

Human Virtues between the Qur'an and Philosophy: A Comparative Analytical Study Based on Juz' Qad Sami'a

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Abstract

This research investigates the idea of human qualities by conducting a comparative and analytical study between the Qur'an and various philosophical traditions, with a particular emphasis on Juz' Qad Sami'a. In this research, an inductive analytical technique is used to extract and examine the most important virtues, including but not limited to bravery, altruism, forgiveness, tolerance, knowledge, sincerity, wisdom, and justice. The study compares and contrasts Islamic teachings with philosophical ideas from both ancient and contemporary philosophy, highlighting aspects of agreement and divergence along the way. In contrast to philosophy, which often roots virtues in rational humanism, the results suggest that the Qur'an is better in terms of its complete ethical framework and its supremacy in grounding virtues in divine direction. This study comes to a close with some suggestions for further research on the expansion of virtue ethics across the whole of the Qur'an and its possible applications in contemporary society.

Keywords: Qur'an, Philosophy, Human Virtues, Comparative Study, Juz' Qad Sami'a, Virtue Ethics, and Moral Philosophy

Introduction

In contemporary society, there is an escalating ethical crisis marked by a pervasive decline in moral values, social disintegration, and a general erosion of human dignity. As individuals and communities grapple with questions about the foundations of moral behavior and the nature of human virtues, two primary sources offer profound guidance: the Qur'an and the rich traditions of philosophical inquiry. The Qur'an, as the final divine revelation, presents an integrated and comprehensive ethical framework rooted in spiritual principles (Nasr, 2021). Simultaneously, philosophical traditions, both ancient and modern, have persistently explored the essence of virtue, the means to attain moral excellence, and its role in achieving human flourishing (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2022).

In the contemporary world, characterized by moral fragmentation and ethical uncertainties, there has been a noticeable revival of interest in virtue ethics. Scholars argue that modern societies, grappling with technological advancements and socio-political disruptions, require a renewed focus on character development and communal responsibility (Snow, 2023). The Qur'anic approach to virtues, rooted in divine command and spiritual accountability, offers a rich and holistic framework that transcends mere ethical formalism, providing profound insights into the nature of humanity and the purpose of life (Kamali, 2022).

The present study undertakes a comparative analytical exploration of human virtues, drawing on Juz' Qad Sami'a from the Qur'an and juxtaposing it with major philosophical perspectives. It aims to elucidate how virtues such as courage, altruism, forgiveness, tolerance, knowledge, sincerity, wisdom, and justice are conceptualized, promoted, and operationalized within these two traditions. While the Qur'an grounds virtues in divine will and the ultimate purpose of life (Kamali, 2021), philosophical approaches often frame virtues through rational human inquiry, existential needs, and socio-ethical constructs (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing field of comparative ethics. By systematically analyzing virtues through a dual lens—scriptural and philosophical—the research seeks to offer a broader understanding of ethical formation that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries. It also responds to an urgent contemporary need: the reinvigoration of moral character in an age dominated by relativism and moral skepticism (Zagzebski, 2020).

This paper adopts a structured academic methodology, beginning with a theoretical framework that integrates Qur'anic hermeneutics and virtue ethics theory. It proceeds to outline the research methodology, conduct a comprehensive literature review, present detailed findings, engage in critical discussion, and conclude with recommendations for future research. Through this comparative approach, the study aims not only to deepen academic understanding but also to provide practical insights for moral education and societal reform.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, inductive-analytical approach to explore the concept of human virtues within the Qur'anic text (specifically Juz' Qad Sami'a) and philosophical traditions. The methodology is designed to uncover the nuanced meanings, interrelations, and applications of virtues by integrating textual analysis, thematic coding, and comparative evaluation.

Research Design

The research is qualitative in nature, employing an inductive approach to move from specific observations (individual Qur'anic verses and philosophical texts) toward broader generalizations regarding the nature of virtues. Through detailed content analysis, key virtues are identified, categorized, and analyzed based on their presentation in both the Qur'an and philosophical writings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The comparative element involves analyzing the similarities and differences between the Qur'anic and philosophical conceptions of virtues, focusing on underlying assumptions, purposes, and ethical consequences.

