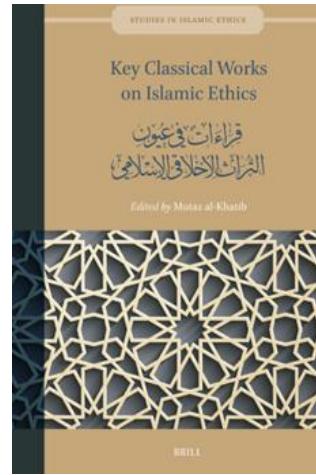


Mutaz al-Khatib, ed. *Key Classical Works on Islamic Ethics*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2024. Hardback. ISBN: 978-90-04-45946-5. Price: €79.00.

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Humans in their lives are always faced with practical and theoretical ethical problems to make decisions in various fields reflectively and responsibly. This is what makes ethical problems, especially Islamic ethics, which takes its main source from revelation, a complex discipline that requires comprehensive study. Although Islamic ethics is not recognized as a distinct discipline, a significant amount of material on ethics can be found scattered throughout classical texts, including the commentaries on the Qur'an and *hadīth* collections, Islamic theology, Islamic jurisprudence, and the works of Sufis.



In addition, the study of Islamic ethics or morals is also still traditionally understood as a branch of practical wisdom originating from Greece. However, when studied in depth from the classical works of Muslim scholars, the breadth of interdisciplinary Islamic ethics will be obtained. This means that it is integrated and interconnected with other disciplines into a single, unified whole.

To prove this point, the book under review, *Key Classical Works on Islamic Ethics*, edited by Mutaz al-Khatib, examines the legacy of classical works of Islamic ethics in various disciplines by bridging theoretical and practical dimensions and linking them to contemporary studies. The book contains writings from Muslim scholars who lived during the Abbasid Caliphate, or the period of progress of Islamic civilization (650-1000 CE) until its decline (1000-1250 CE).

The initial discussion begins by briefly explaining the writing of each chapter and continues with the delivery of a selected bibliography in English as the main literature on classical ethical works. Meanwhile, Chapters 1-13, if classified, have five main themes that can be connected to other disciplines, namely ethics and theology (Chapter 8), ethics and medicine (Chapters 3 and 5), ethics and philosophy (Chapters 7 and 11), ethics and Sufism (Chapters 2, 4, 6, 9, and 12), and ethics and law (Chapters 10 and 13).

The first chapter, written by Mutaz al-Khatib, maps various sources of Islamic ethics whose development uses a broad perspective covering historical, theoretical, analytical, and methodological aspects that are

critically deconstructed with a contemporary approach. Thirteen important works of Islamic ethics are identified, and other potential works will be discussed in the next volume of this book.

The first theme, ethics and theology, is discussed in Chapter 8, which engages with the metaethical contributions of the classical sources of the Ash'arī theological doctrines. Two important classical works are looked at along with their historical and intellectual backgrounds: *al-Irshād ilā Qawāṭī' al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-Itiqād* (Guidance to the Essentials of Evidence in the Fundamentals of Belief) by al-Juwainī (d. 478/1085) and *Nihāyat al-Iqdām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* (The Ultimate Conclusion in the Science of Theology) by al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153). These two classical Ash'arī theological treatises are significant in their metaethical contributions but differ in many respects, especially in their moral-theoretical contributions. Most of the arguments of these treatises serve as a basis for defending the Ash'arī belief in the supremacy of revelation and its necessity for moral knowledge.

The discussion of the book *Adab al-Ṭabīb* (Ethics of the Physician) by Ishāq b. 'Alī al-Ruhāwī (d. 913 CE) in chapter 3 is part of the theme of ethics and medicine. This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis based on the scientific background of al-Ruhāwī, whose conceptualization of medicine is closely related to philosophy and religion, based on a holistic understanding of human nature. His medical ethics thinking has relevance to contemporary Islamic bioethics by providing insights into the historical development of medical professional ethics. In addition, ethics and medicine are discussed in chapter 5, which explores the theory of the classic book *al-Ṭibb al-Rūhānī* (Spiritual Medicine) by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925 CE). The results of this analysis revolve around three interrelated claims: 1) mental illness is caused by epistemic deficiencies; 2) reason and understanding are causally effective in guiding a person towards good behaviour; and 3) living a good and happy life is done by placing oneself under the control of reason, which will provide one with the necessary knowledge. Therefore, the concept is called cognitive therapy. It addresses emotional and behavioural problems that involve the use of psychological approaches that focus on a person's thoughts and beliefs.

