

Editorial



Ethics Question in Context of Revelation

Editor –in– chief

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The Western societies today are facing a profound ethics dilemma, one that is increasingly evident to both observers and thinkers themselves. The crisis lies in the loss of the ability to establish a unified ethics framework, after individualism has overtaken all forms of social solidarity. This dilemma is directly reflected in political, social, and cultural crises, where fixed reference points have disappeared, replaced by relativist notions that reduce ethics to variables susceptible to change based on the market and power dynamics.

Ethics in the West has shifted from being a standard to which one adheres, to a tool employed to justify interests and reproduce dominance. Consequently, ‘truth’ is now contingent on the strongest, and ‘value’ reflects shifting moods rather than a universal constant. Zygmunt Bauman encapsulated this condition with the term ‘liquid modernity,’ where absolutes dissolve, and values turn into flexible entities unable to withstand the pressures of the market and consumption.¹

The relativism that was promoted under the banner of intellectual freedom and ethics modernity ultimately led to the confinement of the individual within an isolated circle of individualism, rather than achieving true liberation. It resulted in the loss of the unifying meaning that connects one’s existence to higher purposes.

1 - Zygmunt Bauman: Liquid Modernity, p. 112.

The collapse of grand references in the West has led to an ‘age of subjectivism,’ where every individual becomes their own ethics reference in the absence of shared standards. The result is that the West now faces a value vacuum, manifesting in various forms: the decline of family ties, the erosion of social solidarity, the rise of aggressive tendencies, and the transformation of the human being into a commodity within the mechanism of the globalized market.

However, the very void that reveals the pressing need to restore the ‘ethics constant’ as the foundation of humanity, not as a constraint on individual freedom. The entirety of historical experience has shown that societies do not thrive on absolute relativism, but rather on a system of deep-rooted values that give human existence meaning beyond the fleeting moment. In this context, the responsibility of Islamic thought becomes apparent, offering a universal alternative, an alternative that should not merely imitate the West’s relativism, nor close itself off in rigid stagnation, but instead revive the Qur’anic vision that establishes ethics as the stable root of freedom, contrary to the perception held by some that ethics is the opposite of freedom. It is clear that the rebirth of societies begins with a ethics transformation that forms the deep structure of the human being.

First: General Features of Ethics Crisis

Since modern Western thought declared its break from religious and metaphysical references, it has endeavored to construct its ethics framework on purely humanistic foundations. However, this attempt resulted in deep confusion regarding the nature of good and evil, instead of producing a pure human morality.

Consequently, ethics shifted from being a field for establishing values to becoming a contentious arena with no clear horizon, where each school of thought sets its own standards in isolation from others. By separating ethics from the sacred, modernity lost the ability to generate a universal standard that could be universally referenced. As a result, the “ethics crisis” in the West has become a structural phenomenon with far-reaching political, economic, and social implications. In politics, governance has come to be practiced according to the

criteria of pure utility, while economics has been driven by abstract profit without regard for its impact on humanity or nature. Social bonds have also fractured to such an extent that the individual finds themselves alienated within the very society to which they belong.

Second: Excessive Individualism, Dominance of Utility

The “Age of Selfhood” stands as the most prominent expression of this crisis, where the individual has become the sole reference for morality. Major values, such as justice and goodness, have become conditioned by the moods and desires of individuals, rather than by universal principles. This transformation was the result of a philosophical accumulation that began with Descartes, continued through Kant and Nietzsche, and ultimately reached the postmodern conclusions where values lost any objective foundation. Thus, everything once strong, values and norms, has melted into the current of constant change, leading ethics itself to become “liquid,” unable to withstand the pressures of the market and consumption.¹ This explains how grand values, which are often proclaimed as universal in Western discourse, can be flagrantly violated when they conflict with strategic interests.

Historically, the utilitarianism doctrine, founded by Jeremy Bentham and later developed by John Stuart Mill, represented a pivotal moment in the trajectory of Western thought. It proposed that the greatest good for the greatest number should be the measure of ethics. However, this criterion, which initially appeared rational, quickly became a justification for colonial and economic policies that trample upon millions of people under the guise of “the public good.” In this sense, utilitarianism is clearly devoid of justice, as it measures the good in terms of the sum of pleasures rather than the rights of individuals.