Data Sources

Primary data include

- **Qur'anic texts:** Focus on the selected surahs in Juz' Qad Sami'a, with interpretations based on classical and contemporary exegetical works (e.g., Nasr, 2021; Al-Tabari, 2019).
- **Philosophical texts:** Core works from Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*), Al-Farabi, Ibn Miskawayh, and modern contributions from virtue theorists such as MacIntyre (2007) and Zagzebski (2020).

Secondary data include scholarly commentaries, journal articles, and academic books focusing on virtue ethics, Islamic ethics, and comparative philosophy.

Data Collection and Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to extract and categorize references to virtues in both the Qur'an and philosophical sources. This involved:

- **Identifying keywords and concepts** related to virtues (e.g., courage, altruism, forgiveness).
- **Coding verses and philosophical passages** according to these themes.
- **Comparative evaluation** to highlight convergences, divergences, and unique features across traditions (Nowell et al., 2017).

The comparative analysis followed a constructivist epistemology, acknowledging that each tradition constructs its understanding of virtue based on distinct metaphysical and anthropological assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Given the religious significance of the Qur'an and the cultural sensitivity surrounding scriptural interpretation, great care was taken to engage with the Qur'anic texts respectfully and to ground interpretations in recognized scholarly traditions (Kamali, 2021). Similarly, philosophical texts were approached with historical sensitivity to the authors' contexts.

Literature Review

The study of human virtues has been the focus of both religious and philosophical scholarship for centuries. This section reviews the most significant contributions to understanding virtues from the Qur'anic perspective, philosophical traditions, and comparative ethical studies.

Studies on Human Virtues in the Qur'an

Several scholars have highlighted the comprehensive moral framework of the Qur'an. Nasr (2021) emphasizes that the Qur'an consistently links virtues to spiritual development and divine purpose. Kamali (2021) also explores the Qur'anic treatment of key virtues such as justice, mercy, and patience, illustrating how they are fundamental to the ethical constitution of an Islamic society.

Recent exegetical studies, such as those by Saeed (2023), focus on the thematic analysis of Qur'anic chapters, identifying ethical patterns that form the moral backbone of the Islamic worldview. Notably, 'Juz' Qad Sami'a' has been highlighted as a rich reservoir of ethical directives, emphasizing virtues like forgiveness, perseverance, altruism, and trustworthiness, particularly in the context of adversity.

Further, Al-Attas (2022) asserts that the Qur'an's emphasis on inner moral states—such as sincerity, humility, and piety—reflects a unique dimension absent from purely action-based ethical theories. The Qur'anic approach views ethics as deeply embedded in both intention and action, rooted in the consciousness of Allah (taqwa).

In the context of specific textual studies, Ahmed (2020) conducted an analysis of Juz' Qad Sami'a, identifying key moral imperatives that reflect the broader Qur'anic vision of human excellence. Ahmed's findings align with the notion that the Qur'an not only mandates virtuous behavior but also provides models and narratives that embody these virtues.

Studies on Virtues in Philosophical Traditions

The philosophical exploration of virtues has its roots in the works of ancient Greek thinkers. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* presents virtues as habitual dispositions that enable individuals to achieve eudaimonia or human flourishing (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2022). Courage, temperance, and justice are highlighted as cardinal virtues achieved through a balance between extremes.

In the Islamic philosophical tradition, scholars like Al-Farabi and Ibn Miskawayh incorporated Aristotelian virtue ethics into an Islamic worldview. Fakhry (2020) demonstrates how Islamic philosophers synthesized Greek thought with Qur'anic ethics, creating a unique model where virtues serve both worldly and spiritual ends.

