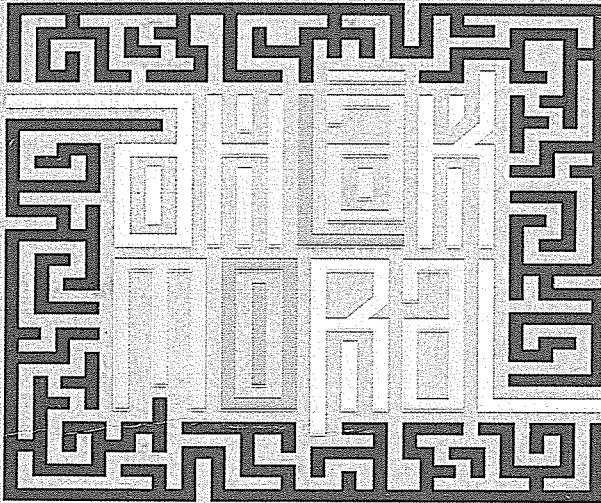


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IX

TOWARDS AN ISLAMIC ETHICAL THEORY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT: The Practice of Ethical Labelling

Mawil IZZI DIEN*

Introduction

The influence of human ethics is evident in all aspects of the contemporary world life. These "ethics" are changeable and difficult to quantify since they have not been built on one clearly defined precept about the meaning of life and its objectives. This is, perhaps, the reason why ethics have been excluded from many serious scientific works, on the pretext that they do not constitute a tangible model for reality particularly if it is linked to a divine theology.

The Cartesian thought has played a notable role in leading modern thinking to reject the Divine, as being unscientific and therefore not constituting proper knowledge. Religion in the West suffered from the distancing of fact from value, and analysis from synthesis. However it is important to note that Religion in the West has had difficulties confronting the Cartesian challenge because its definition, if religion can ever be defined, has been confined by the classical background of rendering to God what is God's while to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar¹. Such a statement might no longer be valid even within Christianity who seems much divided about its validity. In Islam the balance between the Seen and Unseen, the material and the spiritual has been a key element in the construction of civilisation. The concept of God represents the central argument of Islamic civilisation upon which the balance of the various aspects of existence is constructed. L1

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¹ Bible, Matthew, 22: 21

contrast to this present secular attitude towards the Divine appears in total denial of Him that even the likely hood of His presence is contested. God is not recognised as a tangible reality but mythologised in fairy stories and remembered only on special occasions.

Even the mere mention of God's name is considered inappropriate, in many contexts. In Western academia, academics are used to avoiding reference to God unless they use the suffix, "if you believe in Him". Like spiritual values, the environment has been undermined by the prevalent materialistic outlook. All that the human masters have been interested in is, achieving the highest materialistic profit which is based on factitious economical allusion such as currency cover; debt chains and profit gain or loose. The recent world economic crises proved that such a profit is nothing but the edge of a dangerous cliff that could well take the world towards destruction both economical and environmental. The aim of this paper is not to discuss the economical part of this statement so much as to focus on the practical aspects of environmental ethics in Islam and how it can be implemented in a Muslim Society.

1. Significance of Environment in Islam

Structure:

- Part of the faith imbedded within its belief and practice.
- Ontological symbols upon which people's minds can be focused.
- Human as the main responsible active creature.
- Islamic tradition's deep respect for the timeless traditions of the natural.
- The Islamic view is considered by many as a potential catalyst for the rediscovery of the West's root to self understanding.
- Islam's emphases on the human "personal engagement" with the environment accords with the serious environmentalist's advocacy of a holistic ethic which was echoed by The Prince of Wales.

Since the birth of Islam the environment has been considered as *part of the faith imbedded within its belief and practice*. Prostration provides a message of harmony between humans, and earth in submitting to the one creator. During prayers, the supplicant's head is placed on

the earth, accepting that the entire destiny of humanity is in God's power.

The significance of the environment in Islam, *as a vessel* for multitudinous religious events, is manifested in different forms and patterns of behaviour, not only to serve humans but also for the benefit of other elements of nature including animal; water; air and earth. However Islam does not perceive the environment or its elements as a gods, but rather as *ontological symbols upon* which people's minds can be focused to understand the creator and the universe that He created.

