Moral Values and the Role of Human Reason in the Metaethical Thought of the Four Classical Schools of Islamic Theology: Implications for Engagement with British Values

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Abstract

The integration of British Muslim communities into the UK's social and political landscape faces a significant challenge: a perceived dissonance between British values, shaped by the moral traditions of enlightened modernity, and the Islamic revelational moral frameworks that guide Muslim life and values.

The current official guidance on Fundamental British values is often presented as a neutral, universal set of civic obligations and values; however, for many Muslims, values and moral traditions are grounded in Islamic theological and ethical frameworks. There is a significant lack of research on how metaethical narratives within Islamic theology can provide the intellectual framework needed to reconcile two moral traditions while taking British values into account. Without a theoretical link connecting Islamic moral reasoning and values to the moral principles and traditions that underpin modern British values, efforts to promote genuine dialogue and social cohesion in Britain remain superficial and prone to misunderstanding.

This thesis explores how Islamic metaethics can impact Muslim engagement with British Values. Using a comparative approach, this research examines which metaethical propositions and narratives from four notable Islamic theological schools, the Mutazilites, the Asharites, the Maturidis, and the Atharis, support constructive engagement with British Values at the individual, community, and institutional levels.

The thesis also critically examines tensions that can arise when traditional theological perspectives shape Muslim thought as Muslims engage with modern liberal and secular value

systems. Through an Islamic metaethical lens, this thesis explores pathways to resolve such tensions while theoretically conceptualising the Muslim moral mind.

Using textual analysis and contextual hermeneutics, the findings confirm that Islamic metaethical narratives are a key factor in enhancing Muslim engagement with and observance of modern British values. This research has important implications for religious and educational institutions, Muslim communities, and British policymakers seeking to foster social cohesion.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …Shaimaa Elshorkobaly…….. Date ……23/12/2025…….

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Chapter I

Introduction

'The Teachings of the Quran that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided, but not unhampered, by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems.' (Iqbal, 2012, P.134)

Chapter Aims

This chapter introduces the topic, aims, scope, and significance of this thesis, which is situated within Islamic theology and ethics and addresses contemporary questions and challenges.

1.1 Background:

Muslims in the United Kingdom observe a religion that shapes every aspect of their lives, from structuring their days around five prayers to regulating the most intimate details of their personal lives and relationships. Islam organises the political, economic, social, and moral affairs of those who practise it. Islam has its own moral systems and narratives, shaped by the Quran, Sunnah, Islamic history, and Shariah.

Islam is a dynamic religion that declares that the primary purpose of human creation is to worship the Creator (Quran, 51:56). It transforms every aspect of life into a form of worship and deems actions not grounded in belief in God and right intention as a form of loss in the Hereafter (Quran, 6:162). From paving roads to planting trees, from performing surgeries to teaching in nurseries, and from parliaments to courtrooms, Islam turns every aspect of life into a form of worship, grounded in belief in Allah (the proper name for the God of Abraham in the Quran).

Muslims living in modern liberal democratic societies, such as Britain, sometimes face challenges as they seek to balance the demands of daily life with those of their religion. In recent years, rising tensions have led some Muslims to make avoidable, life-changing choices, such as the quiet exodus of Muslims from France because of its increasingly hostile laïcité (the

French model of secularism). This subject has not received due attention until recently (New York Times, 2022).

While the Muslim presence in the United Kingdom and Europe predates the Second World War, its aftermath saw a rise in Muslim talent and labour migrating to what some Muslim scholars once labelled the abode of disbelief. Britain was part of a fractured world emerging from a major conflict while suffering severe labour shortages. The Muslim experience in the UK and Europe has been one of contribution, struggle, and achievement, but it has also been an experience of continual attempts to navigate a largely modern, liberal, and secular democratic reality that is disconnected from revealed religion and more influenced by the moral principles and traditions of the Enlightenment and modernity, as intellectual and philosophical movements that heavily shape modern British values, laws, and political realities.

Many Muslims strive to remain in their British and European homes while observing their religion. This sometimes presents them with challenges, ranging from interest rates and family dynamics and manners to public conduct and politics. Some of these conflicts and challenges are particularly situated in the realm of moral values (Appendix 1).

Islam is central to Muslim identity and defines it in various ways, from the values one ought to espouse to the food one is permitted to consume, from the attire one may wear to spousal and parental rights and duties, and from the causes one supports to the ideologies one promotes. Muslims seek scholarly advice to regulate many aspects of their lives and communities, and this is not unique to them. Other religious minorities in Britain, for example, religious Christians from Nigerian backgrounds or Orthodox Jews, do likewise: '…religious identification is a belief system that shapes an individual's core identity, opinions, and political

behaviour. A religious migrant may consider practicing religion as a sacred duty that cannot be compromised.' (Statham, 2019, p. 43)

This brings us to the question of what could hold the diverse communities of modern Britain together, while sowing the seeds of coexistence and reducing fragmentation. Muslim communities in Britain carry a heritage of Islamic moral traditions, while Britain upholds a set of modern values that emerge from different historical and philosophical traditions, which do not centre revealed religion as a governing framework for law, morality and politics.

In the seminal 2002 report, 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain' (the Parekh Report), several models were examined to pursue equality and cohesion in a Britain that seeks to sustain and invest in its diverse social fabric to realise its full potential. Among these models, the concept of Britain as a 'community of communities' was proposed. This pluralistic model builds on and extends the liberal model by emphasising recognition, rather than mere tolerance, of the diverse communities and cultures that have made Britain a community of communities. It is a model that '…goes out of its way to promote dialogue…' (Parekh et al., 2002, p. 44).

The Parekh report (2002) addresses the concept of common values as a binding force while pointing at the very topic this thesis is dealing with: 'Like any other society, Britain needs common values to hold it together and give it a sense of cohesion. At the same time, it must acknowledge that its citizens belong to a variety of moral traditions and subscribe to and live by a range of values. Therefore, common values cannot simply be the values of one community, even if it is the numerical majority, but must emerge from democratic dialogue and be based on reasons that individuals belonging to different moral and cultural traditions can agree on.' (Parekh et al., 2002, P.53).

