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Presentation date: September , 2023

Date of acceptance: December, 2023

Publication date: January, 2024

## ISLAM AND BIOETHICS:

MORAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUBSTANCES IN THE BASIC SOURCES OF ISLAM

**ISLAM Y BIOÉTICA: SUSTANCIAS MORALES Y TEOLÓGICAS EN LAS FUENTES BÁSICAS DEL ISLAM**

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It mentions suggested (APA, seventh edition)

Javadli, G. K. (2024). Islam and bioethics: Moral and theological substances in the basic sources of Islam. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 16 (1), 120-125.

### ABSTRACT

The rapid advances in biomedicine and biotechnology in recent decades have opened new bioethical dilemmas that require a comprehensive approach. Are we playing God by manipulating life? Are there ethical limits that science should not cross? These questions inevitably connect with theological foundations about the meaning of existence, the origin and destiny of the person, and the relationship between humanity and divinity. Therefore, solid bioethics requires revisiting the spiritual and religious sources that have historically provided wisdom about the value of life. Taking this into account, the objective of this work is to discuss bioethics from the perspective of Islam considering its different theological sources. It is important to note that although there is a spectrum of positions on these emerging issues, the common basis in Islamic society comes from sources such as the Quran and the hadiths, which contain universalizable ethical principles. Thus, it cannot be forgotten that from an Islamic perspective accountability before God implies that techno-scientific advances must be linked to transcendent references that provide moral direction, basing concepts such as the sanctity of life, inviolable human dignity, and responsibility with future generations.

**Keywords:** Islamic bioethical principles, Sanctity of life, Human dignity, Divine creation.

### RESUMEN

Los rápidos avances de la biomedicina y la biotecnología en las últimas décadas han abierto nuevos dilemas bioéticos que requieren un enfoque integral. ¿Estamos jugando a ser Dios manipulando la vida? ¿Existen límites éticos que la ciencia no debería cruzar? Estas preguntas conectan inevitablemente con fundamentos teológicos sobre el significado de la existencia, el origen y destino de la persona y la relación entre la humanidad y la divinidad. Por lo tanto, una bioética sólida requiere revisar las fuentes espirituales y religiosas que históricamente han proporcionado sabiduría sobre el valor de la vida. Teniendo esto en cuenta, el objetivo de este trabajo es discutir la bioética desde la perspectiva del Islam considerando sus diferentes fuentes teológicas. Es importante señalar que, si bien existe un espectro de posiciones sobre estas cuestiones emergentes, la base común en la sociedad islámica proviene de fuentes como el Corán y los hadices, que contienen principios éticos universalizables. Así, no se puede olvidar que desde una perspectiva islámica la rendición de cuentas ante Dios implica que los avances tecnocientíficos deben vincularse a referentes trascendentes que brinden dirección moral, fundamentando conceptos como la santidad de la vida, la inviolable dignidad humana y la responsabilidad con las generaciones futuras.

**Palabras clave:** Principios bioéticos islámicos, Santidad de la vida, Dignidad humana, Creación divina.

## INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a discipline that deals with what is morally good and bad, as well as morally right and wrong. The term is also used to refer to any system or theory of moral values or principles. Its subject matter revolves around the fundamental issues of practical decision-making, addressing the nature of ultimate value and the criteria by which human actions can be assessed as right or wrong. While ethics is traditionally considered a branch of philosophy, its comprehensive practical nature establishes connections with various fields of study, including anthropology, biology, economics, history, politics, sociology, and theology. Nevertheless, ethics maintains its distinctiveness from these disciplines because it doesn't involve factual knowledge in the same way as the sciences and other branches of inquiry. Instead, it is concerned with determining the nature of normative theories and applying these sets of principles to practical moral problems (Singer, 2023).

According to Chadwick (2023), within the realm of ethics, bioethics is an applied branch that delves into the philosophical, social, and legal aspects arising in medicine and the life sciences. While discussions of moral issues in medicine date back to ancient times, the formalization of bioethics, as well as the broader field of applied ethics, is a relatively recent development. Bioethics, in its current understanding, emerged as a distinct area of study in the early 1960s. Its establishment was influenced not only by advancements in the life sciences, especially medicine, but also by a growing recognition of the ethical considerations intertwined with these developments (Wilson, 2013). The primary focus of bioethics is on human life and well-being, although it occasionally addresses ethical inquiries related to the nonhuman biological environment. However, questions concerning the latter are typically explored in separate fields such as environmental ethics and animal rights (Ladwig, 2023; Palmer et al., 2014).