The role of the environment as such is therefore derived from what it represents and not from what it is. Axiomatic meanings for human existence are often concluded from the environment. For instance: Humans are given value by the fact that they are made from the clay of the earth, an often unclean substance that discomforts when it dirties clothes or utensils. Yet this substance is a basic element for the continuity of life. Earth is considered to be the womb for all life, for from it, all life forms gain nourishment. It is one womb that produces different types of offspring, different fruits and vegetables, resonating the power of its maker²

The Islamic environmental way of life is centralised on the concept of a "society of creation" which is led by the *human as the main responsible active creature* who can make difference to the world. The environmental theory of Islam is like its theory of ethics, based on the combinations of theology law and ethics in an inseparable way. None of these three elements make sense without the other two. Having said that; the reality is that contemporary Muslims are led by Western culture which is suffering from the separations between ethics and law, and between body and spirit which are slowly eroding it, as potential leading culture for the world order. However Western civilisation has proved its surface but not deep strength and supremacy over other civilisations by assuming a leading role in science, technology and industry. It is a civilisation that utilises empirical methodology and organisation to harness natural phenomena in the service of human "direct and instant" needs. By combining this instrumental civilisation with the Islamic notion of value, significant advances may be made in

² And in the earth are tracts[Diverse though] neighbouring, And gardens of vines And fields sown with corn, And palm trees – growing Out of single roots or otherwise: Watered with the same water... (Quran xiii, 4)

the Muslim world in particular and possibly extended to the wider world.

History shows that when Islam absorbed the Greek civilisation, it was able to rapidly produce a unique hybrid culture. This cultural combination paid attention to all aspects of life and including the material spiritual. Perhaps a new fusion is needed which acknowledges both the material and the spiritual without which life cannot continue. Many Western scholars today are aware of the problem and are calling for a recognition of the strong link between "mind and body, subject and object, value and fact, spirit and matter",³ to solve the world's environmental problems. The *Islamic tradition's deep respect for the timeless traditions of the natural order seem to be considered by many as a potential catalyst for the rediscovery of the West's root to self understanding.*⁴ The west and Islam are encouraged to join together in combating modern materialistic trends which are causing long term damage to the welfare of human beings. Prince Charles maintained, "We in the Western world seem to have lost a sense of the wholeness of our environment, and of our immense and inalienable responsibility to the whole of creation."

*Islam's emphasis on the human "personal engagement" with the environment accords with the serious environmentalist's advocacy of a "holistic ethic".*⁵ The profound sense of sacred and spiritual which has been manifest in a multiplicity of Islamic applications was highly valued by Prince Charles. This, he considers, is symbolised in the craftsmen who are not concerned with display for its own sake or with progressing in ingenuity, preferring merely to submit their craft to God.⁶ It can be added that the integration of Human with sacred and secular in Islam is also central and can lead to better understanding of natural environment since Muslims are instructed to develop their limited life with the realization that it is the gift of God which should not cause it to be destroyed

This is clearly reflected in a large number of Quranic instructions such as:

³ Sterling, 78.

⁴ Speech by The Prince of Wales delivered at Wilton Park 13 December 1996.

⁵ The Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, opened the 1988 World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere with the call for "a new holistic ethic in which economic growth and environmental protection go hand-in-hand around the world". Engel, 1.

⁶ Speech by The Prince of Wales delivered at Wilton Park on 13 December 1996.

هو الذي جعل لكم الأرض ذلولا فامشوا في مناكبها وكلوا من رزقه واليه النشور...⁷
 وابتغ فيما اتاك الله الدار الآخرة ولا تنس نصيبك من الدنيا واحسن كما احسن الله اليك ولا تبغ الفساد
 في الارض ان الله لا يحب المفسدين.⁸

These verse call to define the balance between the two concepts which are often raised in the environmental debate: is it conservation or is it the maintenance of our existence? In Islam, the concept of conservation only makes sense when it is linked to the objectives of life. The relationship between humankind and the environment is viewed to be a part of the interactive relationship between all creatures, which is established on the principle of submitting to the same Creator. Submitting is not mere ritual practice, since human rituals of worship are simply symbolic. Human awareness of God is evidenced through its actions vis-à-vis one another and with the other creatures on earth. Humans are responsible for the welfare and sustenance of these other "citizens" of the global environment.

2. The Ethos of Obtaining Maximum Satisfaction in Today's World

Structure:

- Maximum satisfaction has become part of the new human culture.
- The Islamic assertion that "more is not always better".
- Muslims today follow the same pattern of behaviour as the rest of the world.
- Human desires have to be carefully defined to decide what is a want and what a need.

