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# The Inevitable Contingency of Ethics on Theistic Foundations

**Muhammad Rasheed Arshad***

Department of Philosophy,
University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

## Abstract

In this article, the author examines the dependence of ethics on theistic foundations. The Western conception is that ethics is a result of a natural evolutionary process. The Modern West has never accepted or believed in any ethical system governed by religion, and modernity has tried to establish that the universal moral principles are independent of any metaphysical context. The modernity project and rising secularization have taken charge of the field, and religious significance has gone absent from the mainstream, on account of which many challenges have occurred in moral and ethical matters. We will also examine whether Modern Western Civilization has established an ethical code independent of religion and whether we should follow the Western Model, if any. Moreover, this article examines how ethics is a cause and consequence of the development of personality, and no ethical system is ever there without any religious foundations. Human beings are built on the essence of servitude, and virtues evolve from the foundation of servitude. Another area the article focuses on is the challenges faced by the Muslims and how Modern Western Civilization made morality appears as a result of social and psychological evolution. We also study the possibility and impossibility of Good without an omniscient and omnipotent authority. The absoluteness of moral principles and values and the necessity of consciousness are also discussed in this article.

*Keywords:* theology, metaphysics, ethics, morality, virtue, consciousness, existence

## Introduction

After metaphysics, the biggest challenge faced by religion today is in the domain of ethics. The Modern West systematically excluded God from all the planes of human existence by estranging the faith's rational capacity and rendering nature's moral essence as irreligious by declaring the ethics a result of the natural evolutionary process.[1] As a result of these two, the transformation of the whole human telos was the project's particular goal. Unfortunately, the contingencies of faith with consciousness and of morality with nature have remained out of focus, for a while, for the religious traditions, including the Islamic tradition. Owing to this unfortunate crisis, man's moral existence has been unable

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*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr Muhammad Rasheed Arshad, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan at rarshadpk@gmail.com

[1]Ryan McKay, and Harvey Whitehouse, "Religion and Morality," *Psychological Bulletin* 141, no. 2 (2015): 447.

to evolve along with the religious manifestations and failed to actualize itself in a creative and organized manner.

It is the passivity and retardation of the religious thought that for at least two centuries, it remained indifferent to a necessary component of the religious discourse: the dynamic man. As a result, the world around the religious man kept changing under the natural and deterministic laws of change. However, this change's steering wheel was no more in his hand. Meanwhile, new institutions of the human organization evolved as a process of compounding and complexity, but the religious thought and action remained indifferent to all this process. It did not even realize that if the ethical code does not become the dynamic basis of the social organization, it reduces into mere literary rhetoric, which is useless for a person pragmatically.

The modern social organizations and relationships have framed for their legitimacy and endurance an ethical theorization. This theorization, after a successful institutionalization and internalization, has raised the most critical question: "Is there a need for religion for man's moral guidance?" During the last gasps of religious metanarratives, a few voices were heard from different dimensions supporting morality's dependence on religion. For example,[2] Zuckerman's analysis of the relationship between declining moral conditions and rising secularism or Dostoevsky's famous quote, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted.[3] "On the popular level, still more than half of the Americans think that morality is impossible without God.[4]

However, with strong institutionalization and legislative expansion, modernity has tried to establish that the natural and universal moral principles are independent of any metaphysical context. In fact, freedom is the only constant that is based on the sustenance of the universal ethical principles and the guarantor of their dynamic continuity.[5]

Religion, because of its structural hegemony, interrupts the process of change in the rational thought and ethical paradigm. The creation of new ethical principles and their novel implications becomes impossible.[6] Moreover, after being wholly marginalized from steering this process of change, the intellectual and practical efforts made by the religious

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[2]Phil Zuckerman, *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell us about Contentment* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), https://muse.jhu.edu/book/7479

[3]Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*, trans., Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Vintage, 2008), 289.

[4]"America's Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project | Pew Research Center," accessed March 8, 2021 https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project/

[5]Kai Nielsen, "Some Remarks on the Independence of Morality from Religion," *Mind* 70, no. 278 (1961): 175-86.