Contemporary virtue ethics has expanded the discussion. Peterson and Seligman (2004) proposed a classification of character strengths and virtues based on empirical cross-cultural research. They identified six universal virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence, emphasizing their importance for psychological well-being. Additionally, Zagzebski (2020) introduced the Exemplarist Moral Theory, arguing that moral virtues are best understood through moral exemplars rather than abstract definitions, aligning in some ways with the Qur'anic use of prophets and righteous figures as models for emulation.

Comparative Ethical Studies

Comparative studies between religious and philosophical ethics remain relatively rare but are growing. MacIntyre (2007) criticizes modern moral philosophy for abandoning a teleological understanding of virtues and argues for a return to a tradition-based ethical framework, a perspective that resonates with the Qur'anic teleology.

Comparative ethics has emerged as a crucial field that seeks to bridge religious and philosophical approaches to morality. Researchers like Little and Twiss (2022) advocate for comparative analyses that respect the internal coherence of religious ethics while engaging them critically with secular frameworks.

In Islamic scholarship, Kamali (2021) and Nasr (2021) advocate for more dialogue between Islamic ethical traditions and contemporary virtue ethics, suggesting that Islamic virtues offer valuable insights into modern debates on morality, especially concerning the grounding of ethical norms beyond cultural relativism.

Recent studies such as Ali (2023) emphasize that comparative ethical approaches reveal profound complementarities and significant differences. While philosophical traditions often ground virtues in human rationality and social needs, Islamic traditions emphasize divine command and eschatological accountability.

Findings

The study presents several significant findings regarding human virtues as articulated in 'Juz' Qad Sami'a' of the Qur'an and their philosophical counterparts. Here are the key findings:

- **Identification of Major Virtues:** The research identifies foundational human virtues such as courage, altruism, forgiveness, tolerance, knowledge, sincerity, wisdom, and justice. These virtues are central to both Qur'anic discourse and philosophical thought, highlighting their importance in ethical discussions across traditions.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Each identified virtue is analyzed comparatively, revealing both intersections and divergences between the Qur'anic and philosophical traditions. This comparative approach allows for a deeper understanding of how each tradition constructs its vision of human excellence and societal well-being.
- **Constructivist Epistemology:** The study employs a constructivist epistemology, acknowledging that both the Qur'an and philosophical traditions construct their understanding of virtue based on distinct metaphysical and anthropological assumptions. This perspective emphasizes the contextual nature of virtue ethics and how different frameworks shape moral understanding.
- **Relevance to Contemporary Ethics:** The findings suggest that the virtues discussed in 'Juz' Qad Sami'a' are not only relevant to historical contexts but also hold significant importance in contemporary moral philosophy. The study indicates a renewed global interest in virtue ethics, particularly in fostering resilience, empathy, and ethical leadership in today's society.
- **Implications for Interfaith Dialogue:** By situating Qur'anic ethics within the broader discourse of contemporary moral philosophy, the study contributes to interfaith understanding. It highlights how engaging with both Qur'anic and philosophical traditions can enrich ethical discussions and promote a more inclusive approach to moral issues.

Discussion

The comparative analysis between Qur'anic and philosophical conceptions of human virtues reveals both remarkable commonalities and critical divergences. This discussion synthesizes these findings, offering insights into how each tradition constructs its ethical worldview and the implications for contemporary moral discourse.

The Theocentric vs. Anthropocentric Foundations

One of the most significant differences lies in the ontological grounding of virtues. In the Qur'an, virtues are directly linked to divine commands and the ultimate purpose of life serving Allah and achieving spiritual success (Kamali, 2022; Nasr, 2023). Human actions are evaluated within a theocentric framework, where moral excellence aligns with divine will. In contrast, philosophical traditions, particularly Aristotelian virtue ethics, conceive virtues as human-centered qualities aimed at achieving flourishing (eudaimonia) (Annas, 2024; Hursthouse, 2022). Morality is an intrinsic good, valuable for the realization of human potential, often without explicit reference to a divine source. This distinction emphasizes that,

while virtues like courage, justice, and wisdom are shared, their motivations and ultimate aims differ across traditions.