The Industrial Revolution led to great changes in Europe, many of which have been exported to the rest of the world. In addition to the positive changes brought about by technology and its application, the associated materialism has had a negative effect on people's attitude towards life. Maximum satisfaction of material desire became the objective of life rather than a means of perfecting human existence and that of the entire planet. This is reflected in the commercialisation of merchandise which is often stamped "your satisfaction guaranteed". *Maximum satisfaction has become part of the new human culture* based on supply and demand which has snowballed in response to human

⁷ Quran:15:67

⁸ Quran: 28:77

greed. So great is its attractiveness that it represents the ultimate goal for which the North strives and the South tries to emulate. However it is noticeable that the same North which produced pollution and the notion of maximum satisfaction has produced a self critique that gave birth to the environment's most staunch defenders.

In many religious traditions the concept of the environment has been lying dormant. The Western focus on the environment's problems has been a factor triggering a renewed interest in searching and reaching for the traditional environmental legacies. In recent years, with the spread of a better understanding of the environment, world thinkers are calling for a separation between satisfaction and human emancipation.⁹ This trend meets with *the Islamic assertion that "more is not always better"*. Muhammad was once asked whether wealth leads to evil? His reply was, "is that wealth good? If it is good then it will lead only to good." He further indicated that more wealth is not always good, giving the example of an animal that eats incessantly until it dies from overeating. This animal is unlike the ruminant that takes only what it needs, chews it, and digests it before it starts eating again. When humanity takes only what it needs it will flourish and live happily, but when it adheres to the principle that more is better then it will choke with its own greed like the animal that is never satisfied.¹⁰

The principle of material maximisation is rejected in Islam which teaches that contentment with what one has is like an unending treasure. The Prophet is reported to have described human desires in these terms, "if the son of Adam has two valleys filled with wealth, he will demand a third, but nothing fills the stomach of the son of Adam like dust".¹¹

Muslims today follow the same pattern of behaviour as the rest of the world, even during the most spiritual periods of their year. In recent research conducted about hajj it was shown that in Makka, the sale of consumer commodities is higher during hajj than any other time of the year,¹² even allowing for the increase in the population. While during the month of Ramadan, it may be observed that the period during

⁹ Bahro, 10; 95.

¹⁰ Narrated by Abu Said al-Khudri and transmitted by Muslim. Mundhiri, *Mukhtasar* 1, 153.

¹¹ Narrated by Abu Musa al-Ash'ri and transmitted by Muslim. Mundhiri, *Mukhtasar* 1, 152.

¹² Abdali, 291-295.

which it is intended that humans will instigate discipline as regards materialism is widely converted into a seasonal trade in luxurious, edible indulgences. The overwhelming tidal wave of materialism seems to have overtaken the whole world including Muslims who are required to renounce some of their material practices during the seasons of abstinence.

Material desires have no limits, but what about spiritual needs? Are they also unlimited? It seems that although the principal of size is often applied to spirituality, the "spiritual" itself is a concept that cannot be quantified. All human, spiritual actions have a physical dimension and it is through balancing the two that human beings can function properly. In Islam, the line is quite clearly drawn in respect to this issue. Worship is not expressed by ritual practice alone, but by discovering the relationship between these ritual practices and daily life. When Muslims declare that they are worshipping God, it means not only bowing in submission to God, five times a day, but also that they are prepared to obey the instructions that the Divine has prescribed. One important prescription in the Quran states that good actions will lead to good:

Is there any Reward

For Good - other than Good? (Quran: lv: 60)

This notion is useful when we consider an issue such as the protection of the various aspects of the environment, however it also poses a question: If these elements have both a spiritual and a material value, at the same time, which value takes precedence? If a tree praises God, can it be felled in the construction of a motorway, when there are many similar trees doing the same service? In answering this question, another question is encountered, can humans assess the value of such praise, bearing in mind that all God's creation praise Him for reasons that are beyond human understanding?¹³

The Islamic theory of submitting to the Divine preference, described above, has to be borne in mind in this enquiry. According to this thesis, humans are unable to value such praise and it is only the Divine who can grade them.

Another point which will be relevant here is that *human desires have to be carefully defined to decide what is a want and what a need*. Is it, for example, necessary to eat fruit out of season, importing it from an-

¹³ Quran: xvii: 44.

other part of the world at considerable environmental cost? In such trade there are three losses. The loss to the eventual consumers who could use their purchasing power in a more advantageous way, the loss to the producer who cannot grow crops for local consumption and the destruction of, normally, non-renewable resources in transporting and preserving the goods.

In my opinion by tapping into such an Islamic reasons for conserving the environment which gives preference to ethical value over the materialistic we can invoke the Islamic culture to reject material consumerism which is destroying the environment and replace it with the Islamic respect for the environment. This could be implemented by labelling all consumer goods packets according to its Islamic environmental value and not just its economical value.