[6]Nadine Sika, "Dynamics of a Stagnant Religious Discourse and the Rise of New Secular Movements in Egypt," in *Arab Spring in Egypt*, ed. Bahgat Korany, and Rabab El-Mahdi (American University in Cairo Press, 2012): 63-82, https://doi.org/10.5743/cairo/9789774165368.003.0005

tradition to restore their control were so inelegant, or in fact inhumane, that they forced even those people to accept and internalize the modern conception of ethics which had no relation with the Modern Western Civilization.[7] In recent times, the condition has been worsened into such an obscene form that it has become nearly impossible for even an orthodox and sincere Muslim to claim moral equivalency with the Western Civilization on even Islam's ethical principles.

The climax of this crisis is that even the most pious adherents of religion are in an inferiority complex intellectually and morally, and there seems no way out of this crisis. There is no doubt in the fact that the Western powers can employ any tactic to establish their civilizational superiority. Initially, the Muslims could not fathom the reason behind the manifestations of this intellectual and moral decline due to a distortion in the religious consciousness and disposition, and later, when they realized this fact, they did not have any substantial power to mitigate the situation. Those who tried to fight the hegemony of modernity, their struggle was a merely kind of struggle-for-existence which went in vain. Moreover, a vulgar element that has entered the religious tradition of Islam has rather become a popular representative of Islam has catalysed this modernity project. This element is terrorism or fundamentalism. It has done no good except that the whole world is now compelled to look vigorously to the Modern Western Civilization as their saviour. The activities of organizations like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have supplemented the dream of domination of the West. The Muslims are still unaware of how horrible a nightmare the Muslim ethics is becoming for the Muslims themselves. However, it is a fact that this element of fundamentalism is like an invasive weed planted by modernity itself, and now it has become demanding, and also infiltrating the Islamic tradition to scratch it out brutally.

On the one hand, these organizations are creating mischief in the name of Islam's global domination while, on the other hand, the general Muslim masses are in a deep apathetic languor. A combination of these two conditions results in a novel version of Islam, accepting which would be retardation and cruelty at any moral plane,[8] because such a version of Islam lacks any intellectual vigor and any moral empathy. In such an unfortunate and unfavorable environment, the most critical challenge at the moment is to establish the intellectual and moral justification to believe in God and become a Muslim. The claim that religion is not a necessary condition for morality cannot be refuted by idealistic argumentation for rational logic.[9] Alternative pragmatic models are what is needed to refute this claim and the Islamic world does not have any of them at the moment. We can theoretically argue for the contingent relationship between religion and ethics. Still, it would be of no benefit because their action is against the theoretical conception, and it is

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[7]Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Hurst, 1997).

[8]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam in the Modern World: Challenged by the West, Threatened by Fundamentalism, Keeping Faith with Tradition* (New York: Harper One, 2010).

[9]Louise Antony, "Atheism as Perfect Piety," in *Is Goodness without God Good Enough?* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 67-84.

the most significant witness against their claim. The debate is not whether religion can be a source for Ethical code or not; instead, the debate challenges the inevitable contingency of morality on religion.[10]

## 2. Countering the Challenge

This article would contain the maxim of self-accountability, eliminating any chance of self-bias. It would be argued that humans' ethical existence cannot sustain without a theistic or gnostic existence, not just as a religious claim but as a universal truth that could be established by every kind of argumentation.

First of all, we have to examine the credibility of the claim that Modern Western Civilization has achieved an objective ethical code independent of religion. Is the West really a moral ideal for the rest of the world? Has the West acquired the natural ideals of ethics? We would respond negatively. The Modern Western Civilization has succeeded in establishing a sound social order; however, the basis of this order is not a virtue, rather power.[11] Suppose the power structure fails at any instance. In that case, this form of organization will not hold any ethical or civil inertia that could keep order in the system where the masses, for example, speak the truth and deal with honesty.[12] The Western Civilization has turned into an organization, or better to say, a corporation where every member has been indoctrinated with the principle that if he does not comply with the rules and regulations, he would be the one at a loss. If all the vibrant buzzing of life turns into a mirage due to this organization, then the interest-based solidarity, utilitarian legislation, and corporate ethics do not form a civilization based on virtue. The concept of 'civilization' is something naturally different from the assembly line working of an organization. Even if this civilization is examined with an utterly secular eye, it would eventually become evident that the manifestations of the West's so-called moral superiority are not essentially natural and moral rather mechanical and utilitarian. This can be easily understood by a glance at the dominant ethical debates and the theoretical justifications behind them.