As one of the most important religions and the fastest growing and expanding believe in the World, it is important to analyze the standpoint of Islam regarding bioethics (Ali & El-Kamary, 2017). In our opinion, this holds significant importance in the contemporary world, given the rapid scientific and technological advances that pose new ethical dilemmas concerning human life, health, and well-being. Islam, as a comprehensive system of faith and practice, provides revealed principles that can guide Muslims on navigating these complex current debates, ranging from the beginning to the end of life (abortion, euthanasia) to issues like genetic manipulation, organ transplants, and more (Tabatadze & Golitsyna, 2019). Islamic bioethics thus serves as a necessary bridge between the discoveries of

modern science and the enduring wisdom of the Quran and Sunnah, seeking a synthesis that harnesses the best of both realms. This way, it could be applied the elevated ethical standards of Islam regarding the inviolable value of human life to emerging technologies, counteracting potential dehumanizing effects, and promoting holistic health and well-being from a worldview that encompasses body, mind, and spirit.

As integral components of Islam, the Quran and Sharia, serve as the foundational sources of ethics, including then Islamic bioethics. These sources emphasize the importance of life, dignity, and the well-being of humans, and establish principles such as nonmaleficence, justice, and the safeguarding of human life (Ahmed, 2016). Despite their significance, the principles underpinning Islam's ethical framework applied to routine clinical scenarios remain insufficiently understood by many clinicians (Mustafa, 2014). In addition, and in spite of criticisms, it has been observed that discussions in Islamic countries on various aspects of modern bioethics align with Islamic sources (Karmy Bolton, 2010). Considering the above, the objective of this work is to discuss the bioethics from the perspective of Islam considering its different theological sources. In this way, important concepts are discussed, from inductive, deductive, historical, and logical methods.

## DEVELOPMENT

Islamic culture and religious ethics have elevated to a significant level, articulating essential principles and rules for human conduct. In both Eastern and Western medieval cultures, as well as European and Asian contexts, there is a reinterpretation of issues related to general ethics, professional ethics, and notably, medical ethics. Renowned figures like Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) contributed valuable insights into rationalist-practical ethical principles and actions. Ibn Sina's works, including the "Book of Safa," "Book of Guidelines and Advice," and the "Law of Medical Science," are highly regarded not only in the Middle East but also in Central Europe for their contributions to medicine and medical ethics. In this regard Ibn Rushd perceives ethics as a conceptual bridge connecting philosophy, religion, and medicine. In addition, in the epics, folklore, and poetry of the Middle East, moral and spiritual qualities are repeatedly celebrated, offering profound human advice and illustrating rules of conduct. The ethical ideas embedded in the works of prominent Azerbaijani figures such as the poet and philosopher Nizami Ganjavi in "Treasure of Secrets" and the astronomer Nasreddin Tusi in "Ethics-Nasiri" contribute significantly to strengthening ethical thinking and moral-spiritual foundations within society.

It should be noted that Islam's attitude to bioethics is directly related to its attitude towards human. Among the world religions, the peculiarity of Islam is that it ensures and protects human identity, dignity, and rights, in accordance with the rules of Sharia. According to this prerogative, all the subtleties of the concept of human rights in relation to the problems of bioethics in Islam are obvious and require a correct scientific interpretation. It should be noted as well that the answers to the problematic questions posed by bioethics to modern society, according to Islamic thought, are reflected in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The evolution of the theory of bioethics in Islam must be linked, first of all, to the essence of the value given to human in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which are the foundations of our religion, and then to the stages and development of Muslim medicine (Rattani & Hyder, 2019). Since we have devoted a special section to the ideas in the Qur'an and Sunnah, we would like to begin our study of the issue from the second aspect, that is, from the historical facts and theoretical considerations of Muslim medicine.

From a medical point of view, Islam considers taking care of one's health as a form of worship. In the Muslim world, there is a special section of medicine called "tybb nabawi" (Prophet's medicine), in which the place of medicine in the Sunnah of the Prophet, his medical views are widely covered. Prophet Muhammad (s) was closely interested in the field of public health, and his Hadiths on this subject were a guide for people. At the same time, it is natural that the Qur'an, which conveys the power and majesty of God, His eternal and everlasting knowledge, contains a lot of information about medicine. In general, it should be noted that the Qur'an contains huge medical knowledge, as well as valuable insights into the origin, formation, anatomy, physiology, pathology, and physical and mental diseases of human. According to a number of scholars, the main principle of the Qur'an regarding health is not treatment, but the protection of a person, the protection of his health - hifzu-sihha. Hifzu-sihha includes a number of hygienic guidelines, including tips on normal nutrition and protection from harmful foods. As a religious system that is so sensitive and serious about human health, Islam has always focused on the proper coordination of medical issues, both morally and legally (Gatrad & Sheikh, 2001).

