

Applied Ethics in Islamic Governance: Engaging Culture and Morality

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The last century was marked by an unsettling paradox of progress and regress, where great advances in science, technology, and knowledge were roped with dreadful catastrophes, such as the two destructive world wars, the Great Depression, and the Holocaust, to make for one shambolic journey that has persisted into the 21st century. Now, confronted by global crises, such as atmospheric and environmental degradation, geo-political conflicts involving weapons of mass destruction, organised violence, economic disparity and inequality, unsought epidemic diseases, and destructive social and lifestyle ills, the overburdened earth continues to be battered by the after-effects of these problems more than it can endure. Rather unsurprisingly, scientists around the globe have begun to examine the risk of the world plunging into its sixth mass extinction.² A more disconcerting development within the broader scientific community, however, is the suggestion that the global problems faced by the world are not linear; simply ending them will not reverse the damage they have inflicted.³ As the natural configuration of the world has been marred, humanity may well be in for a flurry of unprecedented cataclysmic disasters, and must resign themselves to the fact that they are perpetually locked in a 'one step forward and two steps back' limbo.

Most, if not all, of the existing human-induced environmental, political, and social breakdowns can be traced to one root cause: greed. As the elephant

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² Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, Henry Holt and Company: New York, 2014

³ Will Steffen, Katherine Richardson, Johan Rockström, Sarah E. Cornell, Ingo Fetzer, Elena M. Bennett, Reinette Biggs et al. "Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet," *Science* 347, no. 6223, 2015, p. 1-12

in the room here, greed is the overarching problem that ties together ignorance, selfishness, impatience, ingratitude, hedonism, imprudence, and many other forms of me-ism underlying the prevailing self-destructive patterns of human thinking and behaviour. Greed nurtures from within the damaged being an excessive focus on self-gratification, fracturing their conception of the ethereal relationship between the self and nature, and of that between the self and values. The whole predicament, thus, demonstrates more than just a behavioural failure. Where progress is increasingly defined as more wealth and more power, human creativity ceases to be driven by good purpose, while values, morals, and sound judgment become overpowered by desires and emotions.

With unrestrained human nature being something of an Achilles heel for real, positive progress, the need to enforce stricter constraints on human action may seem to be the most direct and efficient solution to many. However, to simply compel outward behavioural conformity, especially when unaccompanied by self-reflection and inner reform, will not address the problem at its core, not to mention that too much constraint can dangerously stifle innovation, energy, and growth. There needs to be a balance of creativity and discipline, governed by a continuous rational, non-impulsive, moral, and value-driven weighing of benefits and risks to any human action. Accordingly, the broken link between human values and action must first be mended before the community can begin to work towards building a better world for the future. A crucial point to emphasise here is the need to accept that this mending must occur in the form of individual and collective mind-set as well as attitudinal transformation.

To establish a value-driven community with a strong moral and ethical compass (proposed here as the ideal corrective), a fundamental paradigm shift must first be made at the cultural level, that which is in tune with the need to dispense with the me-first or me-only attitude of self-importance and to climb out of the abyss of unguided ambition and purpose. Without discarding the individuality of each human being, the aforementioned shift must allow for the development of a shared common sense in experiencing

a purposeful life, appreciating the human-nature relationship, and – most relevant to the topic here – protecting the individual and collective rights of all members of the community. The primary intent of this paper is to make a case for ethics (particularly Islamic ethics) as, arguably, the most powerful and meaningful means for guiding the collective consciousness of the masses towards a unified culture of ethical thinking and conduct. The context in focus here is any society or community in which Islam permeates every single sphere of life, and in which there are active efforts at conceptualising Islamic principles into a unified and coherent Divinely-guided framework of governance (hereinafter termed ‘Islamic Governance’). This paper shows how Islamic ethics can be applied to the context in question at the level of principle, and expounds on some of the major obstacles that militate against the true understanding and exercise of Islamic ethical thinking.

The Case for Ethics

The characterisation of Islamic ethics as a solution to the predicament described in the introduction is not without contestation. Not only does it raise questions about the role and efficacy of religiously-informed laws and policies in the governance and sustenance of the Muslim-dominated society, it also appears to suggest that these two systems must be superseded by Islamic ethics. Two points of clarification must then be made here: first, laws and policies are indispensable for the obvious reasons that they provide the concrete framework of rights and obligations of individuals and organisations within the state, and that they define the parameters within which human action takes place; and second is to point out the fundamental limitation of laws and policies, as argued later in this paper. Laws and policies, while being vital for maintaining an orderly society, are not potent enough, whether on their own or together, to define real, meaningful, and sustainable progress in the 21st century.

