

Ethical Dimension in Ibn Sina's Thought and Its Relation to the Aspect of Education

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Abstract: Artikel ini akan mendiskusikan tentang posisi etika dalam ilmu pengetahuan, tujuan etika, tentang kebaikan dan keburukan dan fungsi etika dalam kehidupan social dan pendidikan. Kajian dimensi etika dalam pandangan Ibn Sina memakai studi banding dengan pemikiran para ahli falsafah yang lain seperti al-Kindi, al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh, Ikhwan al-Shafa, dan Nasir al-Din al-Thusi.

Position of Ethics in Islamic Science

As explained in Chapter Four, according to Ibn Sina, science is divided into a theoretical sciences (*al-'ulum al-nadhary*) and practical sciences (*al-'ulum al-'amal*).¹ The former seeks knowledge of the truth; the latter of the good. The purpose of theoretical sciences is to perfect the soul through knowledge alone. The purpose of practical sciences is to perfect the soul through knowledge of must be done, so the soul acts in accordance with this knowledge. One of the practical sciences is ethics² (*akhlaq*).

¹ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa*, the Chapter of Division of the Rational Sciences (*Fi Aqsam al-'Ulum al-'Aqliyah*), translated by Michael E. Marmura, in Lerner and Mahdi, *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 2.

² Definition of Ethics. Ethics (via Latin *ethica* from the Ancient Greek "moral philosophy", from the adjective of

According to Mutahhari, morals (*akhlaq*): these consist of the commands and teaching relating to the spiritual and moral characteristics of human beings, such as justice, fear of God (*taqwa*), courage, chastity, wisdom, endurance, loyalty, truthfulness, truth worthiness, etc., and prescribe 'how' human being should be.³ Things that

ethos "custom, habit"), a major branch of philosophy, is the study of values and customs of a person or group. It covers the analysis and employment of concepts such as right and wrong, good and evil, and responsibility. It is divided into three primary areas: *meta-ethics* (the study of the concept of ethics), *normative ethics* (the study of how to determine ethical values), and *applied ethics* (the study of the use of ethical values).

³ According to Murtada Mutahhari, Islamic teaching is divided into three parts: (1) Doctrines (*'aqa'id*): These constitute the issues that must be understood and believed in, such as the Unity of God, the Divine Attributes, universal and restricted prophethood, etc. however, there are certain differences between Muslim sects

relate to human qualities are called *akhlaq*.⁴

Nasir al-Din al-Thusi was famous the Commentator of Ibn Sina, also agrees that ethics is the practical science. There are two main works in al-Tusi's ethical output, the *Akhlaq-i Muhtashami (Muhtashamean Ethics)* and the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri (The Nasirean Ethics)*, both written in Persian. In the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, the first 'edition' of which was dedicated to the same Nasir al-Din, is arranged as a work of philosophical ethics. Its divisions into three parts - ethics (*akhlaq*), domestic economics (*tadbir-e manzil*), politics (*siyasat-e mudun*) - set the pattern for subsequent works on practical philosophy in the Islamic tradition.

as to what constitutes the basic articles of faith (*usul al-din*) in which belief is necessary; (2) Morals (*akhlaq*): These consist of the commands and teaching relating to the spiritual and moral characteristics of human beings, such as justice, fear of God (*taqwa*), courage, chastity, wisdom, endurance, loyalty, truthfulness, truth worthiness, etc., and prescribe 'how' human being should be; (3) The law (*ahkam*): Under this heading are discussed the issues relating to practice and the correct manner of performing acts, such as, prayers (*salat*), fasting (*sawm*), *hajj*, *jihad*, *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*, buying, renting, marriage, divorce and division of inheritance. Murtada Mutahhari, *Understanding Islamic Sciences* (London: ICAS Press, 2002), p. 49.

⁴ Murtada Mutahhari, *ibid*, p. 49.