3. Islamic Ethical Reasons for Conservation

Structure:

- The sanctity, *hurma*, of God's creation
- The Islamic notion of good, *khayr*, and evil, *sharr*
- All human relationships in Islam have to be based on the concept of justice (*`adl*)
- The concept of mending the damage, *i.,slah*
- The principal of the awareness of God, *taqwa*.

In Islam humans are expected to protect the environment for a number of reasons. ¹⁴

The sanctity, *hurma*, of God's creation is an important dimension, which Islamic theology provides for the environment. The concept of *hurma* has developed in a diversified manner to include the notions of love; respect; and protection that Islamic ethics has granted to various creatures. According to Izzi Dien "Animals have a *hurma*, water has a *hurma* that regulates our use of it. Even trees have *hurma*, and so does everything without limits or restriction. The concept of *harim* has been widely extended to cover all resources of life such as water and its facilities. The well and the river both have a *harim*, which is the area that no one should violate. Islam teaches that even the insects should

¹⁴ Izzi Dien, *The environmental Dimentions of Islam*, 90.

be shown respect, for Ibn Qudama¹⁵ stated, "during war...bees should not be scattered or burnt." The Ulema are agreed on this point since it has been proved that the Prophet Muhammad did not allow the killing of bees nor any captured beast of burden. To do so would be a form of corruption to the system of life and God has prohibited corruption in general:

[When the evil person] turns his back,
His aim everywhere
Is to spread corruption
Through the earth and destroy
Crops and cattle.
And God loves not corruption. (Quran: ii: 205)

While discussing verse 30:41 of the Qumran; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in a rather interesting medieval statement confirms that all environmental corruption on earth is the result of human errors.¹⁶

To further prove the concept of *hurma* for all creatures İzzi Dien cites Ibn Qudama as follows: "animals are living creatures which must not be killed in order to provoke the enemy [during war]. In this way they are like the enemy's women and children whose life is prohibited to take. However, to take honey from the hives is allowed since it is a permitted food...".¹⁷

He also cited the incident in which Abu Bakr¹⁸ wrote a letter to his army commander, Usama, instructing him on the ethics of war: "do not kill a child, a woman, or an old person, do not destroy a populated area, do not destroy a fruit tree, do not kill the dumb, innocent animal

¹⁵ A medieval jurist (d. 620/1223)

¹⁶ He states:

نزل هذه الآية على أحوال العالم، وطابق بين الواقع وبينها، وأنت ترى كيف تحدث الآفات والعلل كل وقت في الثمار والزرع والحيوان، وكيف يحدث من تلك الآفات آفات أخر متلازمة، بعضها آخذ برقاب بعض، وكلما أحدث الناس ظلماً وفجوراً، أحدث لهم ربهم تبارك وتعالى من الآفات والعلل في أغذيتهم وفواكههم، وأهويتهم ومياهم، وأبدانهم وخلقهم، وصورهم وأشكالهم وأخلاقهم من النقص والآفات، ما هو موجب أعمالهم وظلمهم وفجورهم. ولقد كانت الحبوب من الحنطة وغيرها أكثر مما هي اليوم، كما كانت البركة فيها أعظم... ابن قيم الجوزية، زاد المعاد، 4:362-6.

¹⁷ İzzi Dien, The environmental Dimentions of Islam 90; Ibn Qudama, *Mughni* 10, 498.

¹⁸ The close Companion of the Prophet and first caliph, 753-634 CE.

unless you need it for food, do not burn date-palms, and do not run away from your enemy".¹⁹

On the subject of the value of animals Ibn Qudama informs us that "the Prophet prohibited causing the death of any animal by captivity (imprisoning it without food or water) since it has its own respect, *hurma*, just like [human] women and children."²⁰

A further, axiomatic, reason for Islam's protection of the environment is derived from its Islamic notion of good, *khayr*, and evil, *sharr*. Human beings were created by God with a soul susceptible to the performance of either good or evil. The Quran states that it was God who created the human soul and inspired it with good and evil and those who have their souls purified by doing good will be successful, while he who commits evil will not be successful.²¹

Imam Ghazali elaborated on this issue on the basis of the Quran, categorising human souls into different groups:

The tranquil soul, *nafs mutma'ina*, is a soul which is steady and balanced, because it rejects human desires and evil:

[To the tranquil soul
Will be said:]
O soul, in rest
And satisfaction (Quran: lexis: 27)

This type of soul is also known as a blaming soul, *nafs lawwama*, since it blames humans when neglecting the worship of God [worship in Islam also includes all life actions in the appropriate manner].²²

When the human soul becomes inclined towards evil and encourages human beings to commit evil actions, *nafs ammara bi al-su'*.