The religious tradition kept the discourse of ethics limited and straightforward. On the other hand, the Modern Western Civilization has added many rational and psychological

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[10]William J. Wainwright, "Religion and Morality," *Monotheism and Ethics*, January 1, (2012): 45-57, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004217416_005

[11]Jeffrey A. Joireman et al., "Perceived Rationality, Morality, and Power of Social Choice as a Function of Interdependence Structure and Social Value Orientation," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 33, no. 3 (2003): 413-37, https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.155

[12]Martin Gottlieb and James Glanz, "The Blackout of 2003: The Past; The Blackouts of '65 and '77 Became Defining Moments in the City's History - The New York Times," accessed March 8, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/15/us/blackout-2003-past-blackouts-65-77-became-defining-moments-city-s-history.html

complexities to this discourse and made it seem more like a social evolutionary process.[13] Today, the Muslims need to have such an understanding and develop a descriptive narrative of the ethical conceptions which encompasses the absolute foundations and eternal ideas of the ethical existence of human being on the one hand; and on the other to cover all those details which under the process of temporal change and the need of time play an influential role in the ethical composition of a human being. It is necessary to establish at this point what the concept of natural means in the Islamic Tradition and the Western Discourse. When Modernity claims that ethical code is natural, it is meant that ethics are subject to physical, social, and psychological laws of evolution.[14] At the same time, in the Islamic Tradition, its meaning is entirely different. Man is a creation of God, and the essence and telos of its creation is the servitude of the creator. This notion of essence is different from the concept of 'being' in the Western philosophies which Morrocan scholar Muhammed Lahbabi defined as 'Personalism'; a normative essence[15]. The capability and compliance with servitude are inherent in mankind. Natural in the Islamic tradition is the acceptance and compliance with servitude, and everything that is according to this essence of ours and the telos of servitude is called natural. When the Muslims claim ethics as natural, they do not mean anything except that these are servitude virtues, which are the foundational essence of mankind.

### 3. Inevitable Dependence of Ethics on Metaphysics

The question of ethics is directly contingent on the question, "what is a human being"[16]? Is human a social being, a rational being, or merely a physical being where consciousness and sociability accidentally occur? We claim that a human being is a social being built on the essence of servitude. This means that a man cannot exist independently of the condition that he is God's servant and may he be examined at the individual or collective level. Ethics is, in fact, the cause and consequence of the development of personality at both dimensions. These are natural, civilizational, and legal as causes and are virtues that make this world and hereafter a good place as consequences.

The social virtues also evolve from the foundation of servitude. Only an ethical being resulting from the divine relationship fulfills all the social organization requirements be they religious or non-religious, like cultural aspects and customs. The maxims that

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[13]Donald T. Campbell, "On the Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution and between Psychology and Moral Tradition," *American Psychologist* 30, no. 12 (1975): 1103-26, https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.30.12.1103

[14]Alexander Bird, and Emma Tobin, "Natural Kinds," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2018 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/natural-kinds/

[15] Vervliet Chris, "A Personalist Approach to the Dialogue of Civilisations: African Ubuntu, Social Catholic Personalism and Muslim Shakçânyya Compared," *African Journal of Religion Philosophy and Culture* 1, no. 1 (August 1, 2020): 69-81, https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC-1fd5b1957e

[16]Dorothy Walsh, "Ethics and Metaphysics," *International Journal of Ethics* 46, no. 4 (1936): 461-72.

strengthen the interpersonal virtues socially are the same that results from the consciousness of being with God or the divine relationship. The actualization of the ethical code gets permission and authentication from this reference.