The Aim of Ethics

According to Ibn Sina, through the ethical science someone knows how man ought to be in his moral habits and in his actions so as to lead a happy life here and in the hereafter.

Like Ibn Sina's predecessors, Plato⁵ and Aristotle⁶, Ibn Sina

⁵ Plato (Greek: *Plátōn*, "wide, broad-shouldered") (428/427 BC – 348/347 BC), whose original name was Aristocles, was an ancient Greek philosopher, the second of the great trio of ancient Greeks – succeeding Socrates and preceding Aristotle – who between them laid the philosophical foundations of Western culture. Plato was also a mathematician, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world. Plato is widely believed to have been a student of Socrates and to have been deeply influenced by his teacher's unjust death. Plato's brilliance as a writer and thinker can be witnessed by reading his Socratic dialogues. Some of the dialogues, letters, and other works that are ascribed to him are considered spurious. Plato is thought to have lectured at the Academy, although the pedagogical function of his dialogues, if any, is not known with certainty. They have historically been used to teach philosophy, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, and other subjects about which he wrote.

⁶ Aristotle, one of Plato's greatest students, was born in 384 BC. Aristotle's father was a physician to the king of Macedonia, and when Aristotle was seven years old, his father sent him to study at the Academy. He was there at the beginning as a student, then became a researcher and finally a teacher. He seemed to adopt and develop Platonic ideas while there and to have expressed them in dialogue form. When Plato died, Plato willed the Academy not to Aristotle, but to his nephew Speusippus. Aristotle then left Athens with Xenocrates to go to

says that the main of ethics is happiness.⁷ Ibn Sina says in the

Assos, in Asia Minor, where he opened a branch of the Academy. This Academy focused more on biology than its predecessor that relied on mathematics. There he met Hermias, another former student of Plato, who had become king of Assos. Aristotle married Hermias niece, Pythias, who died ten years later. During these years in Assos, Aristotle started to break away from Platonism and developed his own ideas. King Philip of Macedonia invited Aristotle to the capitol around 343 BC to tutor his thirteen-year-old son, Alexander. Tutoring Alexander in the Academy in Assos, Aristotle still remained the president of the Academy. In 359 BC, Alexander's father, King Philip decided to set off to subdue the Greek city-states, and left Alexander in charge, thus stopping Aristotle's tutoring of Alexander. King Philip was then murdered, in 336 BC, and Alexander then became king. He mobilized his father's great army and subdued some city-states, thus becoming "Alexander The Great". In 335 BC, Aristotle returned to Athens. Speusippus had died, but Aristotle was again not given the presidency of the Academy in Athens, instead, it was given to one of his colleagues Xenocrates. So, Aristotle founded his own school this time, it was named the Lyceum, named after Apollo Lyceus. In 323 BC, twelve years after founding the Lyceum, Alexander the Great died. In Greece resentment against the Macedonia hegemony seethed and riots broke out. Aristotle was accused of impiety, and his life become in serious jeopardy. So he left Athens, and went to his late mother's estate at Chalcis on the island of Euboea. He died there in the next year, 322 BC.

⁷ In Greek philosophers, especially Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the good 'happiness' called *eudaimonia*, which might suggest that the goal is the state of mind which follows upon good action. But this is not what he means. Eudaimonia on his account is not a state of mind; it

Book of al-Shifa: "Through this science one knows how man ought to be in his moral habits and in his actions so as to lead a happy life here and in the hereafter. This part is contained in Aristotle's book on ethics (kitab *Aristotle fi al-Akhlaq*, that is the *Nicomachean Ethics*)."⁸

For Plato, a 'happy' life is not one lived in a happy state of mind, but one which is objectively happy, one which an impartial judge would regard as fortunate ('a happy thought' -- not one which results from or produces a happy state of mind). 'Fortunate', however, suggests something that depends on luck, whereas *eudaimonia* depends largely on good management. Perhaps 'eligible' (worthy of being chosen) is the best word; a good life is one which an impartial judge would regard as worth choosing if there were a choice. Imagine that we are invited to choose our lot, to choose among an array of possible life-histories; a 'happy' life is one which a sensible person making a careful choice might select. Happiness as a state of mind (pleasure) is a consequence of such a life, but not one of its constituent elements. To live a good life, to

consists in action, not in something else resulting from action. The good is 'an active life of the element that has a rational principle... life in the sense of activity'.