Nor do I absolve my own self
[Of blame]: the [human] soul
Is certainly prone to evil... (Quran: xii: 53)

Ghazali cites a *hadith* when explaining the meaning of good ethics. A man came and asked, "O Prophet of God, what is religion all about?" The Prophet replied, [it is all about] "Good ethics."²³ Good, *khayr*, is a foundation of Islamic ethics. The Quran prescribes the "do-

¹⁹ Ibn Qudama, *Mughni* 10, 498-9.

²⁰ Ibn Qudama, *Mughni* 10, 499.

²¹ Quran: xcix: 7- 8.

²² Ghazali, *Ihya* 3, 4, see also Quran lxxv, 2.

²³ Ghazali, *Ihya* 3, 50.

ing of good" and prayer, as prerequisites for prosperity, both in this life and the life to come:

O you who believe
Bow down, prostrate yourselves,
And adore your Lord,
And do good;
That you may prosper. (Quran: xxii, 77)

In my opinion Muslims will protect the environment once it is understood that such protection is good in itself.

Another reason for protecting the environment and the creatures of the natural world is that all human relationships in *İslâm* have to be based on the concept of justice (*'adl*), and kindness (*ihsan*), and not on material or economic gain. The Quran strongly emphasises this concept in many verses:

Of those We have created
Are people who direct
[Others] with truth.
And dispense justice therewith. (Quran:vii,181)
The Prophet Muhammad said,

"Truly, God has prescribed kindness in all matters. Therefore if you kill [an animal] kill well and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen their blade and spare suffering to the animal."²⁴

There is a compelling argument here that Muslims must protect the environment and all the creatures who are inevitably dependant upon it since no other creature is able to perform this task. *Humans are the only creature that God has entrusted with the role of looking after the earth.* This trusteeship is considered by Islam to be a heavy burden and an important responsibility. So great would be the responsibility that all other creatures shrank from bearing it, when it was offered to them by God.²⁵

The essence of the Islamic point of view as regards the protection of the environment is that only those who are truly committed to uphold the ethical Divine order can fulfil this function. Those who claim power without responsibility deny the appointment made incumbent upon them by the Divine and therefore have no place in the manage-

²⁴ Narrated by Shaddad b. Aws and transmitted by Muslim. Mundhîri, *Mukhta.,sar*, 98.

²⁵ Quran :xxxiii: 72.

ment of the environment. One of the most effective means of maintaining and managing the environment is raising awareness amongst people. The proposed Islamic Ethical Labelling of all consumers' commodities which will be proposed at the end of paper is an active form of such awareness .

The concept of mending the damage, *islah*, in Islamic ethics can play a major role in understanding the grounds upon which the environment is to be protected. According to the Quran, it is the sinners who cause mischief on earth whereas the true believers mend and reform it:

And follow not the bidding
Of those who are extravagant,-
Who make mischief in the land,
And mend not [their ways]. (Quran: xxvi, 151-2)

Islah, like the sanctity of God creation, *hurma*, has been developed to include a wider scope than initially appreciated. All means for improving the quality of life, for all creatures and the sanctity of the natural world falls under human responsibility, with the onus on them to reform and correct that which is wrong. The subject of mending and purification *islah* is not restricted to the human soul only, but also includes physical mending actions such as caring for women, the weak, the oppressed and protecting all creatures and the environment. Associated with the idea of *salah*²⁶ is the principal of the awareness of God, *taqwa*. Those who are aware of God would behave with the utmost care and propriety and endeavour not to harm anybody, even when walking on earth, walking with humility:

And the servants of
The Most Gracious are those
Who walk on earth
In humility, and when the ignorant
Address them, they say, "Peace!". (Quran: xxv: 63)

4. Elements of Environment (Human, Animal, Earth, Air , Water)

Structure:

- Only water is discussed as an example.

²⁶ *Islah* refers to the action of mending and ordering good whereas *salah* means being goodness itself

- As a cleansing agent, *tahir*.
- Types of impurity, *najasa*.
- Islam bases its value of purity on the ground of real purity.
- The most often suggested ground to assess the environmental damage today is the Economical measure.

Water is seen by the Quran as a cleansing agent, *tahir*, used in the preparation for prayer, *wudu'*, as well as for a variety of religious actions in Islam.²⁷ Although water is not sacred in Islam it is considered important not to waste it while carrying out these processes. Water is thus given a symbolic value, as well as being recognised as the element that initiates the cycle of life. Water carries the genes at the start of procreation, it is water that comes from the sky to give life to earth and it is water that is used to clean the human body from both physical and spiritual impurity. The fact that both may be cleaned by the same element of life, confirms the Islamic doctrine that physical and spiritual contamination are similar in essence.