The bold claim in the preceding sentence can be justified by the very nature of laws and policies themselves. Through their heavy reliance on the forceful cultivation of fear (mainly through the threat of punishments) to

ensure behavioural conformity, laws and policies present themselves as extrinsic, unyielding sources of motivation that may not positively inspire an individual's inner sense of moral rectitude, motivation, commitment, and creativity. Consider the following example: a man is driving at the speed of 120 kilometres per hour on a busy highway with a posted speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour, whizzing past cars and buses and going in sharp turns to make it in time for a very important meeting at work. He is aware of this legal requirement and the risks of speeding over the designated limit, but he cannot afford to turn up after his boss has arrived. Halfway, however, he notices a police car looming in the rear-view mirror. Understanding that he is violating the law and fearing getting pulled over for a speeding ticket, he eases off the gas pedal to slow down. After the police car has passed and gone farther ahead, the man gets back on the gas pedal and (over-)speeds his way to work.

The key point to concentrate on in this example is how the man's motivation to abide by the law is entirely dependent on the fear of his being caught violating it (despite already doing so knowingly), while speed limits are essentially designed to guarantee the safety of all on the road (an ethical measure). Here, the law inadvertently steers the individual away from ethical thinking, as neglecting the need to be concerned for the safety of oneself and others on the road is categorically unethical. In countries where the law is not clearly defined and enforced, the role of ethics as the only other guiding force to maintain order and stability in society becomes even more manifest: to adhere to rules of behaviour generated intrinsically in such case is, therefore, not optional. On this point, ethics may well be a far more earnest behavioural driver, as it allows the individual a greater sense of autonomy in their own decision-making, and provides a fertile ground for self-reflection in their everyday life, proactivity in taking initiatives to make positive changes, creativity in finding and applying solutions, and perseverance in their endeavours.

In contrast to the coercive nature of laws, ethics simply guides human action with no legal consequences for violation. If the man in the

aforementioned example voluntarily drives in compliant with the advised speed range due to his concern for the safety and welfare of the driving public, then his action becomes an ethical product of his own choice, reflecting a sense of self-empowerment and willingness to drop his ego off the pedestal. Ethics operates at the consciousness level and precedes the law. What is clear here is that, rather than merely providing directives for what is lawful and what is unlawful (the 'what' factors), ethics addresses the why questions, making it possible for an individual to dig deep into the many layers of their consciousness to become aware and make full sense of the compelling reason behind every ethical decision that affects their outward behaviour.

Additionally, what is legal and what is ethical are neither co-extensive nor complementary in many cases. Although law typically incorporates ethical principles, it neither prohibits many acts that would be considered unethical, nor is it immune to deviation from ethical standards. Slavery, for example, had been legal in the U.S. until the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, but most people would need no convincing that taking away the natural right of a person to be human, free, and secure is absolutely unethical. Ethics exceeds law in that it aspires to achieve the highest standards for best practice. No one is legally required by the law to help a blind pedestrian cross the street, or help an elderly person place their heavy bag in the overhead compartment on a train, for example, but to not do so would be unethical. In most instances, lying has no legal implications, but one would be wrong to consider it ethical under normal, non-extenuating circumstances. Social workers may be required by the law to disclose confidential information about a client if there is compelling evidence that the client may present a serious threat to identifiable others.¹ However, revealing such information is in itself a breach of the client's trust and is strictly unethical. Admittedly, just as compliance with law may conflict with ethical standards, so too may compliance with ethical standards breach legal requirements. Consider the example of a man

¹ Frederic G. Reamer, *When Ethics and the Law Collide*, 2008, accessed 24 May 2016, <http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/EoESepOct08.shtml>

driving his car past a red traffic light on an empty road at 2am to get a critically-injured family member to the nearest medical care. Notwithstanding the defence of necessity, violating the speed laws to help this injured individual is technically illegal, although preventing harm in this situation is unambiguously ethical. The above situations are examples where dilemmas emerge due to the collision of laws and ethics, but none negates the commonplace argument that the latter precedes and guides the former: ethics must come first.