⁸ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa*, Book One, Chapter One, p. 3.

live well, is to engage in certain activities; pleasure will result, but is not the goal.⁹

According to Aristotle, genuine happiness lies in action that leads to virtue, since this alone provides true value and not just amusement. Thus, Aristotle held that contemplation is the highest form of moral activity because it is continuous, pleasant, self-sufficient, and complete. In intellectual activity, human beings most nearly approach divine blessedness, while realizing all of the genuine human virtues as well.¹⁰

The Commentator of Aristotle, Ibn Rushd, does not identify happiness with the contemplative life, as had done, but rather with conjunction (*ittisal*) with the active intellect, which the Muslim Neoplatonists - with whom he was at loggerheads - had regarded as man's ultimate goal.¹¹

⁹ Plato, Republic, in Sake Commins & Robert N. Lisnot (Editors), *The World's Great Thinkers Man and Man: The Social Philosophers* (New York: Random House, 1947), pp. 115-120.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Book X, 8, in Sake Commins & Robert N. Lisnot (Editors), *The World's Great Thinkers Man and Man: The Social Philosophers*, pp. 57-90. On Aristotle's ethics see also Bertrand Russel, *History of Western Philosophy* (London, Boston & Sidney: Unwin Paperbacks, 1984), p. 185.

¹¹ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy" in Edward Craig (General Editor), *Routledge's Encyclopedia of*

The Neoplatonic element in Ibn Miskawayh's¹² ethics is nowhere more pronounced than in his analysis of happiness. Its two subdivisions, according to him, are practical and theoretical. The latter consists in 'conjunction' with the active intellect, whereby man is able to join the 'higher intellectual' realm. However, Ibn Miskawayh recognizes beyond this intellectual perfection a 'divine' or supernatural condition whereby man partakes of divine perfection or achieves a condition of self-divinization which goes far beyond his

Islamic Philosophy, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 64.

¹² Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Miskawayh was born in Rayy around 320/932. His full name was Abu Ali Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Yaqub. His name was Miskawayh, and not Ibn Miskawayh, but the Orientalists followed an inaccurate tradition and he became famous as Ibn Miskawayh. He was a secretary and a librarian for the viziers al-Muhallabi (340-52/950-63), Abu'l Fadl (353-60/951-70) and Abu'l Fath (360-6/970-6) and finally for the Buyid Adud al-Dawla (d. 372/983). Ibn Miskawayh was part of the Arab-Persian aristocracy of his times and frequented the circles of the most learned of representatives of Islamic intellectual tradition. This included al-Tawhidi, al-`Amiri, Ibn Sa`daan, al-Sahib ibn `Abbad, Abu Sulayman al-Mantiki, Badi` al-Zaman, Abu Bakr al-Khwarazmi and many others. He studied the works of Ibn Tabari with Ibn Kamil who was a student of the famous historian. According to Yakut, Ibn Miskawayh died on 9 Safar 421/16 February 1030, at the age of 100. The major work of Ibn Miskawayh in ethics is *Tahzib al-Akhlaq*.

worldly conditions. This 'divine condition' is also alleged to derive from an Aristotelian fragment *On the Virtues of the Soul*, which Ibn Miskawayh quotes in Arabic translation, but which is clearly different from the apocryphal tract of the Aristotelian corpus known as *De virtutibus et vitiis*.¹³

For Miskawayh, our happiness arises through upwards movement, our misfortunes through movement in the opposite direction. This concept argues that unity is equivalent to perfection, while multiplicity is equivalent to a meaningless plurality of physical objects. Expanding his concept, Ibn Miskawayh explores the notion of justice. He distinguishes between human and divine justice. Human justice is variable and depends upon the changing nature of particular states and communities. The law of the state is based upon the contingent features of the time, while the divine law specifies what is to be done everywhere and at every time.¹⁴

According to al-Kindi, was strongly influenced by the Stoic tradition, particularly the thought of Epictetus, which was

¹³ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy" in Edward Craig (General Editor), *Routledge's Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, *ibid*, p. 64.