Without the consciousness of being with God, no human relationship system could be run on moral principles, no matter how much prosperity and progress that system yields.[17] This is a universal truth that morality or virtue is to make others happy.[18] From the religious perspective, this "other" is fundamentally God and, on the temporary plane, every other that comes into the circle of relationships with the subject. The fundamental difference between the Islamic Ethical Narrative with the Modern Western Civilization is in the specification of the other. In their narrative, this other is undefined, but they may sometimes name humans or society or state as the other, unlike the religiously fixed other.

## 4. The Form vs. Essence of Ethics

The second important issue is that the ethical forms in all civilizations are more or less similar. Still, it is the maxim behind those forms that determine a specific civilization's ethical theory.[19] If the ethical forms are not absolute and established as the subject, a few conventional objective forms cannot be called virtues. All such forms that seem to portray as maintaining justice and good in society are not necessarily ethical, despite sharing the form of some virtues. These forms can be called administrative rules, social customs, or any other thing, but in no way can they be called virtues in the religious or ethical sense because their maxim is not the divine relationship.[20]

Even if we do not insist on a very religious ethical narrative, three essential elements have always existed as ethical universals. The whole facade of the ethical conception stands on these three essential elements i.e., sacrifice, humility, and modesty.[21] Interestingly all civilizations that have existed have these three common elements, and more interestingly, the way they are defined is also similar. The only difference is in the maxim and telos. The Modern Western Civilization has demolished the three fundamental pillars both from the theory and the practice of ethics in the name of freedom in some instances or the name of enlightenment at the others. Thus, Western Civilization cannot be in any way the Islamic moral ideal. Currently, the difference between the Muslim and Western Civilizations is that ethics is a form in their civilization free from essence, while the Muslims have had grasped

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[17]Richard Swinburne, "What Difference Does God Make to Morality?" in *Is Goodness without God Good Enough?* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 151-63.

[18]Mike W. Martin, "Happiness and Virtue in Positive Psychology," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 37, no. 1 (2007): 89-103, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2007.00322.x

[19]Patricia Kitcher, "What Is a Maxim?," *Philosophical Topics* 31, no. 1/2 (2003): 215-43.

[20]Peter Cane, "Morality, Law and Conflicting Reasons for Action," *The Cambridge Law Journal* 71, no. 1 (March 2012): 59-85, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008197312000207

[21]Nicolas Bommarito, "Modesty and Humility," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2018 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/modesty-humility/

the essence but are cut off from the form. Though Muslims too are in no way in any good or commendable situation, and on the plane of forms, whereas Western Civilization is far more advanced, yet Muslims' lagging in the pragmatic formal ethics cannot be counted as a reason to follow the modern Western civilization as an ideal. Despite being convicted of the crime of not transforming the essence of ethics into the pragmatic forms, the Muslims are still well acquainted and cognizant of the essence of ethics and its profound influences on the collective sub-consciousness of the Muslims. If an idea has the souls' efficacy, it is not an over-optimism to hope for its significant transformation in the environment. Apparently, for this transformation, a political change is required for which, though unsuccessful, struggles are going on.

## 5. The Religious Roots of Modern Ethics

The modern system of ethics, which is considered a result of social and psychological evolution, is extracted from religion in its basic principle form.[22] Though it cannot be denied that the social structure is evolved from the complexities of these basic principles, conscious rational contemplation of human faculties and gets the content of ethical consciousness endowed by religion. This claim can be augmented with all forms of evidence; for example, no system of ethics can exist, whether in theory or action, without the concept of accountability.

The sense of accountability, which is the foundation of all the dimensions of ethics, was born or bestowed upon by religion.[23] There is no foundation of ethics known to human knowledge and experience, which was not laid by religion. In this sense, we are in a position to say that if it were not for religion, the ethical dimension of human existence would not have existed.

According to the Qur'ān, man is ungrateful,[24] and one of its manifestations is that after the emergence of natural physical and motivational factors of ethical existence at a universal scale, it is being denied that ethics have any contingency with religion. Ungratefulness is that God bestowed the potential or capability for something. When that something is achieved, the awarded people start claiming that they could have also achieved it one way or another without God's guidance. The Muslims believe that the virtues were kept inherent in the creation of human beings by the creator, who is the one who guides and the one who makes him accountable. Since he could not have recognized his ethical existence without the guidance of revelation, the development of his ethical existence and its manifestation started after he became the addressee of revelation. Isn't it to be noted that all those mechanics based on which one becomes a human embraced manifestation and realization after the revelation? It can be said that the realization and

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[22]Richard Taylor, *Ethics, Faith, and Reason* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 2-3.