Ethics in Islamic Governance

If there is ever a consensus on a universal approach to ethics, it will likely be that ethics should be centred on – though not limited to – what is popularly known as The Golden Rule (i.e. the ethics of reciprocity): one should treat others as they would like to be treated, or one should not treat others in ways that one would not wish to be treated. Remarkably, this principle cuts across cultures and religions, holds a cardinal value in both the secular and the religious worlds, is relatable to all spheres of life, and has remained constant in meaning through the evolution of time. The closest, most explicit Islamic equivalent of this principle is the *ḥadīth* narrated by Bukhari and Muslim: “None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself”.¹ It must be added, however, that the message of selflessness and love contained within this *ḥadīth* resounds across the hundreds of pages of the Qurʾān, and is epitomised most trenchantly in the history of Islam by no other than Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Under his leadership, the Madīnian polity was built on Qurʾānic ethics and principles, and its organisation and processes were governed ultimately by Divine authority and wisdom. This ethico-religious approach to building a just, God-conscious society is hereafter referred to as Islamic Governance.

Conceptually, Islamic Governance is the primordial, all-encompassing quintessence of the Islamic life, undergirded by the vision of creating a

¹ The translation of Ḥadīth 13 from the 40 Ḥadīth collection of Imam Nawawi, accessed 22 May 2016, <http://sunnah.com/nawawi40/13>

society that is conducive to worshipping Allah. It fuses the spiritual and the corporeal, and the sacred and the profane into a whole so coherent that it is impossible to tell where one ends and where the other begins. There is simply just one ontological entity: the Tauḥīdic (monotheistic) community. Within an Islamically-governed society (a utopian society that no modern Muslim state has successfully achieved), every seemingly mundane endeavour, whether business, tourism, finance, education, culture, arts, or health, is essentially spiritual through its Allah-conscious purpose, now aligned perfectly with the devotional, ritualistic aspects of Islam that collectively strive towards achieving the vision of Islamic Governance. This is to argue that Islamic Governance has a powerful transformative power and plays a major role in shaping the norms, values, aspirations, and fabric of a society and its members.

In the governance of all societal affairs, the higher objectives of the Revelation (or most commonly referred to as *Maqāṣid* or objectives of the Sharī'ah) play a pivotal role. Generally, Muslim scholars confine the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah to five essential human necessities that must be preserved in order to realise the ideal Allah-ordained Muslim life: Religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. Cantering on these five, the Sharī'ah is ultimately oriented towards dispersing benefits to humankind, protecting their basic rights, and improving their living conditions. An aspiring Islamic society must, therefore, ensure that the purpose, goal, objective, rightness, and wrongness of every single human activity are continuously checked against the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah. It must also be highlighted here that there is a great deal of pliancy in the orientation of the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah, despite their traditional confinement to the aforementioned five elements. Kamali, a foremost expert on Islamic law, note that the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah integrate "... a degree of comprehension and versatility into the reading of the Sharī'ah that is in many ways unique and rides above the vicissitudes of time and circumstance",¹ lending themselves to being

¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction*, Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2008

tailored to specific cultural contours, provided that none of these cultural peculiarities contradict the essential principles of Islam.

To argue further, Islamic Governance and the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah are only as good as their implementation by human actors who understand and adapt them to everyday life and practice. Indisputably, human action cuts both ways: it can be good, and it can be bad. Yet, decisions and implementations have consequences for the world. Just as an analogue clock cannot run without all the gears in place, so too a society cannot work seamlessly and coherently without its human resources operating under a harmonious mindset. As opposed to a totalitarian consciousness that does not allow a multiplicity of sources of contribution to the exercising of Islamic Governance, this collective mindset is made up of diverse individualities that voluntarily collaborate and converge on a common vision. How Islamic ethics can come into play here can be explained by using the concept of equifinality in organisational strategy and design. Equifinality occurs when “a system can reach the same final state [provided that this state is steady and constant], from different initial conditions and by a variety of different paths”.¹ Given that the vision of Islamic Governance (or the final state, so to speak) is primordial and unchanging, all the processes designed to achieve it need not be glued into a monolithic structure. Islamic ethics, therefore, can contribute to this in the following way: while serving as a unifying framework that guides the compass of the society and its members, Islamic ethics, through its flexible and non-coercive nature, allows a complex, yet transparent and seamless web of actions and interactions, functioning both individually and interdependently to exist within the society. This web will consist of various clear ethical pathways (each of which is strictly tailored to one aspect or level of the society) for fulfilling the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharī'ah, leading ultimately to one end goal: a society conducive to the worshipping of Allah.