The official list of British values, which was '…first introduced in the policy document presented during the review of Prevent in 2011' (Reed & Rees, 2024, p. 3), could serve as a starting point for a future set of common values, despite the shortcomings and polemics addressed in this thesis. However, this would require foundational bridges that enable Muslims, whether they observe Islam informatively and consciously or culturally and traditionally, to engage with British values through an Islamic metaethical lens that addresses epistemic moral agency and moral values, with modern liberal and secular traditions in mind, while focusing specifically on British values.

The need for bridges and resolutions to potential conflicts and tensions that may arise for Muslim communities and institutions as they engage with British values is often obscured by apologetic narratives that avoid acknowledging genuine and legitimate challenges in a diverse society. This need, and its ensuing debates, is also exploited by hostile narratives that portray such conflicts as unresolvable and deterministic.

My thesis emerges from the field of Islamic theology and ethics and contributes to the literature seeking solutions to a range of contemporary problems and challenges that Muslim communities, and their religious and educational institutions, could be facing in Britain's modern liberal democratic reality where fundamental British values, that are rooted primarily in modern liberal and secular moral traditions, are upheld: '…The values that constitute FBVs include 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2011). While FBVs are presented as being universally applicable to everyone in the UK, the education sector has been a particular point of focus for the implementation of FBVs.' (Reed & Rees, 2024, P.3)

This thesis could also help policymakers and lawmakers improve their engagement with Muslims and their educational and religious bodies and institutions in line with British values, which include respect and tolerance. This thesis may also relate to Muslims in Europe or the USA, as it could be important for social cohesion in countries like Germany and France because of shared moral and philosophical traditions and their relevance.

1.2 British Values: Enlightenment, Modernity, and the Role of Human Reason

For any country to declare a set of values (Appendix 1) as fundamental, these values must have a universal element, or universal meaning, embedded in them so its citizens and communities, no matter how diverse they are, can relate to these values and abide by them. National or common values inspire state policies and laws. They shape constitutions and culture. They are begotten by struggle or historical lessons learned. National values hold within their grasp what nations are or what they aspire to be.

National or common values are also moral declarations that announce to citizens what the state expects of them and highlight to foreign states what a country stands for. This point was highlighted in the Parekh report (2002): 'Procedural and substantive values such as those outlined above are society's moral capital and form the basis of what all people are entitled to demand of themselves and of each other…so long as people do not offend against the shared basic values, such differences should be respected.' (Parekh et al., 2002, P.54)

This moral capital, or what the thesis prefers to call a moral constitution, also serves as a set of governance and moral principles that hold institutions to account, thus securing and protecting the rights of all citizens, including minorities. Such moral values, or moral

constitution, will feature in state educational institutions to shape the moral narratives and guidelines that govern the conduct of young students whose value systems are still developing. Values are acquirable, but they are hard to unlearn. This is the case in Britain regarding fundamental British values (FBV), but more work is needed, especially after the current list is reformed, as mentioned in the recommendations chapter of this thesis.

In the form of an official list, fundamental British values (FBV) may have been associated with Prevent (2011) and the aftermath of the 2014 crisis of several Birmingham schools (Struthers, 2016). However, this does not mean that these modern British values did not exist before these dates, as moral values and meanings that are core to a modern United Kingdom: democracy, individual liberty, rule of law, and respect and tolerance.

These values featured in the British political discourse before 2011 and 2014, and what was deemed by some as poor FBV school guidance: 'While it was right that people should enjoy their own cultures, they should do so under a single set of overarching values. ''When it comes to our essential values, the belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country, and its shared heritage - then that is where we come together…'', said Mr Blair.' (Johnston, 2006)

FBVs have historical backgrounds, for example, individual liberty features in the works of the British philosopher John Stuart Mill whose writings influenced the concept of individual liberty in Britian as well as the USA where some later constitutional interpretations in the United States were coloured by Mill's work and ideas, for example: 'A person should be free to do as he likes in his own concerns; but ought not to be free to do as he likes in acting for another, under the pretext that the affairs of another are his own affairs…' (Mill, 2016, P.76).

Mill's ideas around freedom of thought and speech were classed under individual liberty: 'If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person…' (Mill, 2016, P.14-P.17)

The universal struggle for individual liberty is not peculiar to Britian and the USA in a world that sought to end British and European colonisation and restore women's rights, but the focus with the British case should be on FBV as a potential list for a more developed and advanced list of common values that related to modern Britain and its diverse communities, while maintaining the core values that feature on the official list: 'More broadly, the finding is in agreement with the idea that the four values labelled as fundamentally British actually constitute 'universal human values theoretically upheld in many countries' (Tomlison, 2015:2210)' We should therefore not be surprised to find different ethno-cultural groups embracing them to an equal degree.' (Janmaat, 2018, P.15).

Modern British values, including FBVs, are inherent in the Equality Act of 2010 and many UK laws that seek to promote and uphold equality and diversity while tackling hate and discrimination. FBVs also correspond to the values underlying many of the international conventions and treaties on human rights that the United Kingdom signed: 'As previously mentioned, the values identified within the FBV guidance are ostensibly unobjectionable: indeed, a number of them are plausible human rights values, including respect, tolerance, non-discrimination, freedom, and liberty.' (Struthers, 2016, p.99)

As for the definitive role of modern British values, including FBV, in the shaping of the United Kingdom, especially in its post-colonial reality, it is a fact that it is relevant to all modern liberal democracies: 'Indeed, it could be argued that democracy, the rule of law,

individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance are values underpinning all democracies and are thus not unique to Britian.' (Janmaat, 2018, P.2)

The use of the concept of a common set of British values is usually ensued by claims that a list of FBV may alienate Muslims students which is a discriminatory claim, because of its underlying assumption about Islam and the myth of incompatibility: '…the way of portraying them as 'fundamentally British' was seen as inappropriate and possibly leading to alienation among minorities, particular Muslims (Bolloten & Richardson, 2015; Tomlinson, 2015)' (Janmaat, 2018, P.2)

The values that shape modern liberal democracies have been described as emancipative by Inglehart and Welzel (2009). However, if British values, as a set of common values, are not universal in ontological and epistemological terms, then they lose their meaning in a multicultural society and may have no real bearing at the institutional, community, and individual levels, both locally and internationally. If British values do not relate to all its citizens and diverse communities, and to the UK's commitment to international human rights conventions, then they become irrelevant to local British and international realities.