¹⁴ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy" in Edward Craig (General Editor), *Routledge's Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, *ibid*, p. 64 and 156.

known throughout the Islamic world at the time through contact with Syriac Christian scholars, if not through specific texts. Epictetus emphasized the importance of freedom from the world and human beings' status as agents, who through their ultimate independence were responsible for their own happiness and independent of others.¹⁵

For al-Ghazali, happiness, as the chief good, admits of two subdivisions, the worldly and the otherworldly. Otherworldly happiness, which is our ultimate goal, cannot be achieved without certain worldly goods. These include the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice, the bodily virtues of health, strength, good fortune and a long life, the external virtues of wealth, kin, social position and noble birth, and finally the 'divine virtues' of guidance, good counsel, direction and divine support. Those virtues are referred to in the Qur'an and the *hadith*, al-Ghazali says, and the final virtue, 'divine support', is identified with the Holy Spirit (Surah 2: 87, 253).¹⁶

In mystical thought, the view of Good and evil have relation with the theory of love (*'isyq*). Ibn Sina describes the doctrine

¹⁵ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *ibid*, p. 62.

¹⁶ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *ibid*, p. 65.

of love (*isyq*) in *Risalah fi Mahiyah al-'Isyq*.¹⁷ Ibn Sina uses the word '*isyq*' in discussing a human being's love for God. This objection, however, is not fully justified, for as the emphasis of the discourse on love is to express man's desire to unite with God, the term '*isyq*' may have the same qualities as the word *hubb* (affection). In the words, both *isyq* and *hubb* are used interchangeably to indicate the attainment of spiritual and mystical oneness with God. Ibn Sina's theory of love (*'isyq*), as Massignon pointed out, refers to the very Essence of God, into a discourse relating to "Necessary Emanation of God".¹⁸ The term '*isyq*' also has been used to describe God as Love,¹⁹ the Beloved (*al-ma'shuq*), as Ibn Sina wished to describe him, is one of God's attributes, in the same way that other attributes are the Truth (*al-Haqq*), Pure Good (*al-Khayr al-Ma'ad*), Pure Intelligence (*al-'Aql al-Mahd*), Absolute Wisdom (*al-Hakim al-Muthlaq*) and Pure Generosity (*al-Jud al-Mahd*).²⁰

¹⁷ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi Mahiyah al-'Isyq*, Ed. Ahmad 'Attas (Istanbul: Matba'at Ibrahim Jazu'i, 1953), p. 29.

¹⁸ Louis Massignon, *Theory of Profane Love among the Arabs: the Development of the Genre* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 146.

¹⁹ Joseph Norman Bell, "Avicenna Treatises on Love and Nonphilosophical Muslim Tradition" (1986), pp. 73-86.

²⁰ Ian Richer Netton, *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the structure and*

Al-Ghazali also describes about love (*isyq*). According to al-Ghazali, the road to moral and spiritual perfection is described as the 'quest for God'. The seekers after God must satisfy two conditions: their actions must be governed by the prescriptions or ordinances of the 'divine law' (*al-shar'*), and they must ensure that God is constantly present in their hearts. By this presence al-Ghazali means genuine contrition, adoration and submission, born of the seeker's awareness of the beauty and majesty of God which al-Ghazali, like other Muslim mystics or Sufis, regards as analogous to human passion or love (*'isyq*).²¹

Morals and Custom in Social Life

According to Ibn Sina, we should be prescribed laws regarding morals and custom. The main of moral and custom are for the soul's purification and for worldly interests. The good character in social life is justice (*'adalah*) and the bad character is excess and deficiency because to be avoided for the harm they inflict in human interests. Ibn Sina says:

"It is necessary that the legislator should also

Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.p. 155-157.