[23]Abdun Noor, "Ethics, Religion and Good Governance," *Journal of Administration and Governance* 3, no. 2 (2008): 62-77.

[24]Al-Qur'ān: al-Isra 17:67.

actualization of all the planes of human existence, consciousness, or being, are a result of divine correspondence from the origin till time. Go through the biography of human beings' rational existence; everywhere, revelation is the master, the mentor, and the counselor.

## 6. The Necessity of the Divine Consciousness

Our premise that ethics is the sense and consciousness of relationship, and the collection of traits and social interaction corresponding to this sense and consciousness, the essence of relationship is the consciousness of being with God, which becomes a potential emanatory for the spheres of the complex web of theoretical and pragmatics relationships.[25] Without the essence of this divine consciousness, the ethics of the system of relationships have no value because it does not have any perception of consciousness of the real situation of accountability.[26] That is the reason why every secular system of ethics is psychologically selfish and socially based on either coercion or business management.

A system of ethics is in principles based on individual conscience and actualizes in universal manifestations in the normal situation. Since the Modern Western Civilization has got power and authority, it has forced the collective aspect of the system on the individual conscience so much that the individual subject has become irrelevant and his conscience meaningless.[27] Every element of the ethics system has transformed into a strict order whose nature is materialistic and collectivistic. For Islam, the human is an organic whole that actualizes in the environment just as a partial manifestation. Modernity, on the other hand, is where the alienated man on different aspects has shattered this organic whole of human existence by the coercion of the collectivistic system and rendered it into a mere mechanical being.[28] In a nutshell, the ethical existence of humans actualizes the principle of servitude. If this servitude serves God, it results in a religious system of ethics, and if it serves this-worldly interests, it results in modern secular systems of ethics. The principle of servitude, in short, lies in the telos.

If explained in the prevalent terminologies, the moral conception based on revelation implies that human consciousness in its clinical form is based on conviction, and the existential form is ethical. The fundamental premise of this claim is that while the disciplines of knowledge are trying to study man's existence in holistic form when focusing on their object of study, they assert two principles as basic assumptions categorically that man's existential ground, in comparison with the existing world, along with the cosmological existence, is based on consciousness. No definition of man is complete

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[25]James B. Glattfelder, "The Consciousness of Reality," In *Information-Consciousness-Reality*, (2019): 515-595.

[26]Jacob Gould Schurman, "The Consciousness of Moral Obligation," *The Philosophical Review* 3, no. 6 (1894): 641-654.

[27]James B. Glattfelder, "The Consciousness of Reality," 523.

[28]Robert Bickel, "Modernity and Its Discontents: A Suitably Ironic Closing," In *Peter Berger on Modernization and Modernity*. 1st ed., (London: Routledge, 2017).

without asserting the originality of consciousness.[29] Seen in this context, human consciousness is the home of assumptions, either pre-conceived or impossible to conceive. The structural system and the façade of human consciousness both indicate that the assumptions by which it is formed are either a priori or a posteriori. It can be said that the foundational element of consciousness is *Fitrat* (innateness) and the results emanating from that element belong to the realm of revelation guidance. *Fitrat*, being the fundamental element of consciousness, exists in the condition of self-realization, and the revelational guidance becomes its maxim of actualization. This was just a parenthetical clause, which would expand in the coming paragraphs.

## 7. Explaining the Consciousness and Actualization

Consciousness acts between idea and concept, and at the plane of ideas, it consists of such assumptions that it conceives due to an external factor or guidance.[30] Before idea, consciousness does not establish, in fact, not even exist. This is the basic capability due to which the consciousness acquires, actualizes, expands, and compares its transitory and permanent conceptions. Consciousness cannot reach the point of self-actualization without any external factor or guidance. At the level of idea, the basic potentiality of consciousness is self-realization. With the combination of basic potentiality and basic external guidance, consciousness realizes its structure of assumptions and then applies this realization onto all future conditions and maxims of the future. Since this process is inbuilt in consciousness, consciousness does not let any such concept reside in itself, which contradicts its basic structure.