In reality, absolute utility has emptied ethics of its substance, reducing it to a mathematical calculation of profit and loss. Wars are justified in the name of

1 - See: Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, pp. 112 -113.

“protecting democracy,” while their essence is economic or geopolitical. Scientific experiments on humans or the environment are legitimized under the pretext of “progress,” while, in fact, they serve the interests of capital. As a result, ethics action has become subordinated to self-interest and power.

Third: Social Fragmentation, Crisis of Family

One of the manifestations of this crisis is the accelerated disintegration of the family, which was once the primary foundation for social morality. The rising divorce rates, declining birth rates, and the rise of the “individualistic family” are direct reflections of the loss of reference values that once held society together. In this context, we can understand the transformations in “intimate relationships” in the West, which are a result of the very shift in ethics values; these relationships are now based on transient individual desires rather than on commitment and stability.

Thus, ethics has fallen from being a bond that preserves both the individual and the community, to becoming a personal choice that binds only the individual. This shift has left the West in a state of ethics void, manifesting in rising rates of suicide, widespread depression, addiction, violence, and isolation, all indicators of a structural ethics crisis that cannot be reduced to “individual psychological disorders,” nor treated merely with medical prescriptions.

Fourth: Ethics, Tool of Domination

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of this crisis is that the West did not stop at internalizing morality, but rather re-exported it to the world as “universal values.” When the West raises the banner of “human rights,” it simultaneously imposes its own version of these rights to serve its foreign policies. Thus, neoliberalism appears as a political project that uses the language of freedom and justice to entrench the power of the global market. The relativism that deconstructs values “internally” will, externally, transform into a “political absolute,” imposed by force on other peoples.

Fifth: From Philosophy to Politics, Duality of Western Discourse

When the ethics relativism appeared in modern Western thought, it was initially presented as a liberation of humanity from the authority of religious and metaphysical references. However, this liberation gradually transformed into a values vacuum, allowing power to replace truth. Instead of relativism dismantling “guardianship,” it became a justification for legitimizing new forms of control. Paul Ricœur warned of this trajectory, noting that postmodernism, by deconstructing grand narratives, produced a “comprehensive relativism” that made all values vulnerable to violation in the name of difference.¹

In this context, relativism did not remain confined to the academic realm but quickly spread to the political and media fields, where it became a tool for reshaping the world according to the standards of dominant powers. Every value could be interpreted and redirected as needed: democracy becomes conditional, human rights are fragmented, and freedom is granted to some while taken away from others.

This hegemonic dimension is evident in the stark duality of Western discourse. While the principle of “freedom of expression” is presented as an absolute value, any critical voices are silenced when they touch upon the interests of the state or influential lobbies. While slogans like “equality” and “women’s rights” are raised in certain countries, the voices of women in other countries are muted if their demands contradict political calculations. This is what the American thinker Noam Chomsky pointed out when he exposed how the terms “freedom” and “democracy” are used in the U.S. media to cover up policies of repression and external intervention.²

Here, ethics relativism becomes a tool for tailoring values to suit Western interests, such that good and evil are redefined each time according to political and military alignments. What is considered terrorism when committed by the other is labeled as legitimate defense when committed by Western powers or their allies.

1 - Paul Ricœur: *Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 78.

2 - See: Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, p. 14 and onwards.

Sixth: Market, Value Domination

The use of relativism was not limited to politics; it extended to the economy as well, where values themselves became commodities governed by the law of supply and demand. Digital platforms, for example, which were supposed to be spaces for communication, have transformed into tools for surveillance and the reconstruction of consciousness according to the interests of transnational corporations. This aligns with the concept of the “surveillance society,” where individual freedom becomes nothing more than a facade that hides a network of controls that constrain individuals through consumption and advertising.