Modern British values are perceived as the fruits of Enlightenment liberalism and modernity, or what the thesis describes as ''enlightened modernity'' and its universal moral project, which aims to establish a universal moral language, laws, values, and guidelines that can bypass the barriers posed by differences among nations and peoples to provide international human rights frameworks, for example. Enlightened modernity is the bedrock of binding international law and charters, which hold states to account within the legal frameworks of the United Nations and its numerous bodies, charters, and conventions.

While this may evoke the ethnocentric aspects of British values and the current international post-WWII world order, the universal nature of what is described as ‘‘British values’’ aligns with the universal values established in many nations, even if these values are sometimes defined differently, albeit to a certain extent. When the polemics are discarded, the substance of ‘British values’, which mirrors the universal values and pursuits of equality, justice, liberty, tolerance, coexistence, and peace, reveals that they are moral values shaped by narratives around humanity's universal rights.

Without a set of common British values, including FBV, and their universal ontological and epistemological predicates and connotations, the United Kingdom would be a country with no common values central to its culture and laws, holding its diverse fabric together. If the official FBV, such as individual liberty, tolerance, and other British values, such as justice and equality, are not treated as objective universal moral truths, then this brings to question the very foundations of the Equality Act of 2010, the European Convention of Human Rights, and the whole genera of the universal rights of humans which Britian is committed to and advocates nationally and internationally for.

The universality of British values is directly connected to their enlightenment and modern liberal and secular roots. While historically, religious traditions have impacted, directly and indirectly, the development of British values as we know them in the 20th and the 21st century, they are predominantly situated within a modern liberal and secular project of human moral reasoning that identifies with ‘‘enlightened modernity’’ and its universal moral narratives, which are the product of intellectual endeavours that strove to step away from revealed religion.

Numerous Muslim reformers, some of whom are mentioned in the thesis, recognised the universality of the enlightened modern moral project and engaged with it because of common themes with Islamic moral traditions and values. This was capitalised on by those who resisted colonialism: 'Dire need (for knowledge) in the face of the extremities of (church) leaders ignited grudges in the hearts of the seekers of knowledge, which did not wane. The seekers of knowledge demonstrated the will to truth and went on to discover (all forms) of knowledge that benefited the masses and stimulated the intellects…No need to mention how the French Revolution was an apocalyptic moment against religion (Christianity) and its leaders.' (Abduh, 1993, P.125) The universal moral project of modernity was used as a tool to aid the end of colonialism as it capitalised on themes of universal moral values of liberty, quality, justice, and peace: '…what made Enlightenment ideas truly universal was that they became weapons in the hands of those who fought Western imperialism…the ideals of liberty, equality, democracy, and rights are not specific to the West.' (Malik, 2014, P.332)

To engage effectively and constructively with British values is to engage with the fruits of enlightened modernity and its universal moral narratives of human agency in a world where humans can discern universal moral laws and values that aim to enhance the human condition: 'Building on the Renaissance, the Enlightenment elevated the individual self to the centre of the world…Specifically, the modern mind assumes that knowledge is certain, objective, and good…' (Grenz, 1996, P.2-4)

1.3: The Two Criteria for Constructive Engagement with British Values

The epistemic role of human reason in discerning universal moral truths and values is a crucial criterion for constructive - rather than deconstructive - and positively robust

engagement with British values. This constitutes the first criterion for engaging with and observing British values at the individual, community, and institutional levels.

Another important criterion for any group, within a diverse modern liberal democratic nation, such as Britain, to engage with a set of common values, especially if they are modern, liberal and secular values, is to acknowledge their inherent worth and meaning that is independent of religion and that can happen if they are recognised as objective moral truths.

This brings us to the Euthyphro dilemma as a tool used within the scope of this thesis to explore Islamic metaethics and its fabric of moral epistemologies, and whether objective moral truths and values exist independent of revelation: 'Consider this: is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?' (Plato, 2002, P.11)

If revealed religion alone is what dictates what is good and evil, and subsequently moral values, this could lead to a conflict when engaging with universal moral values as stated in modern secular liberal democracies based on the rational moral reasoning that was shaped by an enlightened modernity: '…allowed the light of reason to shine upon the human problems…this was the period in which the modern idea of the self, and of the individual as a rational agent, began to develop, in which the authority of custom and tradition weakened, while the role of reason in explaining the natural and the social world was vastly expanded, in which nature became regarded not as chaotic but as lawful, and hence amenable to reason.' (Malik, 2014, P.190).

If good and evil can only be good and evil because revealed religion declares so, and not because of any inherent "quality" or nature in that good or that evil, and the same applies to moral values by default, then national or common values in a modern liberal and secular context, which is disconnected from revealed religion, may fail the test of securing observation and constructive engagement from any group that does not recognise the existence of objective moral truths and values that are independent of revelation.

However, if common modern and liberal values, such as British values, are classed as universal objective moral truths and values, that are inherently and discernibly good, hence 'individual liberty' and 'tolerance', for example, are good because of their inherent nature and what they universally and intrinsically stand for, and not because any revealed religion said so, that would constitute a fertile ground for cultivating support and commitment for these values from groups that recognise objective moral truths and values that could exist independent of revealed religion.

The conflict becomes clearer if members of any faith, for example, believe that human reason cannot discern between moral good and evil because only their faith can do so for them, or that human reason has no epistemic role in the realm of moral values. Metaethical narratives that uphold such claims could immediately disqualify any modern liberal and secular nation from deciding for itself which common moral values it can uphold nationally, support and observe internationally, let alone require or demand national commitment to them.