In its natural condition, a process of discovering and forming new assumptions is continuously going on in the depth of the unconscious mind, during the conscious activity of learning and unlearning and accepting and rejecting. In other words, consciousness desires to conceive the known at the plane of belief, and this is impossible without any external factor; this is because knowledge can be subjective, but belief cannot be. This characteristic of consciousness is called faith in the religious context. Even if detached from the religious context, it can be established as the reality of consciousness that it is unidirectional and moves from knowledge to certainty in belief. In both ways, the meaning is the same. This fundamental principle of the study of dimensions of consciousness sets the definition of existence too. Firstly, from the aspect that in humans, consciousness and existence are not independent of each other. In their origin, existence and consciousness are similar, as well as in their structural element, with the difference that consciousness has the characteristics of abstraction and transcendence. In contrast, existence does not need these characteristics due to a kind of dependence on consciousness. Therefore, in the condition of independence from the consciousness, man is an ethical being in the existential

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[29]James B. Glattfelder, "The Consciousness of Reality," 570.

[30]Oberto Marrama, "Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas and Animation in Spinoza's Ethics," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (2017): 506-525.

form. The ethical system of existence is just like the system of assumptions for consciousness.

Similarly, the factors of continuity, growth, and actualization are external as they were in the realm of consciousness. Without the external, consciousness is a mere vacuum, and existence is mere stagnancy. If the man in his totality, i.e., the potential and actual tendencies of consciousness and existence, is dependent on his 'other' (external factor), the problem to be solved remains to be determined who is this other? Where does this external maxim originate from? The areligious mind is perplexed in this question. Somewhere it is claimed that it stems from the environment; others claim that it originates from the human consciousness itself. Human-ness is in a constant process of evolution; for some, this evolution is internal; for others, it is external. External factors are also, at most, limited to the social system. Since evolution is based on change, all areligious concepts of humans, despite their differences, are united on a common denominator, which is relativism. For all those conceptions, consciousness and being both are relative. Both their beliefs and their morals are relative. This is where the religious conception of humans takes a different position. If the concept of absolute does not exist even as a referent, the concept of relativity cannot sustain. Relativity is the heresy of absoluteness. All meanings of negativity assert towards a permanent reference of absolute. Though it is a purely logical argument, it can be used effectively in this discussion.

## 8. Materialist Ethics

One more element in the Western conception of human beings fundamentally increases its gulf with the religious notion. The West's concept measures human beings on the same principle as it does with this material world.[31] This means there is a system of existence that prevails in man, as well in the universe. Thus, their ethical conception is mechanical, deterministic from one aspect and relative from another aspect. In their conception, humans hold no specific position concerning being in the external system of existence. However, being a carrier of consciousness, it is continuously faced with the challenge of choice. The choice means that the necessities of consciousness can be fulfilled by more than one option. Still, to adopt a unanimous conception, he has to choose because if humanity were a group of unrelated self-sufficient beings, there would be no need for this choice. But since such is not the case, it goes against the natural system. For that, the man tries to sustain the sum of his collectivity by abiding by the principle of relation running in nature's design. Thus, being a conscious soul, he has to make some decisions. The maxim behind these decisions, according to the West, is utility. By cumulating the existential determinism and conscious will, no result can be deduced other than that the human's mechanical being is absolute. At the same time, ideal and moral structures are relative.

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[31]Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006).

Defining humans as complex of existence and consciousness is a viable way. Still, the modern West has created such a bifurcation between these two because of which no definition of man has remained possible, which could encompass his absoluteness holistically. Believing in the absoluteness of existence and relativeness of consciousness implies that man is merely a thing like all other things, except it can just conceive a perception. While according to the religious conception, man is leveled with the universe at the level of creation, but it has the capability to bear the consciousness of being with God (Reality). Based on that consciousness, man can make knowledgeable decisions and enforce will. Without being associated with the real, man is undefinable. This association alone keeps him sustained with some eternal and absolute values and keeps his level of being distinguished from most other creatures.