Seventh: Manufacture of “Double Standards”

One of the most prominent manifestations of relativism as a tool of domination is what can be called “double standards.” The West claims the right to occupy countries and dismantle societies under the pretext of “spreading democracy,” while criminalizing any local resistance to this dominance as “terrorism.” Edward Said addressed this Western ethics hypocrisy in his book “Culture and Imperialism”, where he revealed how literature and cultural discourse are used to beautify and morally legitimize colonial projects.¹

This duality is a natural result of the absence of a fixed ethics standard. When there is no overarching criterion beyond self-interest, ethics itself becomes a tool in the hands of the stronger. Thus, the paradox is revealed: the West, which declared relativism as “liberation,” is the very same that has turned it into a “political weapon.”

Eighth: Cultural Subjugation, Redefinition of Values

Alongside politics and economics, relativism has been used to redefine cultural values on a global scale. International organizations, which are supposed to operate according to universal principles, are in practice subject to the dictates of the major

1 - See: Edward Said: Culture and Imperialism.

powers. Educational curricula, family laws, and media regulations in the Global South are restructured to align with the “Western model.” The West uses the discourse of values to spread its hegemony while refusing to acknowledge the civilizational particularities of others. Thus, ethics relativism has turned into a tool for reconstructing the consciousness of nations and imposing a singular version of values under the guise of “pluralism.”

1. From Universal to Isolated Humanity

One of the greatest achievements of Western thought during the Enlightenment was the affirmation of human dignity as a rational being deserving of inalienable rights. However, this achievement quickly eroded when dignity was detached from any fixed foundation. Immanuel Kant attempted to ground dignity on the concept of “ethics duty,” based on practical reason. But as Western thought progressed, the idea of duty itself receded in the face of utilitarian and pragmatic trends, to the point where dignity became a relative matter, open to negotiation and pricing.

Thus, the concept of the “universal human” turned into the isolated human, whose values are determined according to personal moods or market interests.

2. Social Collapse, Loss of Solidarity

Societies are not based solely on rights but on a network of solidarity and shared values. When these values collapse, society turns into a mere collection of individuals without ethics bonds. Émile Durkheim noted that “anomie”, the loss of norms, leads to a state of social disorder and ethics suicide.¹ This diagnosis is clearly evident today in the rising rates of isolation, depression, and suicide in the West. These are not merely individual psychological phenomena. Rather, they are signs of the collapse of the foundational common ground that connects individuals to their communities. “Freedom” has transformed from a shared space into a tool of isolation, and the individual now views others as a threat to their independence.

Concepts like solidarity and social responsibility have diminished, replaced by

1 - See: Émile Durkheim: Suicide.

a discourse of “individual rights” severed from any commitment to the collective.

3. Absence of Spiritual Aspect, Objectification of Humanity

The universal human foundation is not based on reason alone; it requires a spiritual aspect that provides individuals with a horizon that transcends their material existence. However, the West has entered a phase of de-sanctification of the world, losing the spiritual horizon that once framed its values. As a result, humans themselves are treated as commodities to be measured by their production and consumption, rather than as beings with meaning and purpose.

This objectification is what led philosopher Herbert Marcuse to formulate the concept of the “one-dimensional man”, a human who has lost the multiplicity of his spiritual and ethics dimensions, reduced to only an economic and political function.

4. Consequences of Collapse in the Western Society

The collapse of the universal human foundation has manifested in tangible crises:

- A. The Family Crisis: Its disintegration and collapse as a nurturing ground for values.
- B. The Education Crisis: Curricula turning into functional training without a ethics dimension.
- C. The Political Crisis: Politics reducing to power struggles without any human perspective.
- D. The Environmental Crisis: Treating nature as a mere commodity for consumption, without sanctity or responsibility.

These crises reflect the loss of the “ethics common ground” that forms the backbone of every civilization. The downfall of civilizations begins when the “unifying value” is lost, the value that gives meaning to its actions.

Ninth: Need to Restore Ethical principle

The course of Western modernity has shown that ethics relativism, regardless of

how much it is described as tolerance and openness, ultimately leads to a void that consumes society from within. This is because values cannot be mere individual choices; they require an overarching foundation that ensures their unity and continuity. “The Absolute” is a fundamental condition for any value system; when the Absolute is absent, values collapsed, and transformed into isolated fragments without a connecting thread.