²¹ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *ibid*, p. 65

prescribe laws regarding morals and customs that advocate justice, which is the mean. The mean in morals and customs is sought for two things: The one, involving the breaking of the dominance of the passions, is for the soul's purification and for enabling it to acquire the power of self mastery so that it can liberate itself from the body untarnished. The other, involving the use of these passions, is for worldly interests. As for the use of pleasures, these serve to conserve the body had procreation. As for courage, it is for the city's survival. The vices of excess are to be avoided for the harm they inflict in human interests, while the vices of deficiency are to be avoided for the harm they cause the city.²²

Ibn Sina's also says that the practical wisdom pertaining to worldly actions and behavior are also a good character in human social life.

"By the wisdom as a virtue, which is the third of a triad comprising in addition temperance and courage, is not meant

²² Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa*, Maqalah al-'Asyriyah, Fashal Khamis (Book of Healing, Metaphysics X, Chapter 5, translated by Michael E. Marmura, in Lerner and Mahdi, *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991).

theoretical wisdom—for the mean is not demanded in the latter at all—but, rather, practical wisdom pertaining to worldly actions and behavior. For it is deception to concentrate on the knowledge of this wisdom, carefully guarding the ingenious ways whereby one can attain through it every benefit and avoid every harm, to the extent that this would result in bringing upon one's associates the opposite of what one seek for oneself and result in distracting oneself from the attainment of other virtues." For example, to cause the hand to be thus fettered to the neck means the loss of a man's soul, his whole life, the instrument of his wellbeing, and his survival to that moment at which he attains perfection."²³

Before Ibn Sina, al-Farabi also describes the important of justice. In his discussion of justice, al-Farabi also follows Aristotle's lead, arguing that justice consists in the equitable distribution of 'common goods' in the city or the state. These goods include security, wealth, dignity and public office, of which every member of the city

²³ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa*, *ibid*, Metaphysics X, Chapter 5.

or state is entitled to a share. Another more general meaning of justice is given as 'man's exercise of virtuous actions in himself and in relation to others, whatever such a virtue might be'.²⁴

For Ibn Rushd, justice is then described along Platonic lines as the 'harmony' of the three corresponding virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance; but it has, as Aristotle stated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, two subdivisions which Ibn Rushd calls common or universal, corresponding to 'perfect virtue', and particular, whose further subdivisions are distributive and certificatory.²⁵

There is three human's power: The appetitive, the irascible, and the practical as Ibn Sina says the following:

The power of men:
"Since the motivating powers are three—the appetitive, the irascible, and the practical—the virtues consist of three things: (1) moderation in such appetites as the pleasures of sex, food, clothing, comfort, and other pleasures of sense and imaginations; (2) Moderation in all the

²⁴ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²⁵ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *ibid*, p. 63.

irascible passions such as fear anger, depression, pride, hate, jealousy, and the like; (3) Moderation in practical matters." "At head of these virtues stand temperance, practical wisdom, and courage; their sum is justice, which, however, is extraneous to theoretical virtue. But whoever combines theoretical wisdom with justice, is indeed the happy man. And whoever, in addition to this, wins the prophetic qualities becomes almost a human god. Worship of him, after the worship of God, becomes almost allowed. He is indeed the world's earthly king and God's deputy in it."²⁶

Between Good and Evil

In *al-Shifa al-Ilahiyyat*, we find Ibn Sina twice raising the objector's point that "it was possible for the First Governor to bring into existence absolute good, free from evil" and "why is evilness primarily not prevented from (being present in the last type of things just mentioned), so that it would be all good? (the "last type of things" being the sublunary world, which for Ibn Sina is the only part of the world that contains evil). In these two