Of course, it is not enough to comment on the development of bioethical thought in the Islamic world on the basis of the achievements of Muslim medicine alone. It is necessary to study the complex situation in Muslim societies, which arises from the unity of morality, law and Sharia. It should also be borne in mind that the climate and ethnic diversity, diversity of customs and traditions, and sectarian differences in areas where Islam is widespread can

greatly expand the boundaries of our subject. Therefore, taking into account the goals and results of this research, we will try to use dialectical laws, inductive and deductive logical cognition methods of generally accepted and established scientific methodology, such as comparative analysis of existing facts, analysis and generalization of results in the study of various trends in solving problems. In our opinion, this conceptual approach is the most appropriate tool for the interpretation of such a broad topic.

In classical Muslim culture, Muslim ethics is accepted as Islamic morality, and the Qur'an and Sunnah as a whole are considered to be the bearers of ethical insights. For this reason, being one of the most modern fields of knowledge, it makes people think in a new spirit, forms in them a new outlook on life and their deeds, condemns scientific-philosophical, biological and medical-practical approaches to cruelty to nature, people and animals, and fights against such situations. There is a need to study bioethics in a religious-philosophical context, which began to develop as an ideology calling for compassion and kindness, promoting high moral and spiritual values (Mirzahosseini & Yaghobi, 2013). This is because the issues raised by this field of science are reflected in the Qur'an, the primary source of Islam, and in the Sunnah, a collection of the Hadiths of the Prophet. In our opinion, the explanation of the issues raised by bioethics today (cloning, euthanasia, suicide, abortion, artificial insemination, surrogacy, organ transplantation, etc.) from the point of view of the Qur'an and Sunnah is not only for the religious community, but also from the scientific and ideological perspectives of each society is of great importance.

The commentators of the Holy Qur'an can definitely confirm the existence of Verses on the problems of bioethics. We have come across dozens of Verses in our Holy Book explaining medical and moral problems that are relevant today, and we have found it very important to explain their nature. For example, the Qur'an contains enough divine information about the creation of man, the value of human life, human lineage, morality, lust, adultery, error and death, euthanasia, suicide, abortion, homosexuality and other areas of bioethics. Another interesting point is that the Holy Quran progressively encourages Muslims to science and knowledge and appreciates being a leader in positive innovations for the benefit of society. In this sense, those who call Islam and the Qur'an dogmatic are greatly mistaken.

In order to understand the basic principles of Islamic ethics, it is important to analyze the rulings and recommendations given to the human being in the Qur'an. This is because the socio-economic and spiritual life described in the Holy Book, as well as the specific and moral

requirements of traditions and rules of conduct, are addressed not only to those who follow Islam, but to all people in general. According to the Qur'an, human has a special power to understand himself and his environment. This force is his mind and intellect. He discovers the laws that govern the universe and nature with his mind and thinking and uses them effectively in his daily life. It is through reason and thought that a person can acquire a knowledge that he cannot comprehend with his senses, especially philosophical enlightenment and moral virtues.

The Qur'an states that human is a very mysterious being. Here we see that human is both praised and rebuked. It is sometimes related to angels, and sometimes even degraded to four-legged animals. The Qur'an declares that human, with his talent, will be able to control nature and subdue the angels, and that he will fall into the lowest stratum of Hell, *Asfalus-safil*, by his ugly deeds. This means that a person must determine his own destiny, come to a conclusion on all matters that concern him, and master the human values that are the basis of moral and ethical teachings. These human values can be summarized according to the Qur'an as follows:

1. Human is the vicegerent of God on Earth: "(O Mohammed!) *When your Lord said to the angels: "Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent on Earth," they said: "Will You place on it one who will spread mischief and shed blood while we celebrate Your glory and extol Your holiness?" He said: "Surely I know what you do not know"*.
2. Human's scientific capacity is superior to that of a creature.
3. Human has the nature of knowing God; there is a power (conscience) within him that understands God. All denial and hesitation, inner (spiritual) shortcomings stem from human nature.
4. In addition to the material elements that exist in human nature, there is another divine element (spirit): "*Then He shaped him and made him into a human being and breathed into him of His spirit...*".
5. The creation of human is not a matter of chance but is premeditated and determined. Human is a chosen being: "*Then his Lord chose him, and accepted his repentance, and guided him*".
6. Human has dignity and honor. God has preferred him over other creatures. He will realize his true existence only if he understands these essentials, and removes humiliation, slavery, and ignorance.
7. Human has a conscience and an inner morality. Understands beauty and ugliness by instinct.
8. Human finds comfort only in the remembrance of God. His desires are endless and eternal, but he quickly gets fed up with everything he gets and wants to get away. If he has only one desire, it is to be reunited with the Holy One of Allah: "*They are the ones who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Know that hearts find peace only in the remembrance of God*".
9. All the blessings that exist on earth have been created for human: "*He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, then He turned to the heaven and made it seven-fold in the shape of the sky. He is the All-Knowing*".
10. Human was created only to worship God and obey His command: "*I created the jinn and men only to worship Me*".
11. Human realizes himself only by obeying God. If he forgets God, he has forgotten himself, he no longer knows who he is, why he was created, what he will do, and where he will go.
12. Human does not act only for material gain, and the force that drives him is not only material desires. Sometimes a person strives for higher goals. Sometimes he does all his work and efforts only to gain Allah's approval: "*O you who are secure (in your faith, deeds and the promise of Allah)! Return to your Lord, and you will be pleased with Him, and He will be pleased with you*".