Water derived from rain, hail, snow, springs, wells, the sea and large rivers are all considered clean and suitable for ablution, *wudu'*, as well as drinking, providing that they remain in their natural state without contamination or pollution.²⁸ The notion of spiritual purification by water has permeated the whole of Islamic culture. When a person accepts Islam he or she has to clean their entire body with pure water. Whenever a Muslim prepares for prayer, water is needed. Each of the aforementioned types of water are considered to be agents of purification because they are normally clean. However, if they are obviously contaminated then their ability to purify ceases, and a breakdown in the provision of suitable water results in damage to the community's spiritual practices as well as their drinking water.

5. The five categories and Islamic Ethical Environmental Labeling (IEEL)

Structure:

- Five categories of 'will based' legal injunctions in Islamic law.

²⁷ Reading the Quran and circumambulating the Ka'ba, *tawaf*, should not be practised without *wudu'*.

²⁸ Hughes, 665.

- Categories might not be always clear in Islamic law since the circumstances of time and place could change.
- How to allocate commodities to one of these categories?

There are five *categories of 'will based' legal injunctions in Islamic law*. These categories oscillate between allowing and banning an action or leaving it optional to do or not do.

In this research it is suggested that all consumer's goods would carry on their packets letters to summaries the value attached to the contents of packet according to Islamic environmental legal ethics. The following five categories would be used as a guide in establishing the Islamic ethical environmental Labeling IEEL:

<i>Wajib</i> , Obligatory	=	W;
<i>Mandub</i> , Preferable	=	M;
<i>mubah</i> , allowed	=	Mb;
<i>makruh</i> , Abominable	=	Mk;
<i>Haram</i> , Prohibited	=	H.

It is observed that, while there is a distinct relevance in the nature of what is *halal* and *haram*, *Mubah*, suggests a somewhat different nature, since it represents an injunction which is triggered by a cause or a reason and can easily shift to either side. Other types of injunction that lie centrally ie. *mandub* and *Makruh* are closely related to one another. In practice they can change position, according to circumstance and public interest or *Maslaha*. This can alter an action and its position from one category to another. An example of this may be found in the consuming food: eating and drinking what is allowed is generally *halal* and become *mandub* if they help needed. However excess of either would render them *makruh* abominable. The same principle applies to the cases of leisure activities which are allowed, but if pursuit leads to loss of important aspects of life; then it will be prohibited;

The division of these categories is evidently influenced by the Islamic ethical doctrine that perceives human actions as causes for divine punishment or reward in proportion to the amount of action. Such terms are given as instruction for Muslims actions, or simply as descriptors for the causes or conditions which determines the legality of an act.

For the purpose of practical legal application, these basically trilateral divisions are further broken down into five levels or qualifications.

The environmental labeling decision to opt to one of these *categories* might not be always clear in Islamic law since the circumstances of time and place can be different; but for many commodities it can be clear once its use is identified. Example to that is the case of water: if it is bottled in a hygienic and clean way it would be labeled as *mubah*. Another example is the plastic table cloths which are not biodegradable. This can be made of materials that last hundreds of years in the environment and can cause it great harm when produced by emitting CFC gas. According to the IEEL it would be classified as *Makruh* or *haram* depending on the control of the damage they can cause. This is one of the main reasons that many European shops today are slowly phasing out the use of plastic carrier bags and replacing them with more environmentally friendly re usable bags.

1. *Wajib* is derived from an Arabic root which refers to an action that indicates an obligation or responsibility. Often this term occurs in textual sources in an imperative formula to 'do' that particular action, for example 'establish worship and ward off [evil]'.¹⁰ The affirmative form is also employed, whereby formulae indicating that God 'enjoins' or 'orders' are used, for example 'Lo Allah enjoined justice and kindness ... He exhorted you in order that ye may take heed'.¹¹ On other occasions, the term 'prescribed' is utilised, for example 'fasting has been prescribed upon you',¹² and also in the prophetic tradition, which maintains that 'God has prescribed charity on everything; when killing [an animal for food], perfect your killing. Slaughter well by sharpening your knife.