²⁶ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa*, *ibid*, Metaphysics X, Chapter 5.

passages we do not find Ibn Sina asking why it is that "the First Governor," who for him is pure good (*khayr mahd*) does not free this world from certain kinds or amount of evil. Rather, he asks why it is that such a God does not free this world from any evil by "bringing into existence absolute good, free from evil," or a world that is "all good".²⁷

Shams Inati makes a good summary and conclusion on Ibn Sina's problem good and evil. Inati's explanation as the following: (1) God is good and providential, but, precisely because of His goodness, God cannot intend any good or evil in the world. This thesis an implicit denial of God's absolute power. If it is solution, it is not because God is absolutely good, but because God's goodness is a limitation.²⁸ (2) There is more good than evil in the universe. Essential evil is rare; only non-essential evil is predominant. According to Ibn Sina, there is no evil except in the sublunary sphere, and, even there, real or essential evil only affects minority individuals.²⁹ (3) Evil is a necessary consequences of the good, and to wish the removal of

²⁷ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy* (New York: Global Publications Institute of Global Cultural Studies Binghamton University, 2000), p. 4.

²⁸ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, *ibid*, p. 169.

²⁹ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 170.

evil is to the removal of the good.³⁰ (4) Evil is a necessary means for the good.³¹ (5) God is omnipotent; that is, God cannot free the world from evil.³² (6) Essential evil is privation of being, and therefore cannot be caused by God, who is the cause of being only.³³ (7) Human evil is due human free will, resulting from knowledge³⁴.

As for the problem of destiny, Ibn Sina attempts to solve it by assuring us that rewards and punishments are not inflicted on us by God in the second life. Rather they are result of our own conduct. To say, there fore, that "God is just" and "there are rewards and punishments" is not inconsistent. God's justice encourages good action and discourages its contrary, and has nothing to do with rewards and punishments.³⁵

The need for punishment depends on the possibility of evil, and Ibn Sina's examination maintains that moral and other evils afflict individuals rather than species. Evils are usually an

³⁰ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 170.

³¹ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 171.

³² Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 172.

³³ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 172.

³⁴ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 172.

³⁵ Shams C. Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy*, p. 173.

accidental result of things that otherwise produce good. God produces more good than evil when he produces this sublunary world, and abandoning an overwhelmingly good practice because of a 'rare evil' would be a privation of good. For example, fire is useful and therefore good, even if it harms people on occasion. God might have created a world in another existence that was entirely free of the evil present in this one, but that would preclude all the greater goods available in this world, despite the rare evil it also contains. Thus, God generates a world that contains good and evil and the agent, the soul, acts in this world; the rewards and punishments it gains in its existence beyond this world are the result of its choices in this world, and there can be both destiny and punishment because the world and its order are precisely what give souls a choice between good and evil.³⁶

In interesting feature of al-Farabi's ethics which has no Aristotelian parallel is the discussion of evil. He starts in Neoplatonic fashion by asserting that 'evil has no existence as such in anything found in these worlds; that is generally in whatever does not exist through

³⁶ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *op cit.*, p. 64.

human volition. Everything therein is good'. Evil, then, is a predicate of human action, not of physical occurrences. However, al-Farabi disagrees with traditional Neoplatonists who identified being with the good and not-being with evil pure and simple, on the ground that 'being is good only when it is in conformity with justice (or merit); not-being is evil when it is not in conformity with justice'. This appears to reflect Heraclitus' concept of *dike* as chaos.