Citizens with such beliefs could find it difficult or futile to even engage in constructive conversations on a national level about common values, especially if they belong to a minority faith. It must be emphasised that this argument is not specific to any one religion but could

apply to all faiths and belief systems that hold such claims and metaethical narratives that fortify them.

However, religions that have within their metaethical narratives and propositions both moral reasoning (epistemic moral agency) and objective moral truths that can be discerned by human reason (the two criteria), then pathways could be opened to engage constructively with modern values in liberal secular democracies that are solely reliant on moral reasoning that is divorced from or does not conform with revealed religion. Such pathways would not contradict strongly held religious beliefs and could allow for effective and profound bridge-building.

The reliance on the Euthyphro dilemma provides a systematic approach to exploring Islamic moral epistemologies, which can accommodate the concept of universal values as objective moral truths discernible by human reason. This epistemic common ground with enlightened modernity and its moral traditions that shaped FBVs points to a basis that could facilitate and support citizens with religious beliefs in engaging with these values, not just as FBVs, but rather as universal moral values that have space to flourish within their religious morality.

1.4: Islam and the Two Criteria: Moral Reasoning (Epistemic moral agency) and Objective Moral Truths and Values

The above sections established two main criteria (the role of human reason as a discerner of moral values and the existence of objective moral truths independent of revelation) that should be satisfied for any religious group to engage constructively with the concepts of FBV or the values of any modern liberal and secular society. This is not a claim that these are the

only criteria, but within the scope of this thesis, they are designated as the most basic and essential ones.

This thesis investigates whether such a platform genuinely exists that can satisfy these two fundamental criteria within the fabric of Islamic morality and how dominant it is, while conceptualising the Muslim moral mind theoretically within the scope of the thesis, and allowing for actual engagements with British values through an Islamic metaethical lens.

If such a platform does indeed exist, Muslims, at the individual, community, and institutional levels, could capitalise on it for ideas on easing any perceived tensions and conflicts that may arise when observing their religion alongside British values. Also, Muslims could then confidently contribute robustly to the discourse on British values, thus shifting the narrative from the deconstructive and sceptical in support of the Muslim minority, among other minorities, to constructive for and by the Muslim minority.

Where moral systems can find epistemic and ontological common grounds, reconciliations and compatibility become realisable endeavours and, at the foundational level, rather than superficially or cosmetically. For Muslims, this would only be possible if Islam allows for epistemic moral agency, whereby human reason plays a clear role in engaging with the universal meanings of British values in modern liberal Britain.

Using these two criteria, the thesis provides tools to conduct the same investigation for any other ideology or religion. However, it must be acknowledged here that these criteria may not apply in the pavilions of Postmodernism. Also, further research could shed light on further basic and essential criteria.

When addressing British values, it is also important to draw a line between enlightened modernity, which is characterised by confident epistemic moral agency, and postmodernity: ‘Postmodern philosophers applied the theories of the literary deconstructionist to the world as a whole. Just as a text will be read differently by each reader, they said, so reality will be read differently by each knowing self that encounters it. This means that there is no one meaning of the world, no transcendent centre to reality as a whole.’ (Grenz, 1996, P.6)

Conflating enlightened modernity, with its universal moral values and laws, and postmodernity, which thrives on deconstructing universal meanings in a world of tribalized realities, is a pitfall this thesis avoids. Postmodernity is a movement that is sceptical of epistemic moral agency and British values but can still negotiate with such values: ‘Enlightenment notions of objective truth and universalist conceptions of rationality, which had been under postmodern critique for decades, are now often viewed as not merely lacking foundation but as actually toxic.’ (Cahonee, 2023, P.82)

While The Parekh report (2002) encourages the recognition of the unique features of the diverse communities of Britain, it still suggests common values as a pathway to social cohesion in Britain as a ‘community of communities’ which would situate the report at the crossroads between enlightened modernity and a growing postmodernity of tribalized communities: ‘The postmodern worldview operates with a community-based understanding of truth. It affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern worldview affirms that this relativity extends beyond our perceptions of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, truth is relative to the community we participate in.’ (Grenz, 1996, P.8)

However, the paradox of postmodernism lies in its own attempt to rebrand its propositions as the new objective moral truths, while striving to universalise its worldview and its take on moral values by means of local and international laws and legal frameworks that must be observed and upheld locally and universally in the forever pursuit of humans to peg their moral systems and moral visions to something that transcends their reality and obligates the other to observe it.

1.5 Brief Definition of Metaethics and Its Role in This Research:

'The term meta means after or beyond, and consequently the notion of meta-ethics involves a removed, or a bird's eye view of the entire project of ethics. Meta-ethics can be defined as the study of the origin and meaning of ethical concepts. (Fieser, retrieved 2014). Edward Moad rightly stated that questions of moral epistemology are dealt with, and partially determined by, a set of interrelated metaphysical, meta-ethical, and epistemological propositions.' (Al-Attar, 2017, P.4-P.5)

Metaethics is not just a question of moral epistemology. Metaethics engages with the fabric of entire moral systems, including the semantics of the words used and their impact on moral systems and moral agency. Metaethics are the building blocks of moral values, and within their terrain lie the reasons for moral conflicts and the seeds for reconciliation and resolution. Islamic metaethics also impacts Islamic disciplines such as jurisprudence and Quranic interpretation, which in turn impacts the lives of Muslims in the UK and other Western nations.

According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: '…metaethics is the attempt to understand the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological presuppositions

and commitments of moral thought, talk, and practice. As such, it counts within its domain a broad range of questions and puzzles, including: Is morality more a matter of taste than truth? Are moral standards culturally relative? Are there moral facts? If they are moral facts, what are their origin and narrative?' (Stanford, 2023).