The need for an ethical principle is a human necessity. Just as the body requires a steady source of nourishment, collective consciousness requires stable values to preserve its cohesion. When ethics becomes purely relative, each individual becomes an absolute reference for themselves, and the possibilities of social coexistence collapse.

History repeatedly demonstrates that the collapse of fixed values has often been a precursor to the fall of civilizations. Societies do not collapse solely because of external challenges, but also when they fail to uphold a “unifying ethical principle” that brings them together. If we apply this perspective to Western civilization, its fragility today lies in its inability to offer a unified meaning for humanity, after replacing the fixed with the ever changeable.

The paradox is that freedom itself cannot persist without a fixed reference.

Freedom, unless linked to justice, dignity, and truth, devolves into chaos. Freedom without value constraints turns into the tyranny of the majority or the domination of the powerful.

Therefore, the ethical principle does not restrict freedom; rather, it safeguards it from descending into chaos or political and economic exploitation. This means that true freedom can only be realized when it is based on the “natural law,” which represents the shared, stable, value foundation between all human beings. In other words, freedom is meaningless unless it is protected from disintegration by a transcendent ethics foundation.

Contemporary globalization has demonstrated that relativism does not support pluralism; rather, it opens the door for market values to be imposed as the sole standard. For this reason, the restoration of the ethical principle represents the

only way to protect societies from dissolving into the logic of the market. Thus, restoring the ethical principle becomes a matter of survival for identity and culture, in the face of globalization's power to dismantle any uniqueness.

Today, the need for "universal human ethics" does not imply a return to rigid, traditional formulas but rather a search for a value system that balances both stability and renewal. The French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas proposed the idea of: the "ethics of the other", where values are not simply a reflection of my individual will, but a response to the face of the other, who imposes a responsibility upon me that I cannot escape.¹ While this proposal is philosophical in nature, it reveals that the need for a transcendent reference is not an innovation but an existential necessity for preserving human dignity.

Tenth: Horizon of Revelation, Ethics Restoration

The Western experience has shown that when human beings are made the sole reference for ethics, they are unable to establish a stable foundation that preserves their cohesion and meaning. The West has shifted through various ethical frameworks: Kantian rationalism, which made rational duty the basis of dignity; pragmatism, which placed utility as the highest standard; existentialism, which reduced everything to individual freedom; and postmodernism, which declared the death of meaning itself.

However, all these paths have led to the same dilemma: the absence of a transcendent reference point. The human being, who elevates himself or herself to the status of a God, finds that they lack the foundation to protect them from the fluctuations of desire and self-interest. Deifying humanity is no different in essence from idol worship because it elevates the finite to the status of the infinite. Thus, the purely human alternative, no matter how adorned with terms like freedom and rights, cannot establish a unified ethical foundation.

1 - See: Emmanuel Levinas: *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, p. 88 and following.

1. Revelation, Guarantee of Ethical Principle

In the Islamic perspective, revelation serves as a universal reference that places ethics within an absolute, transcendent framework. The Quran presents ethics as part of the natural order: {The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice} [Al-An'am, verse: 115]. Truth and justice are part of an unchanging, universal reality. This is the essential difference between ethics from the horizon of revelation and ethics from the horizon of human-made systems: the former is absolute, grounded in transcendent truth, while the latter is relative, shaped by ever-changing human constructs.

Quranic values represent judgments rooted in the inherent nature of both human beings and the universe. Islam does not base ethics on "social contracts" or "immediate benefits," but on a transcendent truth, making them valid for all times and places.

2. Balancing Stability, Renewal

One might think that making revelation the reference for ethics would result in stagnation or closure. However, the reality is quite the opposite. Revelation establishes fixed principles (such as justice, mercy, dignity, and responsible freedom), but at the same time, it opens the door for *ijtihad* (juridical reasoning) in applying these principles to new circumstances. Islamic law came with fixed overarching goals, and allows for flexible means, suited to different times and conditions. Thus, revelation offers a unique model: it ensures that principles do not vanish into relativism, or become frozen in outdated historical forms. It harmonizes the fixed and the changing, the absolute and the relative, providing humanity with a supreme reference point while also allowing for creative and renewed application in practice.