Al-Farabi's successor and spiritual disciple Ibn Sina is the author of a very short tract on ethics which follows closely the Platonic model in psychology. Ibn Sina divides the soul into the rational, irascible and concupiscent, to which correspond the virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance respectively, and with justice being the 'summation' of all three. To ensure the enforcement of justice within the state, argues Ibn Sina, the existence of the caliph, as conceived of by the Shi'ites, is necessary as the sovereign of the world and God's vicegerent on earth.³⁷

More explicitly than al-Farabi, Ibn Sina develops in his psychological writings a theory of conjunction (*ittisal*) of the soul

³⁷ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *ibid.*, p. 64.

with the active intellect, that supermundane agency which according to the Muslim Neoplatonists governs the sublunary world. With this conjunction, he argues, is bound up the ultimate perfection of the soul which has attained the highest degree of wisdom and virtue, becoming thereby a replica or a mirror of the higher intelligible world. Therein lays man's ultimate happiness while his soul is still in the body.³⁸

On good and evil, Ibn Sina says in *Danishnama'i 'Ala'i*:

Good can be applied to two ideas (*ma'na*). (1) One of these is that intrinsic goodness (*niki*) which is in something due to itself and is good for itself. It is the perfection (virtue; *kamal*) of a thing, for when it is absent from a thing, that thing is said to be deficient (*naqis*). It suffers in itself if it perceives an imperfection (*naqsi*) and it perceives imperfection totally (*tamam*). (2) 'Good' in the other instrumental sense is that due to which something else becomes better (*niki bishtar buwad*). That for which is possible to exist must be one of the following three kinds. (1) It may be such a being which cannot exist without good (*khair*) coming from it. It exists in fact due to this poverty. (2)

³⁸ Majid Fakhry, "Ethics in Islamic Philosophy", *ibid*, p. 64.

Although it may be a being which is predominantly good (*ghalaba*), it may at the same time be a being whose effect cannot be bad (*bad*) and malefic (*sharr*). Therefore, it remains a being of the good order. Examples are fire, sun, and water. For instance, the sun cannot be the sun itself having the proper nature of the sun and yet be of no benefit (*fa'ida*) to the order of the world, even though it is natural (*tab'*) that someone who faces it, baring bareheaded, will have a headache. Although fire is beneficial as well as useful to the universal order, a pious or wise man who falls into it will burn himself, for fire cannot be other than it is. The power procreation (*quwwat-i shahwaini*) cannot be sexual power and fail to benefit the good universal order (*nizam-i khair-i kulli*), though it may be harmful to a group of intelligences (*ahl-i 'aql*). For some stars (*sitaragan*) it is impossible not to exist. While the effect of their existence is not such that it may lead some people astray, they are nevertheless harmful in concept by allowing some persons to become actualized as persons. Among such persons are those who by not existing would be neither of harm nor of benefit to the good universal order. To

demand that from these stars nothing but good should come is to demand that they be something other than they are, namely, they be of the first kind. Furthermore, to make such a demand would be the same as to demand that fire is not fire, that Saturn be not Saturn, and that such kinds of entities do not exist. (3) Finally it may be of such a kind in which evil (*badi*) and malevolence (*sharr*) are dominant. We must now consider the conditions of these three kinds of beings. If they should necessarily be, from what cause should they be realized?³⁹

According to Ibn Sina, the human being is born 'upon the natural disposition' and is neither good nor bad by nature, although tending more to good than to evil; and this human being changes and adapts according to the influences of the environment and its education systems. If he is accustomed to evil, he will become evil; if accustomed to good, he becomes

³⁹ Ibn Sina, *Danish Nama'i*, translated by Parviz Morewedge, *The Metaphysics of Avicenna (Ibn Sina): A Critical Translation-Commentary and Analysis of the fundamental Argument in Avicenna's Metaphysica in the Danish Nama-i 'Ala'i (The Book of Scientific Knowledge)* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 1973), pp. 80-81.