Islamic metaethics is a moral force that highly influences Muslim individuals and institutions as it impacts their moral worldview, and eventually their normative and practical ethics. Metaethics hold the key to what lies beneath Islamic morality and Islamic moral thinking.

Islamic metaethics is rooted in Divine revelation, while the United Kingdom is a modern liberal democracy that upholds a unique model of secularism, despite being a parliamentary monarchy whose monarch is the head of the church of England, and whose bishops have seats in the House of Lords. It is important to note that the role of the Bishops in the House of Lords is not to bring religious authority into the legislation or make religion central to it.

The United Kingdom is described in official speeches and documents as a modern state, and its FBVs testify to its ties to enlightened modernity whose '…principles are in opposition to any tradition, any established order, against any sacredness or inquisitive clergy, against any revelation or imposed values…' (Ramadan, 2004, P.5).

The British model of secularism is unique and is different from the French model, for example. The British model is more accommodating of public expressions of religions as it strives to uphold the Equality Act of 2010: '…Separation of religious institutions from the institutions of the state and no domination of the political sphere by religious institutions; 2.

Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all, with everyone free to change their beliefs and manifest their beliefs within the limits of public order and the rights of others; 3. No state discrimination against anyone on grounds of their religion or non-religious worldview, with everyone receiving equal treatment on these grounds.' (Copson, 2019, p.2)

Census 2021 established atheism and agnosticism as major demographic features of the United Kingdom. British secularism is not only an institutional or a political matter: 'For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as ''Christian'', a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3 (33.3 million) in 2011…''No religion'' was the second most common response, increasing by 12.0 percentage points to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.' (Census 2021, P.2) These findings further fortify the underlying reasons for this thesis.

In 2018, Michele Mangini published his paper: 'Rationality and Ethics between Western and Islamic Tradition'. The paper delivers a brief and a limited investigation into Islamic morality versus Western morality to address the rivalry between two competing moral traditions in a Europe that is at the cusp of a crossroad: 'On the one hand, the political option can be described as erecting walls and defending European values and identity against the other as someone who cannot be integrated (or)…the cultural option…it would consist in digging underneath the surface of differences and oppositions in order to retrieve elements of commonality…' (Mangini, 2018, P.1). The nature of this thesis, and the scope of its investigation, stems from recognizing the need for reconciliations and bridge building in line with what Mangini (2018) labelled as the cultural option.

The moral challenges and conflicts that could be emanating from the meeting of two moral traditions - that of Islam and that of a modern United Kingdom - is alluded to in an independent review submitted for parliamentary review in 2018: ‘There are undoubtedly religio-cultural challenges within some Muslim societies which continue to challenge modern ideals of individual freedom and moral agency, especially in relation to women.’ (OGL, 2018, P.3)

The tensions between modern secular and liberal values and Islamic values, which sometimes make their way to the UK through migratory routes, for example, have also been alluded in Moaddel’s ‘The Clash of Values’: ‘A comparative analysis of the respondents’ orientations showed that the percentages of these respondents who favoured religious fundamentalism were much higher than the percentages of those who favoured liberal values across the seven countries.’ (Moaddel, 2020, P.148). Such findings further necessitate a thesis to investigate the challenges they pose, from an ontological and epistemological perspective, for in-depth analysis.

Islamic metaethics lie beneath the fabric of Islamic values as it determines who defines the values and how to apply them, and through interactions between Islamic metaethical narratives and models and British values, this study will explore whether Islamic metaethics can resolve some potential tensions (or not) and whether Islamic metaethics can enhance the engagement of Muslims communities and institutions with British values.

The concept of British values is many times weaponised to create some logical impossibility that predicates Muslim existence in the UK: ‘The relationship between assumed threats posed by some Muslims to liberal democracy and the promotion of British values was reinforced by a number of high profile and influential position papers and discussions.’ (Revell

and Bryan, 2018, P.9) The concept of British values is not inherently wrong since it underlies the Equality Act of 2010 that protects minorities including the Muslim minority: 'Young people in Britain appear to be very supportive of FBVs, at least according to the data I analysed (CELS)…' (Janmaat, 2018, P.15); however, this thesis addresses British values through an Islamic metaethical lens, while seeking ontological and epistemological answers.

British values are not mere rhetorical statements. Values shape laws and constitutions; they guide state policies and are core to culture: 'In the centre is a system of social norms consisting of the value systems (the mental software) shared by major groups in the population…the societal norms have led to the development and pattern maintenance of institutions in society with particular structures and ways of functioning. These include the family, education systems, political systems, and legislation.' (Hofstede, 2001, P.11)

British values are embedded in all aspects of life in a modern United Kingdom and Muslims communities and institutions are required to observe them just as any group in the UK. British values impact the lives of Muslims, for example, Muslims school students are educated into British values: 'Schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs…Actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values…' (Department of Education, 2014, P.5)

The theme of Islam's incompatibility with modern liberal and secular values was catered to by many theories and thinkers, for example, Huntington and his 'The clash of Civilisations". Huntington's world portrays a future where wars are fought along the borders of moral values that separate civilisations, which may take a microscopic form within multicultural societies,

and Islam features on the fault lines of these values and civilisation-oriented wars. The daunting pessimism of Huntington's theory and the morbid forecast it harboured was already playing out in some parts of the world by the time he presented his vision of strife to an optimistic and gleeful world celebrating Fukuyama's 'The End of History' worldview which did not uphold the morbid forecast of Huntington (Foreign Policy, Spring 2025).

The ongoing perceived conflict between the moral traditions of modernism and liberal democracies and the moral traditions of Islam is capitalised on by the hard right amidst growing existential fears that are linked to the long-term implications of such a conflict in Britain and other Western nations, which are experiencing a demographic change. The scope of this thesis could offer insights into the metaethical foundations of this exploited conflict and whether there are bridges and reconciliations to escape a self-fulfilling prophecy of Huntington's values-based clashes.