From what we have said, it is clear that from the point of view of the Qur'an, human is a vicegerent appointed by God on Earth - a semi-material and semi-divine being. He is a free, independent, trustworthy creature with a nature of knowing God, a sense of responsibility for himself and the environment, and ultimately a master of nature. His creation begins at a weak stage, progresses to perfection, and finds comfort only in the remembrance of God. The scope of human knowledge and practice is not limited. However, in addition to all this, a person has certain duties and responsibilities, which he often forgets or does not follow. Therefore, the Qur'an sometimes rebukes and criticizes people. Humans like other living beings, is under the influence of various material and natural attractions - the tendency to sleep, rest, food, sexual intercourse, which leads him to matter and nature. What distinguishes the human race from others is that the attractions that attract it are also non-material - moral or spiritual. The spiritual attractions that are known and acceptable to us include concepts such as science and knowledge, moral goodness, beauty, and worship.

All the religious values and moral norms of Islam are based on the Qur'an, which is the word of God, and the Sunnah, which contains the Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an and the Sunnah interpret the essence of

religious values in the same context as the conditions of Islam, the principles of faith, and the sharia and moral categories; that is, the interpretation and explanation of all the concepts to which the mass consciousness is accustomed, but which it is unable to grasp its roots and consequences, are reflected in these basic sources. There is no moral substance that the Book does not comment on or comment on. Islam is generally a set of moral norms, so the basic function of the Sharia is to inform about the commands and prohibitions, the halal and the haram, the rewards and the sins (Ahmed, 2016).

One of the moral principles of the Sharia is to refrain from dubious acts. There are several forms of doubt, and the interesting opinions of scholars in the field of religious psychology can serve as an example. Psychologists believe that every child from the age of 7 is under seeking doubts (Javadli, 2017). When a teenager's family and environment do not answer the questions about the Creator and creation of the world correctly, his or her life orientation changes, and important moral concepts such as responsibility, debt, and accountability are distorted. Older people sometimes fall into the trap of identity doubts, which is more common among the younger generation - people who turn to religion for personal gain and desires are frustrated when they are not reciprocated and blame religion for it. Above all, there is the doubts of fidelity, which shows the believer's concern about not fulfilling his duty to God with dignity. Those who create scientific doubts are, unfortunately, scientists; they consider the divine miracles to be a natural phenomenon, the harmony of nature to be a physical discovery, and the development of society to be the result of a scientific and technological revolution. There are perceptual doubts that do not accept traditional religious lifestyles and norms, and finally, there are agnostic denial doubts that completely reject religion and faith. There are interesting points in the Qur'an and the Hadiths that emphasize that doubt is inherent in human nature and psychology.

Finally, the last basic principle is that haram is a sin for everyone, that is, haram has no exception. No good intention can make haram halal. Prohibition of unauthorized actions and deeds is mandatory for Muslims. Islam does not discriminate in matters of halal and haram, regardless of language, gender, skin color or nationality. Just as God is one for all, so the laws of our sacred religion are one for all. What God has made lawful is lawful for all, and what He has made unlawful is unlawful and sinful until the Day of Resurrection. It is not in vain that we quote Verses from the Qur'an in terms of the concept of sin, halal and haram, about human deeds and actions. Because the solution of the issues raised by the science of bioethics requires

people to be based on the right moral principles in certain practical activities. One of the most troubling issues in the Muslim world today is the use of things that Almighty Allah has forbidden to people during these practical activities. Answering such difficult and responsible questions makes it necessary to examine the issues raised by bioethics in a religious-ethical context.

## CONCLUSIONS

Islamic theological perspectives are profoundly relevant in examining modern bioethical issues. Core Islamic principles regarding the sanctity of human life, dignity, compassion, justice and responsibility provide a moral framework to guide ethical deliberation around complex questions. As was discussed in the article, concepts such as life being an entrusted gift from God are relevant to create a holistic worldview that integrates theological wisdom with practical realities. Thus, engaging Islamic ethics reveals deep connections between revelation and reason, faith and science, in safeguarding ethical priorities while supporting biomedical advancement. Considering this, more dialogue is required between religious and bioethics scholars can lead to greater cooperation in handling shared human challenges. As bioethical debates expand globally, Islam's moral resources may provide important contributions alongside philosophies from other faiths and humanistic worldviews.

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