Let your beast of burden have comfort ...'¹³

2. *The second category, mandub, refers to 'that which is preferable'*. Technically, this term designates that which has been requested by the legislator but does not carry compulsion. *amidi* provides an interesting guideline for *mandub*: 'it is an act, the performance of which is considered preferable to its non-performance. The person who adheres to *mandub* would be worthy of praise, yet one who ignores such would incur no reprimand or punishment.'²⁰

Mandub normally appears in the form of an order that is not compulsory: a

Qur'anic example refers to debt using the imperative form, 'write it'.²¹ This is followed by another verse which states: 'if any one of you entrust another with a pledge – let the trustee restore that pledge to the owner. Let him fear Allah.'²² This implies that the initial imperative is not intended as compulsory, but that the answering of the request would be meritorious. The *mandub* is also found in a straightforward formula that defines its meritorious nature, particularly with reference to voluntary ritual and practice, as seen in the Prophetic statement:

'the person who comes to this house [of God] and commits no vulgar words or acts will return home as if he was born again'. Here, vulgarity is not forbidden, but the person who refrains from such words and deeds is offered a restored innocence and purity.²³ This kind of injunction is given a variety of titles, such as the preferred, voluntary or just Sunna. It often appears to come into differing categories, depending on its proximity to the tradition of the Prophet. If the

Prophet practiced a meritorious action regularly or suggested its practice, and then it is called confirmed, *mu'akkad*. His personal practice of the extra prayer before morning prayer is an example of this. If an action is not practiced regularly, such as voluntary fasting or minor pilgrimage in the month of Ramadan, then it is referred to as 'not confirmed', *ghayr mu'akkad*.

3. *The third category, mubah*, indicates that which is allowed, whereby individuals have the option of 'doing' or 'not doing such an action'.³¹ Most

objects and actions that are pertinent to general human existence fall into this category, since the rule is that everything is allowed unless there is a text that prohibits it.

4. *The fourth category, makruh*, abominable, represents a minor form of the prohibited, not dissimilar in amplitude to the *mandub*, which is a minor form of *wajib*. It refers to an object or action from which the legislator has requested the actor to refrain. However, if this request is unheeded, there is no resultant punishment, but compliance with the request will reap reward. An example of *makruh* is the eating of garlic by one who intends to attend the mosque or socialise with others. The consumption of garlic itself is not prohibited, but it is abominable in the latter case.

5. *The final category, Haram*, represents the opposite of the first, and it includes all that has been prohibited, such as 'the taking of usury'.

The format in which this type of injunction is normally expressed can vary. Some direct prohibition, *nahi sarîh*, is in evidence, but there exists also a form of rebuke against a person who might commit a prohibited act. Certain chapters reveal a form of 'don't do', while other chapters order the perpetrator to 'refrain from doing'. Sometimes the injunction appears with an order 'not to do', and the resultant punishment is specified for those who violate the order. An example of the latter may be observed in the case of the adulterer. Often, books of Islamic law pertaining to prohibition cover issues that warrant direct prohibition, for example, polytheism and theft, or matters that are prohibited due to their links with the aforementioned – for example, trading before the call for Friday prayer, prohibited originally because this would coincide with the time of prayer. Amidi prefers to call this category the banned, *mannu'r*, which to him is synonymous with the word *Haram*. However, the introduction of the banned concept here could be helpful in identifying the difference between an action and object which is intrinsically 'bad', and prohibited by the law, and one which is not intrinsically bad yet is prohibited by law.

How to allocate commodities to one of these categories?

The allocation of commodities to any of these categories can be difficult and requires great deal of valuation efforts which should be conducted by responsible able authorities through committees and expert scholars. However we could suggest some grounds as starting point for considerations in deciding whether a commodity is a *haram* or *halal* or between the two:

A- The damage that an item has caused to the environment directly endangered species or indirectly such as using CFC Gas in industry or the wastage of water during construction or mining.

B- The future damage expected from the commodity; such as the danger of using plastics.

C- The potential damage of nuclear materials.

D -The kind and amount of damage.

E- Reducing benefits to the five elements of nature: water; animals; earth; air and humans if the answer is yes then we need to know what benefits and who decide on that.

In my opinion all these grounds are samples for the environmental ethical problems and questions. Questions which up to now have no

solid foundation since the environment has not been quantified as having a clear ethical value. By basing conservation on the ethical consideration that Islam gives to life and its continuity²⁹ then conservation will make sense both from an ethical justification and validity of its application amongst the adherents of Islam.