1.6 Muslims in Western Nations Within the Context of This Research:

Islamic religiosity is not a phase, a problem, or a mere response to challenges. There are some writings that link expressions of Islam to poor socioeconomic factors or lack of education, while describing parting from Islam as a sign of endorsing liberalism, progressiveness, and modernity. However, Torrekens and Jacobs (2019) presented their analysis of EURISLAM Data sets, and that analysis argued against the hypothesis that: '…more open and discursive political opportunity structures lead to lower levels of Muslim religiosity.' (Torrekens & Jacobs, 2019, P. 162)

Muslim religiosity in Western modern liberal democracies is not a mere reaction to socioeconomic and political disparities; it is rather linked to community, upbringing, and countries of origin, especially for new immigrants: 'How religious people are is largely shaped by their upbringing and as mentioned above Muslims immigrants tend to come from countries where religious commitment is strong.' (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012, P.528)

Islamic metaethical narratives are usually passed down to Muslims through religious schools and institutions, preachers and imams, families and communities, and peers and Islamic media. Muslims may or may not be aware of these metaethical narratives, but they colour how Muslims see the moral world. Muslims practice their faith and uphold moral values by observing the teachings of their religion as communicated through Muslim educational and religious institutions. Many Muslims may not even be aware of which Islamic theological school they follow from a metaethical perspective, or which metaethical model their religious educational or juridical institution follows, yet many will still be influenced by the metaethical models and framework they were taught, directly or indirectly.

Islamic metaethics is a force that shapes the moral understanding of the world and reality, but, most importantly, it influences reactions to, and the level of engagement with, modern liberal moral propositions and situations. Muslim institutions will follow metaethical models that usually emanate from the school of theology they adhere to, which will then impact their jurisprudence and interpretations. This will trickle down to communities and individuals as they navigate their modern liberal and secular realities.

Islam is not a recent phenomenon in the United Kingdom, and Muslim citizens are an integral and stable feature of British society. Therefore, it is important to conduct this study to address challenges and explore themes that are of high importance to Muslims in the UK.

As a modern liberal democracy, the United Kingdom is not an ethnostate, and only reconciliatory bridges can help Britain maintain and benefit from its diverse fabric: 'To be a nation, it is not enough to meet an objective condition of common descent; you have to meet a subjective condition, a condition that lies in the hearts and minds of its members…how much ancestry and how much you have in common are different questions; and once you get to groups above a certain size, it's very unlikely that shared ancestry will guarantee shared character.' (Appiah, 2018, P.76-77) This thesis could be conducted with religious minorities in mind to also support them in modern liberal secular realities, where their religion is not a governing moral or legal force.

Diversity of nations and communities is a global phenomenon, and it is a hallmark of a globalised world where nations, communities, and cultures interact virtually and across borders, and it is also a reality that is celebrated from an Islamic perspective: 'Oh, people! We have created you from a male and a female, and we have made you into nations and tribes, so that you get to know each other. The noblest among you are the most pious; and Allah is the most knowing and the most aware.' (Quran, 49:13)

1.7 Research Questions:

1. What are the core metaethical propositions and narratives, or models, of the four key Islamic theological schools addressed in this thesis with regard to the two

fundamental criteria: the role of human reason as a discerner of moral values and the existence of objective moral truths?

2. Can Islamic metaethical models, and their theological schools, engage with specific British values?
3. Which aspects of these Islamic metaethics are the most suitable for supporting Muslim communities and institutions as they observe Islam in a modern liberal and democratic Britain, and their potential impact?
4. Is there a theoretical conceptualisation of the Muslim moral mind that would facilitate engagement with it, and would also better inform Muslims communities and institutions, as well as public policy and law makers, on the challenges and potential solutions and support required for Muslims in the United Kingdom?
5. Are there common metaethical grounds or narratives between Islamic metaethics and modern liberal and secular metaethics which underlie modern values of Britain?

1.8 Thesis Unique Contributions

This thesis has unique features and contributions:

1. The comparative approach covers four major theological schools and brings to the fore some of the most notable and credible Islamic institutions and scholars, including some scholars and schools that are understudied in Western Academia.

2. The thesis delivers a direct engagement between Islamic metaethics, which is more than just moral epistemologies, and British values as per an official list, which shows how Islamic metaethical models and narratives could impact the observance of British

values and allow for Muslims to contribute to the discourse of British values, which is rooted in modernity and its secular and liberal moral traditions.

3. The thesis identifies a dominant metaethical narrative within its scope, which indicates an underlying common moral epistemic theme despite the polemics that stalk the powerhouses of Islamic metaethics. This theme could prove effective in bridging gaps and mitigating tensions among Muslims in the modern, liberal, and secular British context. The thesis also provides scriptural evidence that support this dominant moral epistemic theme or model to capitalise and build on it. This could contribute to a unique metatheory or moral epistemology in the future for Muslims in the UK and other Western nations. However, if needed, such a future possibility must be authorised and shouldered by prominent, reliable and credible Muslim institutions and scholars.

4. The thesis provides a presentation that conceptualises the moral Muslim mind theoretically which could prove of significant importance for Muslim communities and institutions, and any pertinent bodies that wish to engage with this moral mind. This is a theoretical conceptualisation that could lead in the future to an actual field study to verify it or disprove it.

5. The thesis identifies metaethical common grounds that ease the tension between Islamic moral traditions and the moral traditions of a modern United Kingdom. This goes deeper than just rhetorical or ceremonial reconciliations.

6. This thesis could allow for educational and informational models to evolve for the betterment of the Muslim experiences in the United Kingdom and other Western nations.

1.9 Thesis Structure and Flow

Chapter I: The introduction positions the research and reveals its **aim, scope, and significance**. The chapter contains important **concepts, definitions, and themes** that will run throughout the study.

Chapter II: The literature review sheds light on the relevant literature and the studies that paved the way to this thesis as well as **the gap** that this thesis fills. Also, this chapter presents the primary works that were used in this study to support its core metaethical explorations and conclusions.

Chapter III: The methodology and the challenges of this research.

Chapter IV-VII: The comparative exploration of the metaethics of four major theological schools while relating them to the British values in different applications: individual liberty, rule of law, democracy, tolerance, and justice.