Contrary to the Modern Western conception, the defining element of man is consciousness, not existence, in the religious conception. This consciousness has an absolute position with respect to the real and a relative changing position with respect to the creation. The modern conception does not perceive any realm of a man outside the inter-human relationships; hence, for them holding a relative position for ethics is a natural outcome of their conception. In the religious framework, the man has a transcendence as well, along with his inter-human web of relationships. Because of this transcendence beliefs and morals must remain absolute and unchanging. Man is a being stabilizing the relativity of existence with the absoluteness of consciousness. Its relativity is itself acquired from the essence of absoluteness of the consciousness and this relativity does not negate the comprehensiveness.

With such overwhelming conflict, acculturation is not possible at the level of beliefs and morality with the West, as it is a common process among various civilizations that reciprocally enhances each. This contradiction is so overwhelming that keeping a cautious distance becomes necessary in purely secular disciplines of knowledge and dealings, fearing the domination of creation over 'The Real' or asserting the creation at the cost of rejecting 'The Real.' In the ethical context, the modern West's axiology is limited to this world and immediate gratification only. Contrarily, the Muslims' ethical temperament is wary of being limited to this world only. The Muslims' ethical conception can also be established on the same principles based on which the modern West accepts and rejects or asserts and negates.

## 9. Ethics and Social Interaction

Ethics can be characterized as the essence of the relationship between two individuals.[32] This essence and all its dominant forms owe its existence to the existence of

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[32]Amitava Krishna Dutt, and Charles K. Wilber, "Social Interactions and Ethical Values," in *Economics and Ethics*, by Amitava Krishna Dutt and Charles K. Wilber (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 79-94, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230277236_5

God.[33] The modern system of ethics is deprived of this concept. This deprivation results in the acceptance of fantasies such as utility, harmony, freedom among others. However, these values can be established and manifested more profoundly on the concept of a more virtuous good. Although rooted in the religious system of ethics, the detachment and neglect of the rich heritage of these values have resulted in a malignancy that infects all the contemporary secular values. For example, the way the value of equality is being exploited in conflicting modern social systems such as liberalism and communism is a shame on the origin of this value, where all men were defined as equal creations of God. The absurdity lies in defining while trying to dissociate them with the very creator of these values.

The religious conception is attributed to the fact that God is the binding reality of existence and consciousness. Any concept of existence and non-existence lacks being if God is subtracted from the equation. The cosmos, alongside humans, gains context from the appreciation and perceiving of God. This is a context that is entirely intolerable to the prevailing secular conception of ethics. The assertion and insistence of this dignified stance from the West will only result in the prevailing secular dominance's dismantling.

## 10. No God, No Good?

Belief in God is not a prerequisite for ethics is an absurd claim.[34] For argument's sake, leave out God momentarily, and now consider the fact that the ethical completion and formalization requires an omniscient and omnipotent authority which, firstly, establishes such a system, protects it, rewards on any kind of obedience while punishing vice versa, and forgives anyone who pleads guilty and is ashamed.[35] The exclusion of these principles leaves humankind clueless about any conception of ethics. An ethical code is inescapable voluntary accountability. The delusive idea regarding its existence without believing in any Higher Authority does not correlate with the essence of morality itself. Having established the unification of morality and the need for a god's existence, now the relation of religion to moral improvements should be investigated. The delivery of the West's affair with religion, to the extent where it is today, is a conceivable one, considering the cruelties of Christianity that the West has experienced in the past. The contemporary Muslim states and societies, to this date, are one of the most active proponents contributing to amounting up such events. This is an undeniable fact that the religious representation of morality is far low than what is manifested by secular moral conceptions. The natural perspective of ethics suggests that religious masses are deprived of it as compared to non-religious individuals and states. This comparison and the resulting empirical consequences abandon religion as a requirement.

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[33]Stephen Layman, "A Moral Argument for the Existence of God," In *Is Goodness without God Good Enough*, 49-66. Lanham, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

[34]William Lane Craig, "No God? No Good," bethinking.org, accessed March 8, 2021, https://www.bethinking.org/morality/no-god-no-good

[35]Marina Oshana, "Moral Accountability," *Philosophical Topics* 32, no. 1/2 (2004): 255-274.