To give one practical example to our proposal we may refer to the concept of what is pure *tahir* and what is *najis* impure³⁰. Muslim scholars have always been clear that all types of impurity, *najasa*, should not be disposed of in a way that may contaminate the public water supply. Furthermore, if contamination did accidentally occur then it should be cleaned.³¹ In my opinion for the purpose of Islamic environmental labelling, factory and other industrial effluent if disposed in the wrong way can be considered true impurities, *najasa haqiqiyya*. This could be labelled as *Haram*. However they may be divided into immediate impurities such as abattoir waste and sewage, delayed impurities such as plastics, polystyrene and poisonous impurities including asbestos. Accordingly *Haram* poisonous waste must be either not produced or contained in a way that can never contaminate the environment. If the clothes become soiled by an immediate impurity,

²⁹ The Islamic environmental value is derived from God where is to the conventional environmentalists the value of the environment is a moral consideration given to the Environment by humans based on different reasons such as the utilitarian; aesthetic reasons or no reasons.

Muslims believe that without a divine authority for the environmental value justification for the case of the environment starts chasing its tail and follows the same loop from which materialism suffers. To claim that the environment only has a value because of its use to human makes no sense. Neither does the claim that it has an unique value that justifies conservation, since the immediate question here would be: unique for whom and why?. Every claim to justify the conservation of the environment requires another ground on which it can stand. The authority of God, in Islam, is the ultimate authority that gives humanity the power to manage the environment and to alter nature. This authorization is not unlimited. It is controlled by the principle that human life is a test governed by God. Izzi Dien Enviromental Dimension of Islam

³⁰ The concept of *najasa* in Islamic law is rather complex and usually dealt with in great detail. However the salient points to our present discussion, require only that the difference between true impurity, *najasa haqiqiyya*, and mandatory impurity, *najasa hukmiyya*, be made clear. True impurity includes any dirt that normally revolts people such as faeces, urine and spilt blood. Mandatory impurities are those which have been specified by the text such as the state of ceremonial uncleanness following intimate sexual contact. Zuhayli 1, 149-150.

³¹ Shawkani 1, 35-80.

they must be labelled as: *Makruh* they must be washed before they can be worn for daily life or prayer.

It may be added that whilst Islam *bases its value of purity on the ground of real purity the most often suggested ground to asses the environmental damage today is the Economical measure* which directly links the environmental value to human benefits. If we use the economical measure to assess the damage to the environment then we are entering in a vicious circle of which comes first the economics or the environment

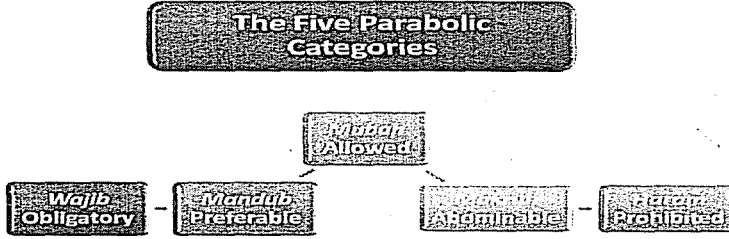
Often these values are considerably different due to the disparity of economical value to the environmental value. A whiteboard marker pen often worth little to buy but same pen's environmental value is much higher if we calculate the environmental elements used and destroyed when it was produced such as water and the emitted harmful gas... Because people are not aware of its actual value; as soon as such pen is no good for writing; it is thrown into the bin. The action of throwing a "useless" pen away will cause future environmental damage rising from the cost of its disposal and the damage that can result from that. The same applies to thousands of items of our domestic and none domestic waste such as cardboard boxes or car tyres.

Finally it is important to conclude with a statement that Islamic Environmentalism is similar in practice to modern environmentalism however it is far more superior to it because it has the belief of it's adherents and conviction that it will work. This is why we can claim that that Islamic Environmental Ethical labelling can be an affective way for conservation since Muslims believe that the value given to the environment comes from its maker; Allah.

Summary

The intention of this paper is to highlight the Islamic ethical background for the environmental conservation. The Quran; the Sunna and other sources for Islamic ethics and law are tapped into to discover how Islam interacts with the idea of conservation. The significance of the environment in Islam starts from the fact that care for nature and its elements is embedded within the faith theory and practice. The paper examines certain principles which are important in the search for an environmental ethics. Humans are seen as 'responsible entrusted managers' for the environment who do not own it. Another principle is the Islamic assertion that more is not always better and

that the elements of environment, including water; earth, animals, air and; belong to God and should be shared between all the creatures of God.



The paper suggests an ethical practical measure to help rising the environmental awareness amongst Muslims by environmentally labelling all consumers goods according to the Islamic notion of what is allowed *halal* and what is not allowed *haram*. By Islamically and environmentally evaluating all goods; it is suggested that a letter should be inserted on the packet of these good to state whether it is environmentally *halal* or *haram*.

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