Chapter VIII: A dominant moral epistemological theme or narrative that has been detected in the sample of schools explored in the thesis and the importance of this finding as well as the proposition of the thesis and the evidence to support it.

Chapter IX: This chapter concludes the thesis by presenting a proposed theoretical conceptualisation of the Muslim moral mind; comparative ranking of Islamic metaethical models; as well as their engagement with fundamental British values (FBV).

Chapter X: Recommendations

Appendix 1: Academic Review of the Definitions of Values and their Impacts on Societies

Appendix 2: Ibn Hazem and the Zahriyyah School

Appendix 3: Ibn Miskawayh

Chapter II

Literature Review

Chapter Aims

This chapter aims to shed light on prior core works directly relevant to this thesis, thereby justifying the thesis and highlighting the gap it addresses.

To achieve its objectives, this thesis brings together Islamic metaethics and modern liberal and secular British values, which primarily stem from modern liberal and secular moral traditions. The aim of the literature review is to focus on works closely related to this research, while highlighting, for each reference, some of the similarities and differences between my thesis and these works, thereby shedding light on the gap this thesis addresses.

2.1 Works that Initiated the Research

This thesis is situated within Islamic theology and ethics to address contemporary questions concerning Muslims and moral values in modern Western liberal and secular realities. However, several works motivated the researcher to embark on this study, and some are highly important, despite belonging to different disciplines. These works focus on values, immigration, Islam, and social cohesion in the UK and other Western countries, but it is their arguments that initiated or justified this journey. This is the reason why this thesis could be classed as multidisciplinary, which comes with its own challenges.

In 2002, the Parekh report (The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain) was published. This seminal report contains themes that are foundational to this thesis. It seeks a pathway to cement social cohesion by acknowledging the reality of a diverse Britain of many communities with different backgrounds. It accurately challenges exclusionary narratives that portray Britain as an ethno-state with an identity set in stone. However, it also highlights several challenges and attempts

to address them to facilitate Britain's realisation of the full potential of its pluralistic reality as 'a community of communities' (Parekh, 2002). The concept of common values is mentioned in that report. This report serves as a prelude to this thesis, which seeks to answer epistemological and ontological questions about British values through an Islamic metaethical lens.

This report, together with the works of Inglehart and Welzel, Moaddel, and Hofstede on values and culture, paves the way for this thesis, situated within Islamic theology and ethics, to answer basic questions that have not been asked before, while taking British values into account.

Islamic moral traditions have been extensively studied and presented in numerous notable works; however, this thesis introduces a new topic: Islamic metaethics and the criteria required for constructive engagement with British values on the official list of fundamental British values. This study also examines the impact of Islamic metaethics on engagement with British values and how this could enhance Muslim observance of British values as a set of common values that hold the fabric of Britain as a 'community of communities' together.

To answer the questions of this comparative research, the journey required navigating several disciplines, schools, and scholars to find answers relevant to the research questions.

2.2 Core Works and A Gap in the Research

The following section of the literature review sheds light on some key relevant works to highlight the research gap that this thesis addresses:

The recent work of Raissa A. Von Doetinchem De Rande (2025): 'Politics of Islamic Ethics: Hierarchy and Human Nature in the Philosophical Tradition'. This very recent work is described as a book that addresses the concept of human "fitrah" in relation to contemporary ethics, with a focus on the Asharites and Mutazilites.

My thesis does not focus solely on the dichotomy between the Asharites and the Mutazilites; it also presents other schools and refers to Muslim philosophers who emerged from the pavilions of Aristotle and Neoplatonism, as well as to modern and postmodern Western philosophers and ethicists. What makes my thesis different is that it attempts to identify the best Islamic metaethical narratives and propositions for Muslims in a modern United Kingdom, while engaging directly with a specific set of British values to examine potential applications through which Islamic metaethics could help resolve challenges and enhance Muslim observance of and contribution to these values.

In 2021, Stephen Jones's book 'Islam and the Liberal State' attempts to provide a balanced overview that questions traditional claims portraying Muslims as a component of a modern United Kingdom that is isolated and alienated because of a religion that cannot fit the narratives of modern liberal secularism. In this important contribution, Jones advocates for a greater role for Islamic traditions in public deliberation, as this could hold the key to greater incorporation of British Muslims and to an overall democratic renewal in Britain. He also highlights the need

for these traditions to become better known. My thesis is a direct contribution to this important goal. This thesis shows how traditional Islamic metaethics can impact engagement with British values while also presenting some of the challenges.

In 2021, Ayman Shihadeh of SOAS published a journal paper titled: 'Psychology and Ethical Epistemology: An Ashari Debate with Mutazilite Ethical Realism'. This paper examines, through a psychological lens, two metaethical propositions from two major schools, advanced by notable and representative scholars.

My thesis acknowledges the impact of the semantics and moral terms of Islamic metaethics, which could affect the willingness of the moral agent, be it an individual, a community, or a scholar, to act on morality and moral values, rather than making morality purely revelational (based on Divine revelation). Exploring Islamic metaethics alongside British values can help identify the best metaethical models and narratives for Muslims in modern liberal and secular contexts and should also help identify what each of the four schools of theology can offer, metaethically, to enhance the Muslim experience in the United Kingdom.

In his book, 'Transcendent God, Rational World', Dr Harvey (2023) notes that Al-Maturidi drew on the concepts of Divine Kindness and Divine Grace to explain the agreement over transmitted reports and the consensus among jurists and scholars. This captures one aspect of metaethics that my thesis examines. My research does not just examine moral epistemologies, but also the factors that shape them and the metaethical propositions that give rise to them, for example, the impact of human reason being central to metaethical propositions in a world where Divine justice is a core value in a metaethical narrative, and how that could affect aspects of jurisprudence, to explore whether this would foster better engagement with the rule of law

as a modern liberal and secular value of the United Kingdom (or not). This is among the most distinctive contributions of my thesis for Muslims in a modern Western liberal and secular reality. This thesis is not designed for Muslims living in countries where Islamic Sharia is the governing reality.

