greater zeal” (2:20).

6. The Essence of Love

What pushes the mystical wayfarer forward on the path of monotheism is the love that draws him toward the beloved. The love comes from God’s love of Himself, which flows throughout the world as a manifestation of His names and attributes. Therefore, all beings, as such, love their origin and love each

other, and such love is more intense when it comes to God's friends, since they are more perfect manifestations of God's names and attributes.

There are many Quranic verses that indicate this point: "But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah" (2:165). God is loved by everyone, but He is particularly loved by believers. Love for God is the origin of all actions and behaviors on the part of believers and the essence of their life. Some people have interpreted the word "drink" in the verse "and their Lord will give them a purifying drink" (76:21) to mean love.

Scholars of mysticism have talked about two paths towards divine proximity, or annihilation in God, both of which can be taken at the same time: one is to strive and practice asceticism and the other is to love. The easier path is the latter. Many accomplished mystics have been successful because of their sudden love and infatuation, and thus managed to reach the destination of mysticism in a short time. This is why many ethical and mystical works are rife with passages and poems on love.

Conclusion

1. In material ethics, motives for action are social approbation or disapproval. What is judged praiseworthy by mundane reason is approbated, and what is judged blameworthy is reprimanded. In philosophical terms, moderate faculties lead to approbation, and excess or deficiency lead to social reprehension.

2. In the general ethics of prophets, human behaviors are motivated by the reward or punishment of the hereafter, as well as divine providence. This system of ethics is confirmed by sacred scriptures, including the Quran, but because of its self-centered motives, it is not perfectly monotheistic.

3. Specifically Quranic ethics is based on pure monotheism,

consisting of two foundations: intuitive knowledge of God and love for Him. Thus, it has deep ties with Islamic mysticism based on the Quran and the tradition of the Infallibles (a).

4. Theoretical mysticism, which provides an intuitive account of existence and its stages, bears remarkable similarities, or rather corresponds, to the Quranic worldview in theoretical ethics. Practical mysticism, which is a psychological journey towards the highest degree of existence, also corresponds to Quranic practical ethics.

5. Specifically Quranic ethics and Islamic mysticism match one another in their goals, emphasis on self-refinement, asceticism, compliance with the Quran and Tradition, shared mystical stations and stages, and remembrance of God.

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