¹ Christopher Gresov & Robert Drazin, *Equifinality: Functional Equivalence in Organization Design* 22, no. 2, 1997, p. 403-428

The power of individuality must be reiterated here. Amidst the strong cultural emphasis on communal identity, it is easy to be lulled into finding false security enveloped within the mantle of 'we' or 'us'. The common wisdom of 'there is no 'I' in 'team', if understood incorrectly, betrays the reality that a team or community is made up of individuals who bring their own individualities to the mix. One can choose to be unjustifiably optimistic and expect only a synergy of talents, skills, and experiences to emerge from this convergence, or one can choose to be justifiably realistic and anticipate both this ideal synergy and the risk of a collision of idiosyncratic habits, preferences, ideals, beliefs, and expectations. The need to understand the self and its many dimensions (e.g. identities, needs, and orientations) prior to seeing oneself in the context of their relationship with others is a basic aspect of being human. At the core of every activity, an individual is being confronted by the questions "who am I?", "what is the purpose of my existence?", and "why am I me?", which precede those such as "who am I in this community?", "how do people perceive my existence in this community?", and "how should I express myself in the context of this communal setting?". As the German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche once put it, "Man can endure any how when he has a why".¹ To answer these, one must travel inward to the very depths of their being, soul, faith, and frame of mind. One's sense of self-trust is contingent upon one's sense of security in their identity. Without understanding how one relates to oneself and how one relates to others, the individual in question drowns in their own thoughts and insecurities. Thus, the ability to move authentically and seamlessly between one's 'I' identity and their 'we' identity is an essential requirement.

Applied Ethics and Cultural Shift

A critical component in the process of cultural shift towards ethicisation is to allow Islamic ethics to 'speak' with the culture concerned. What is needed here is an honest assessment of the culture from the lens of Islamic ethics with the intention to understand the former's fault lines with regards

¹ Elliott Rosenbaum, *The Essential Self: The Key to a Life of Passion, Lasting Joy and Fulfillment*, Bloomington: iUniverse, 2013, p. xv

to ethical misconduct or unsolved ethical dilemmas, and to subsequently decide how Islamic ethics can be used to address them. The main question that should guide this process is “does this (e.g. conduct, norm, and value) accord with the highest standards of Islamic ethical teaching?” This approach is neither about cherry-picking certain aspects of Islam to be grafted onto the culture nor is it about mix-matching the elements of both Islam and the culture to create a hybrid ensemble that is partly the former and partly the latter. Rather, it revolves around finding a way to retain the character, identity, and substance of the culture while adapting its organisational and operational structure to Islamic ethics. If there is one thing that Islam does not do to a culture in the process of blending into a culture, it is restructuring the culture into a new form unrecognisable from the original version, its long-held character and local traditions destroyed. Evidence to this can be found in the history of its global expansion. Muslims ruled India for hundreds of years, and could have transformed the country into a distinctively Muslim space by forcing its populace to embrace Islam, and shedding every single trace of Hinduism all the way from the grassroots to the top. Yet, India remains a predominantly Hindu country, holding tightly to its ancient Hindu ethos and recognising its Muslim population as minority. The architectural concept of the Great Mosque of Xi’an in the Chinese province of Shaanxi, for example, demonstrates a blend of traditional Chinese arts and Islamic geometry, but taken as a whole, the design of the place of worship is still distinctively traditional Chinese. The architectural culture of the Chinese Muslims could have turned out so much more Arabesque if Islam had been intended to conquer or colonise.

The idea of adapting to Islamic ethics, however, brings us back to the following fundamental questions: how do we begin to define and apply Islamic ethics? Whose responsibility is it to define and apply Islamic ethics? Surprisingly, hard questions such as these can, in the right contexts and circumstances, have ‘easy’ answers. This dual task of defining and acting must be a shared endeavour between the ‘people with power’ as one group and the ‘grassroots community’ as the other group, each taking a different

approach, but that which complements the other. The former can capitalise on their established authority to exercise a top-down cultural shift, mainly through endorsing a universal code of ethics that register in the public consciousness, while the latter can respond at the personal and community levels by cohering into a confident, moral voice that advocates social change and fusing ethical thinking into everyday life. Rather than passively waiting for the government to educate the public, the public should become proactive and educate itself. These two approaches (top-down and bottom-up) are explained further in the forthcoming passages.