good.⁴⁰ The ethical thought of Ibn Sina has similarity with the ethical thought of Ikhwan al-Shafa. The Ikhwan al-Shafa interest in ethics was confined to its bearing on their doctrine: acquiring theoretical knowledge and doing good in this life so that their souls may enjoy eternity and happiness in the hereafter. They start from the ascertain that character are either in born or acquired. Inborn characters begin with the formation of the foetus in the womb, and they develop therein gradually under influence of the planet. Innate character, or virtues, is specialized aptitudes assigned to different organs. They enable the soul to act through every organ and produce the sensation, action, or craft particular to that organ without need for deliberation or choice. At one place the Ikhwan al-Shafa assume that inborn characters are uniformly good. At another, they maintain that they are bad, and consequently, all religious, were revealed to resist the innate characters of man and to reform them if possible. After birth man begins to acquire virtues. He continues to do so until his death. There is in man an aptitude to do good, and with the same aptitude he can do evil.

⁴⁰ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Siyasa*, ed. by Louis Maaluf, *Majallat al-Sarq* (Cairo), 1906, p. 1074. 14

Character and behavior are teachable.⁴¹

Anything which should be done, if done as it should, to the extent to which it should, in the place where it should, at the same time when it should, and in view of the end for which it should, is called good. And he who does that thing deliberately and with choice is called a wise man, a philosopher, and a perfect man. Good, for the masses, is that which religion has enjoined, and evil, that which religion has prohibited.⁴²

Like Ibn Sina, human is influenced by environment, Ikhwan also describes that the character of man are determined and modified by the disposition of the body, climate of the land, and the contact of the children with their parents, tutors, comrades, and with the people in prominence. The different circumstances through which man usually passes are important factors in making people change from one character into another.⁴³

Relation to the Aspect of Education

Ethics is one of the practical sciences. Through this science

⁴¹ Umar A. Farrukh, "Ikhwan al-Shafa", in M.M. Sharif (Editor), *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), p. 305.

⁴² Umar A. Farrukh, "Ikhwan al-Shafa", *ibid*, p. 305.

⁴³ Umar A. Farrukh, "Ikhwan al-Shafa", *ibid*, p. 306.

someone knows how man ought to be in his moral habits and in his actions so as to lead a happy life here and in the hereafter.

In our social life, it is necessary that the legislator should also prescribe laws regarding morals and customs that advocate justice, which is the mean. The mean in morals and customs is sought for two things: for the soul's purification and for worldly interests. The good character in social life is justice (*'adalah*) and the bad character is excess and deficiency because to be avoided for the harm they inflict in human interests. As Ibn Sina says, there is three human's power: The appetitive, the irascible, and the practical.

God generates a world that contains good and evil and the agent, the soul. acts in this world; the rewards and punishments it gains in its existence beyond this world are the result of its choices in this world, and there can be both destiny and punishment because the world and its order are precisely what give souls a choice between good and evil.

Ibn Sina is of the opinion that the human being is born 'upon the natural disposition' and is neither good nor bad by nature, although tending more to good than to evil; and this human being changes and adapts according to the influences of the environment and its education

systems. If he is accustomed to evil, he will become evil; if accustomed to good, he becomes good. On this point, Avicenna says: 'When the child is weaned, then his education and his moral training begin, before he is attacked or overcome by blameworthy morals or objectionable characteristics. For evil morals so quickly take over the young boy, and bad habits soon prevail; and if any of these gain influence over him they overcome him, and then he cannot separate himself from

them nor struggle against them'.⁴⁴

Summary

Avicenna emphasizes this elsewhere by saying: 'All moral characteristics, the good and the bad, are acquired; and it is possible for the human being, when he has as yet no specific moral character, to obtain them for himself; and when his soul also chances upon some specific characteristic, he may move, by his own volition, away from it towards its opposite'.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Siyasa*, *op. cit.* p. 1074.

⁴⁵ Ibn Sina, "Ilm al-Akhlaq", in *Majmu al-Rasa'il, Majmu' al-Rasa'il* (Cairo: Matba'at Kurdistan al-Ilmiyyah, 1328 AH), p. 198.