Modern secular social and state manifestations prove their case regarding the triviality of belief in a metaphysical higher being. Even more so, they are presenting it as a hindrance to the configuration of an ethical self.[36] This is an indispensable reality that the Muslims lack a collective structure that proves a moral case for those who do not believe in Islam. Worse are the events where a collective Islamic structure did only become a pitfall for ethical values. Unfortunately, this can be manifested in each and every religious education institute (*Madaris*) or the Islamist and political task groups that came into existence. It can be concluded that, momentarily, no institute or structure can be presented that provides a moral attraction for the non-religious or at least prove that the ideal principles required to constitute an ideal collectivity can only be attained with the belief and obedience of a god and/or religion. It is a well-established fact that religion and instinctive ethics are made to antagonize each other using certain labels that the prevailing religious thought cannot bring an end to this estranged relation. Even more, so that any attempts to bridge the gap goes unrecognized in the religious circles.

Hence, the evidence provided by the Modern Western side is evident in this regard, which proves a strong case for them. This helplessness leaves the Muslims with a single option. That is to call out for the ethical integration pointing out the vital link between the relevance of revelation and its guidance with those mentioned above. It should be borne in mind that the Muslims can be accountable regarding their moral inferiority even though they had the most authentic guidance, in the form of text and a mentor to follow. Their current inferiority does not stand them a chance in front of the modern seculars. The only perceivable narrative has to be based on the premise that they are, by no means, an advocate of their religion. Instead, they are an appropriate symbol of indifference towards it. This is the only line of dialogue that might get them a chance to understand and then explain their moral grounds to others.

## 11. Conclusion

We tried to ponder the Modern Western claim theoretically since we cannot refute it on pragmatic grounds. We claimed that just as man's ideal being is incapable of self-actualization until moved by the external world, similarly, the ethical consciousness would be unable to self-realize without any guidance from revelation by God.[37] In other words, all absolute principles and eternal values, despite their pre-existing capability, are dependent on an 'other' for its self-realization. Hence, the conception and engagement of all potentialities present in the human being are dependent on an external maxim, guidance, and discipline.

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[36]Otto Pfleiderer, "Is Morality without Religion Possible and Desirable?" *The Philosophical Review* 5, no. 5 (1896): 449-472.

[37]Paul J Watson, J. Trevor Milliron, Ronald J. Morris, and Ralph W. Hood Jr., "Religion and the Self as Text: Toward a Christian Translation of Self-actualization," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 23, no. 3 (1995): 180-189.

Conclusively, the basic principle of morality is the avoidance of nuisance and the accumulation of value.[38] Here this means avoidance of vices and accumulation of virtues. This cost and benefit can be relative if viewed in the context of this world only but is absolute with the reference of the hereafter. Man cannot universalize relativity. The primary condition for relativizing something is absoluteness. If religion was not there, the absoluteness of moral principles and values could not be conceived.[39] Hence, the revelation complemented the most fundamental requirements of consciousness, i.e., absoluteness. Keeping aside religion cannot be perceived except that the consciousness itself cannot create absolute assumptions.[40] This is true for all levels of consciousness. For now, our subject is the ethical consciousness, which was endowed with absolute and eternal principles by revelation with the reference of the hereafter. The modern West cannot understand or believe in the other-worldly structure of consciousness, while the religious conception is solely dependent on it. Apart from discussing how crucial and significant the belief in the hereafter is in the moral discipline, we can confidently claim that morality is mostly natural, channeled, and focused on by the revelation. It is correct that virtues, religious or secular, are similar in forms. All difference lies in the telos and metaphysical grounds of the ethical system. In simple words, morality keeps the other happy, and it is not a religious or secular debate in this regard. However, the question persists that humans as 'others' are relative, so where is that absolute other upon whose association and illumination no fundamental basis of morality ethics exists.

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[40]Kenneth R. Westphal, "The Beginning of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," *The Owl of Minerva* (2016): 1-67. https://doi.org/10.5840/owl201632916.

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