Parties entrusted with top-down tasks must bring clarity to what is meant by Islamic ethics, taking into account the peculiarities of the culture concerned and its people. Defining ethics is not simply regurgitating major theoretical perspectives on the concept and repackaging them for the public's uncritical acceptance. Defining necessitates understanding the ultimate nature of ethics through answering questions such as "what is the true purpose of ethics?", "why does it matter for humanity at large?", and "why must every individual within a community embrace ethics?" in a way that is acceptable, relevant, and meaningful to the community. There must exist a universal code of ethics that can serve as a parent reference for good conduct and governance at all levels within the society, from which each sector can then derive a sub-code tailored specifically to its contextual particularities. This is more practical than having many models of ethics that are exclusively dependent on contextual details, so much so that what is unethical in one sector may technically be ethical in another. Technicalities often allow loopholes to be exploited and bent to serve the interest of a narrow group. Without making too rigid a partition between what is ethical and what is not (which runs the risk of overlooking complex issues that teeter on the border between the two), the 'people with power' must foster an environment where the community can positively learn to obtain (rather than be indoctrinated with) a good picture of right and wrong for issues that can be patently categorised into the two groups respectively.

Efforts must not, however, be confined solely to defining. Defining must be intended to open the door to an even more important element within the process: acting. Acting for the top-down parties here should be understood as ‘planting’ the seeds of Islamic ethics into the community (or at least the awareness of Islamic ethics if the former is a tall order). Any good gardener would confirm that planting requires thorough planning and a great deal of patience. Shoehorning policies and laws into public life without prior education is not the way to inspire the community into embracing ethical living. Education is, thus, essential. It is often claimed that ethics cannot be taught in the sense of turning bad people into good people by teaching them about ethical conduct because ethics is hardwired into the brains of individuals at an early age. What is argued in this paper, however, is not teaching ethics, but rather fostering an environment where ethics can be explored, discussed, and nurtured, and where being ethical is an easy choice to make. Here, there is a distinct emphasis on individual search and experience. One must not underestimate the power of cultural conditioning; culture can influence how we think without us noticing the cultural filters in our minds. For complex ethical dilemmas that have not been confronted or adequately explored, the community must be provided with the right tools and frame of reference to resolve them. Some of the examples given previously in this paper highlight how compliance with the law can result in violation of ethical principles, and vice versa. In such circumstances, simply knowing what is ethical and what is not may not be enough.

Parties who work outside this top-down system must capitalise on their grassroots existence to live and breathe ethics and educate their community. The best approach here is the principle of ‘practice what you preach’. A better way to see this in Islamic terms is to conceptualise it as behavioural *da‘wah*. Conveying the message of Islam through behavioural exemplification of its teaching is a far more effective form of encouragement than verbal preaching and is consistent with the Muslim aspiration to follow the way of the Prophet ﷺ. Additionally, to show and not tell, is a much more powerful way of inspiring and imprinting on people, much like parents setting a good example for their children. Given that

Islamic Governance is only as good as their implementation, active commitment to seeking to understand ethics and exercise ethical thinking cannot be dispensed with. In practical terms, this means that each individual within the society must strive to be a role model for the community by exhibiting culture-changing ethical behaviour.

If asked to rope these two approaches together in general terms, one would be tempted to speak of a shared purpose. However, what is more important that just having a shared purpose is getting the purpose right. In view of the line of argument presented in this paper, both the top-down and bottom-up groups must understand that ethics should be used to channel human thinking and conduct towards achieving the vision of Islamic Governance, not restrict them. The use of the word channel here provides a convenient starting point for connecting purpose with action. Channelling one's creativity towards a specific goal means allowing the creative individual to develop, embrace, and express their guided creativity to the fullest. A good analogy for 'guided human creativity' in this context is water. Water itself has no distinct and constant shape, but when it is poured into a container, it takes on the shape of the container. Water can, therefore, take many shapes depending on the shapers. The better way to keep the water well-contained inside the container is not necessarily to control the level of the water, but rather to ensure that the container is smooth, robust and uniformly-shaped with no cracks so that it can hold the water well. To put a limit on one's creativity and imagination, much like truncating cookie dough into shape with a rigid cookie cutter, have consequences not just for the individual, but for the whole community.

