

The Quranic Virtue Ethics in the Context of Contemporary Western Virtue Ethics

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Abstract

This paper gives an outline of the aims of the Quranic virtue ethics as presupposed or implied by the ethical verses of the second, *sura* or chapter of the Quran, *al-Baqarah*, comparing it with the contemporary western virtue ethics.

It is argued that avoidance of moral chaos on earth, is the primary goal of the Quranic ethics. Virtue integrates while vice disintegrates our personal and societal character. This paper portrays in outline the overall ethical élan and direction of the Quranic ethical worldview and asks how we can protect ourselves against moral chaos at the individual and societal level. For the Quran, this process starts with the idea of moral accountability inculcated in our hearts and minds by faith, prayers, and revealed guidance about virtue. Equipped with these ingredients of *taqwa*, or moral conscientiousness, we need to manage our worldly provisions for the benefit of all concerned by spending them [properly]. The basic things such proper management of provisions/ avoidance of corruption on earth requires are keeping the covenants and joining what needs to be joined through personal and social virtue. These points are taken from the Quranic verses and elaborated to create the overall context in which the Quran places its ethical guidance in one of its largest *suras*. The opening verse 2:2 is the pivot around which the Quran builds four concentric circles related to personal virtue, moral failure, universal moral responsibility of civilization, and social ethics.

These insights of the Quran will be compared with major developments in contemporary western virtue ethics such eudaimonism, agent-centered virtue ethics, target-centered virtue ethics, and pleonastic virtue ethics. The points of overlap and divergence will be highlighted to bring out the spiritual foundation of the Quranic virtue ethics.