The theme of ethics and philosophy is discussed in Ibn Miskawayh's (d. 421/1030) work, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlaq* (Refinement of Character), in Chapter 7. Ibn Miskawayh was a Muslim scholar who focused on the field of moral philosophy, which harmonized Greek and Islamic ethical philosophy. His main discussion focuses on the formation of noble character through education by emphasising the importance of achieving a balance in the three domains of psychology, reason, soul, and behaviour to achieve true happiness. Furthermore, in Chapter 11, he

dissects the classic work of *Shajarat al-Ma‘ārif* (The Tree of Knowledge), written by al-‘Izz b. ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1262). The theoretical and practical framework of Islamic ethics, formulated in an interdisciplinary manner, combines elements from the fields of Islamic theology, Islamic jurisprudence, Sufism, and Islamic legal theory. The author of this chapter concludes that the uniqueness of al-‘Izz’s thought contributed to the science of Islamic ethics as known today.

The relationship between ethics and Sufism is the fourth theme discussed in chapter 2, “Ibn Abī ‘l-Dunyā’s *Makārim al-Akhlāq* (The Book of Noble Character).” Ibn Abī ‘l-Dunyā—whose work inspired al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), although his ethical views differed—was one of the first to formulate a comprehensive vision of ethics in Islam that was based on a clear understanding of the inner life and who also showed awareness of the current debates about different approaches to ethics. His key framework for reflecting on the meaning of noble character is that high ethics can be aspired to by identifying with the *sunnah*, broadly understood. Chapter 4 focuses on the classical Islamic heritage of *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (The Unusual Principles) by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255/869), explaining the vision of ethics and its relationship to religious, moral, and political authority. The concepts and analytical tools used in this book are more ethical and Sufi in nature.

The treatise ‘Uyūb al-Nafs wa-Mudāwātuhā (The Maladies of the Soul and Their Remedies) by a Sufi scholar and *hadīth* expert Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) is discussed in Chapter 6. This work presents various lists of mental illnesses and their healing tactics, focusing on addressing the sinful tendencies associated with these conditions as experienced by Muslims during that time. Chapter 9 discusses the ethical contributions of Al-Ghazālī as one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic history through the book *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). The author of this chapter highlights four ethical themes that are present throughout al-Ghazālī’s works: 1) divine command and human happiness; 2) knowledge and pleasure and evil and error; 3) character and action; and 4) perfection and moderation. Finally, chapter 12 discusses Ibn Taymiyyah’s (d. 728/1328) work *al-Tuhfah al-‘Irāqiyah fī l-A‘māl al-Qalbiyyah* (The Iraqi Gift on the Works of the Heart). This chapter discusses Ibn Taymiyyah’s project to purify Sufism based on the guiding principle that healthy Sufism must always be anchored in the Qur’ān and *sunnah*. Its goal is to correct and provide a correct alternative to the errors of Sufism that have become common among Sufis and theologians.

The last topic, ethics and how it connects to the legal field, starts with Chapter 10 of al-Qādī ‘Iyād’s (d. 544/1149) *al-Shifā bi Ta‘rīf Huqūq al-*

Muṣṭafā (The Cure in Knowing the Rights of the Chosen One). This book presents a discussion of the Prophetic ethical dimension, which in this paper is referred to as a vision of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) that achieved a kind of canonical significance in much of the Islamic world. The subsequent discussion relates to the individual and societal ethical dimensions. Finally, the theme of ethics and law is discussed in Chapter 13, which deals with the work of Ibn Muflīḥ (d. 763/1362)—a follower of the Ḥanbalī school—entitled *al-Ādāb al-Shar‘iyyah* (Divinely Mandated Etiquettes). The book’s discussion is recognized as a wealth of Islamic moral teachings and a study of the late classical traditional ethical imagination, examining the advantages and limitations of the Ḥanbalī ethical teaching tradition.

While reading this book, the reader gets many advantages. First, the classical works discussed provide a broad scientific perspective because they were written by Muslim scholars who lived during the golden age of Islamic civilisation and came from various backgrounds, including theological, jurisprudential, and mystical schools of thought. The contributions refer to four sources: 1) the Qur’ān and *sunnah*; 2) the Muslims’ heritage; 3) the humans’ heritage; and 4) reason and experience. Second, the discussion of each chapter follows a structured methodology, namely an examination of the biography of the authors of the classic works and their contributions to Islamic ethical thought, as well as critically analysing them to reveal the uniqueness of their ethical insights for contemporary disciplines. Third, the authors come from Western and Eastern scholars who have expertise in the field of ethics and disciplines that are integrated with other fields of science. Thus, it becomes more objective and rich in insight.

There are a few shortcomings in this book, such as the existence of two manuscripts (Chapters 4 and 11) that are not translated into English. The lack of English translations for these chapters can pose a challenge for readers who are not well-versed in Arabic. In general, this book can be recommended for researchers and postgraduate students who are conducting interdisciplinary Islamic studies research to gain scientific knowledge of Islamic ethics. The interconnection of Islamic ethics with contemporary problems in various fields of modern science can produce a contextual model or theory of Islamic studies science that is in line with the needs of today’s world.

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