3. Revelation and Responsible Freedom

One of the main contradictions of Western relativism is that it elevates freedom to an absolute, turning it into chaos. Revelation, however, offers a different concept of freedom: one that is governed by responsibility. In the Quran, humans are

described as Allah's vicegerents [caliph] on earth, entrusted with a sacred duty: {We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and humans accepted it} [Al-Ahzab, verse: 72]. This trust signifies that freedom comes with a responsibility. The philosopher Taha Abdurrahman argued "freedom in Islam is entrusted freedom," meaning it is a freedom that makes humans accountable to Allah, Almighty, and to others, preventing it from becoming mere whim or recklessness.¹ Thus, instead of freedom being the opposite of ethics, in the horizon of revelation, it becomes its natural outcome.

4. Revelation, Universal Alternative

Today, in the age of globalization and digital dominance, the limitations of human-made reference points are becoming increasingly evident. Revelation is presented as a universal alternative that allows humanity to recover its ethics constants. This does not mean imposing a single cultural model, but rather providing a transcendent foundation that accommodates diversity within a stable framework.

Islam offers a "universal ethics system" because it is grounded in the principle of monotheism (tawhid), which makes justice, dignity, and freedom absolute values that transcend cultural differences. Instead of universality being, as the West desires, an imposition of one culture upon others, in the horizon of revelation, it becomes an openness to human diversity, all while remaining anchored in a fixed transcendent reference. If humanity reconnects with revelation, it can recover the meaning that fills their lives. Revelation redefines existence itself in light of its purpose: {Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?} [Al-Mu'minun, verse: 115].

Thus, revelation becomes the horizon that frees humans from the absurdity and relativism of life, offering them stability that balances their freedom with responsibility, individuality with belonging. This issue of "Eitiquad" magazine is

1 - Taha Abdurrahman: Spirit of Religion, From Narrowness of Secularism to Expansiveness of Trustworthiness

a call to recognize that the question of ethics today cannot be answered from within the troubled Western horizon, nor from within shifting human alternatives. The true answer can only be found in the horizon of revelation, as it is the only horizon that guarantees the stability of human values, safeguards freedom from devolving into chaos, and provides a universal foundation that transcends interests and selfishness. Hence, «The Question of Ethics in the Horizon of Revelation» is a call to re-establish global ethics based on divine revelation, rather than leaving it vulnerable to relativism or the illusions of deified humanity.

This issue contains eight research papers, organized as follows:

In the «Focus» section, Dr. Mohammad Firas Al-Halbawi translated two articles. The first is titled: «Ontology of Moral Values - View of Allama Misbah Yazdi, John Dewey» by Sayyid Murtadha Hanarmand, from Iran. While the second article, which appears third in the order of the issue, is titled: «Kantian Deontological Ethics Theory - Evaluation, Critique from Islamic Ethics Perspective» by the Iranian author Dr. Mohammad Amin Khonsari.

The second paper in this section was handled by Assist. Prof. Sayed Hafiz Abdul Hamid, and is titled «Faith as Basis for Ethical Meaning.» The paper titled «Ethics Relativity in Postmodernism: Deconstructing Values in Discourse of Bauman, Foucault», was contributed by Dr. Anas Bouslam. The fifth paper was written by Dr. Batoul Youssef Al-Khansa, which is titled «Ethical Pragmatism - Critique of John Dewey's Approach».

In the «Studies and Research» section, Jawad Abdul Hamid Ammar wrote: «Fate of Ignorant in Islam – Analytical Study.»

Finally, Sheikh (Ghassan al-Asaad) presented an in-depth reading of the book «Dialectic of Religion, Ethics».

As we present this issue during these exceptional times the world is going through, we pray that Allah grants the people of the nation wellbeing, guides them the insight, and leads them to the straight path.

Praise be to Allah, the First and the Last.

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