Conclusion

It is hard to argue against the obvious observation that most of the global problems confronting humankind at the present time find their origin in uncontrolled human activities, which, in turn, are influenced by the umbrella emotion of greed. Efforts have been made at various levels by various parties at raising widespread state and public awareness of the dire need for urgent measures to protect the world's natural resources and humanity

at large. Most of these measures have been tangible in nature, their emphasis placed heavily on restraining human action or calling on humankind to put an end to their destructive lifestyle choices and habits. This paper highlights the urgency of addressing the more intangible source of the problem by means of Islamic ethics, and explores a number of measures for seeping Islamic ethics into public consciousness and state policy, confining the focus of its discussion to any context in which Islam plays a fundamental role in governing its social, cultural and political processes.

Making real, meaningful progress requires every single member of the community to play a role in the optimisation of ethics in their everyday life by promoting and exhibiting the highest ethical standards. Laws and policies are limited in the extent to which they can inspire individuals to understand and excel in this role because they appear, fundamentally, as extrinsic sources of control that make use of punishments and the element of fear to drive people to behavioural conformity. Ethics, on the other hand, emerges from within every individual and provides guidance for their thought and action, unaffected by external elements and unfettered by fear. Whether an individual abides by ethical thinking and behaviour or not is an individual choice. This empowerment of the self is crucial for imparting to every individual that they each have the power to endow themselves with (rather than being bound by) ethical values, principles, and skills.

Within the framework of Islamic Governance, all endeavours can be aligned with Islamic principles towards achieving the state of Allah-consciousness at all levels of society. The success of this vision relies on the actions of the right human resources with the right values and attitudes. Islamic ethics can serve as guidance for stabilising the volatility of human action because its comprehensiveness and high degree of relatability allow it to be adopted by every single segment of society. Rather than using Islamic ethics to singularise the various processes that give shape and character to the society, one must recognise the multi-faceted nature of

society and give way for diverse ethical pathways that, all the same, lead to the one vision of Islamic Governance.

In the process of incorporating Islamic ethics into the culture, emphasis must be placed on the harmonisation of the principles of the former and the character and identity of the latter, as opposed to the supplanting of the latter by the former. Marrying Islamic ethics and the culture is a shared responsibility between the 'people with power' and the 'grassroots people, allowing for two different but complementary approaches running parallel to one another: top-down, and bottom up. Through the top-down approach, the 'people with power' must define the basic components of Islamic ethics (e.g. definition, purpose, and objectives), create a universal code of ethics as a parent reference for the constituent organisations and segments of the society, launch visible campaigns for widespread awareness on the importance of ethical thinking and conduct, and foster an environment where understanding and practicing ethics are feasible and encouraging. While thorough familiarity and compliance with Islamic ethics is a basic necessity for the successful implementation of Islamic Governance, the ability to use the framework of Islamic ethics to resolve a broader range of ethical dilemmas, including those which have not been fully explored, is even more critical. Through the bottom-up approach, the public must strive to live and breathe Islamic ethics, with every individual within the society working to become a role model for the other. Through its purpose of channelling – not restricting – human creativity and action towards achieving the vision of Islamic Governance, Islamic ethics must allow every individual to be goal-oriented in their everyday practice, using their full intellectual and physical potential to achieve the goals set by the society as aligned with the *Maqāṣid* of the Sharāh.

Reimagining society through Islamic ethics and reframing its challenges and problems as religious problems, as implicitly understood from the prism of Islamic Governance, are both monumental tasks, and will take many years, or even decades, to yield significant results, particularly at the societal level. Islamic Governance is a gradual and evolutionary process,

not fast and revolutionary. In addition, at the risk of showing pessimism, it must be emphasised that the vision of Islamic Governance, at its ultimate finest, is an 'absolute ideal', the common connotation of which is 'unattainability'. To add a stronger dose of realism, the evolution of Islamic Governance, as applied to a living context, is not immune to being a mixed bag of success and failure, with positive results possibly going hand in hand with problems of procedural and/or conceptual nature. However, the ability to anticipate and plan for the future is already a significant determinant of success, thus, becomes an attitudinal requirement at the most basic level. Ethics will go a long way in building one's positive inner psyche and qualities, and helping pave the road for achieving the vision of Islamic Governance.