Virtue as a Process vs. Gift

In philosophical accounts, virtues are acquired through habituation, education, and rational reflection (Zagzebski, 2024). Individuals cultivate virtues progressively through practice and moral reasoning. In the Qur'an, while moral striving is emphasized, there is a consistent portrayal of virtues — particularly wisdom and sincerity — as divine gifts, bestowed upon those whom Allah chooses (Al-Baqara 2:269, trans. Abdel Haleem, 2005). This theological dimension introduces the concept of *tawfiq* (divine enabling), which tempers purely human efforts with reliance on divine grace. Thus, virtue in Islamic thought is both a human pursuit and a divine endowment.

Community-Oriented vs. Individual-Oriented Ethics

Another key difference is the communal dimension of virtues. The Qur'an consistently frames virtues within the context of communal welfare, social justice, and collective responsibilities (Rahman & Siddiqui, 2024). Virtues are not merely personal excellences but instruments for building righteous societies. Philosophical ethics, especially in modern interpretations, often prioritize individual moral agency and personal flourishing (Hursthouse, 2022). Although community remains important, the emphasis frequently tilts towards the self's moral development. This divergence suggests that Qur'anic ethics inherently integrates personal piety with social activism, a model increasingly relevant for addressing contemporary global challenges such as inequality, discrimination, and environmental crises.

Emotional and Rational Dimensions

Both traditions recognize the importance of integrating emotion and reason in virtue formation. The Qur'an appeals to the heart (*qalb*) and intellect (*aql*) simultaneously, encouraging believers to reflect, feel compassion, and act righteously (Kamali, 2022). Similarly, contemporary philosophers like Zagzebski (2024) emphasize that virtues are not solely rational but involve the harmonious development of emotions and desires. This convergence underlines a universal understanding: ethical living requires both cognitive discernment and emotional cultivation.

Contemporary Relevance

The findings reveal that Qur'anic virtues, despite their ancient articulation, possess striking relevance to modern ethical debates. For instance:

- **Justice** resonates with global movements for social equity.
- **Tolerance** aligns with demands for pluralism and coexistence.
- **Forgiveness** is vital for post-conflict reconciliation efforts.

Moreover, the Qur'anic synthesis of internal spirituality and external action offers a model that counters the fragmentation often seen in secular ethics — where public virtues and private morality are treated as separate domains (Clarke, 2023). Thus, a dialogical engagement between Qur'anic ethics and philosophical virtue theory can enrich contemporary moral philosophy, fostering ethical systems that are both spiritually grounded and socially responsive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study on human virtues within 'Juz' Qad Sami'a' offers valuable insights into the intersections between Qur'anic ethics and philosophical thought. Here are the key conclusions and recommendations derived from the research:

- **Integration of Ethical Frameworks:** The study concludes that both Qur'anic and philosophical traditions provide rich, complementary perspectives on human virtues. By integrating these frameworks, a more holistic understanding of moral education can be achieved, which is essential for societal reform and personal development.
- **Practical Implications for Moral Education:** The findings emphasize the importance of incorporating the identified virtues—such as courage, altruism, and justice—into educational curricula. This integration can foster ethical leadership and resilience among students, preparing them to navigate complex moral landscapes in contemporary society.
- **Future Research Directions:** The paper recommends further comparative studies that explore additional Qur'anic verses and philosophical texts to expand the understanding of virtue ethics. Such research could provide deeper insights into how different cultures and traditions conceptualize virtues and their applications in modern contexts.
- **Encouraging Interfaith Dialogue:** The study advocates for promoting interfaith dialogue that focuses on shared values and virtues. Engaging diverse religious and philosophical perspectives can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation in addressing global ethical challenges.
- **Addressing Limitations:** Acknowledging the scope restriction to 'Juz' Qad Sami'a', the study suggests that future research should explore other sections of the Qur'an and various philosophical traditions to provide a more comprehensive analysis of human virtues across different contexts.

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