In 2021, Almahjub published his article 'Islamic Jurisprudence as an Ethical discourse: An Inquiry into the Nature of Moral Reasoning in Islamic Legal Theory'. This article presents the different frameworks that guide jurisprudence and the contest between consequentialism and deontology. The article presents its investigation through several notable scholars, including Al-Ghazali, Al-Razi, and Rashid Reda.

This article investigates the ethical basis of jurisprudence, a topic that intersects with my thesis on a single theme. The article recognises the utilitarian aspects that feature in the Mutazilite school, but my thesis shows that, despite this, the Mutazilites, who would not accept a Platonic theory of the forms, have effectively and unintentionally catered to a theory of moral abstract meanings that transcend our contingent world, as it is rooted in their universal understanding of justice, for example, in line with Divine justice. The Mutazilites' rational moral reasoning is an engagement between the intellect and the Divine essence, not with the Divine attributes of the essence. The Mutazilites are the house of universal values when compared to the Asharites, but the Asharites are the home of tolerance when compared to the Mutazilites. This will feature in how Islamic metaethics engages with British values, making my thesis a unique contribution.

In 2018, Michele Mangini published his paper: 'Rationality and Ethics between Western and Islamic Tradition'. We have referred to this critical core work in Chapter I. My thesis aims

to address the same problem but at a deeper and larger scale, while aligning with the cultural option which Mangini presents as reconciliatory and on the metaethical level. Islamic metaethical models and narratives may contribute to efforts that aim to capitalise on Islamic traditions to secure reconciliation without erasing the foundations of the moral traditions of Islam and of secular and liberal modernity.

In 2017, Fawad Khaleel published his thesis: 'Epistemological Crisis in Ethical Governance and Constructing a New Islamic Episteme as an Ethical Theory: A Case of Institution Hisbah'. His thesis reflects on the institution of Hisbah, both historically and morally. Khaleel's thesis sheds light on the epistemological crisis underlying Islamic traditions, which leads to inconsistencies, and aims to present a new epistemology to address contemporary challenges from ethical perspectives rather than just legal ones. Whilst my research acknowledges a perceived moral epistemological crisis for Islam in a modern liberal democracy, it goes beyond mere acknowledgement. It explores Islamic metaethics to identify common ground and objectively identifies challenges and reconciliatory pathways, rather than calling for a whole new moral epistemology for Muslims and their institutions in a modern United Kingdom.

In 2017, Mariam Al-Attar published her article: 'Meta-Ethics: A Quest for an Epistemological Basis of Morality in Classical Islamic Thought'. This critical article engages with some of the themes in this thesis, but it does so in relation to the higher aims of Sharia (Maqasid Al-Shariah) and focuses on the Asharite and Mutazilite dichotomy. The article argues for rational moral reasoning in service of Maqasid Al-Sharia. Al-Attar's 2012 book on the topic of Divine Command theory, 'Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic

Thought', sheds light on this theory and its contentiousness while examining Mutazilite thought.

My thesis offers a comparative analysis of four schools of theology. It engages with each school's broader metaethics to identify the most suitable metaethical models and narratives for enhancing Muslim experiences at the individual, community, and institutional levels in Western nations, particularly the United Kingdom. It also brings Islamic metaethics to the forefront of the official set of British values to examine how these metaethics could enhance Muslim contributions to and observance of these values in a modern liberal and secular context.

Like Al-Attar's work, this research recognises the challenges posed by an Islamic Divine Command theory, especially in modern liberal and secular democracies. However, my thesis reveals what mitigates these problems and, for instance, presents a unique Asharite aspect that could enhance the Muslim experience of those who uphold this theory when engaging with British values.

In addition, my thesis expands the scope of analysis to include other understudied schools, for example, the Maturidis. Al-Azhar, which is the highest academic Sunni authority for many Muslims around the globe, is also presented through some of its most notable names, which is again a unique contribution of this thesis, especially as it shows how diverse and universal Islamic metaethics are.

Despite differences in some outcomes, Al-Attar's work supports this research's quest and justifies engaging with such complex issues in a single thesis, given the deep interconnectedness that may be missed when Islamic metaethics is underexplored, when

epistemology is confused with moral epistemology, or when metaethics is reduced to moral epistemology alone. Islamic metaethics requires revisiting familiar terrains, but the lens is different and the implications are new and critical.

In 2016, Saad Mohamed Ali Imam published his book 'The Mutazilite Philosophy of Morality and the Asharite Position on it'. In this extensive work, Imam delved deeply into the moral philosophy of both schools while paying moderate but crucial attention to metaethics: 'The cause of justice is a primary principle upon which the Mutazilites established their thought…This is how the principle of justice comes under moral metaphysics…' (Imam, 2016, p. 328-329). This notable Azhar PhD has provided crucial insights for this thesis. However, my thesis is contextualised towards Islamic metaethics, British values, and Muslims in the United Kingdom. This Arabic reference is worthy of full future translation into English.

In 2010, Aven Emon published his masterpiece 'Islamic Natural Law Theories', which establishes the presence of a natural law theory within the Mutazilite school, challenging the traditional notion that Islamic theories of law are rooted solely in Divine revelation. He also brings into light the Mutazilite-Asharite dichotomy. This book could be considered a foundational work in Islamic metaethics, as Emon draws attention to the impact of semantics and moral language on legal theory. For example, he sheds light on the impact of Al-Qaddi Abdel Jabbar's use of 'Lutf' (gentleness): "To develop his natural law theory further, Abdel Jabbar argued that human beings are invested with a kind of guidance that allows them to understand the beneficial nature of the rizq and the order that should arise once it is distributed. To do so, he introduced the concept of Lutf'' (Emon, 2012, p. 57).

My thesis bypasses the dichotomy between two schools, challenges the traditional notion that Divine Command Theory is inherently problematic, and highlights the challenges and the mitigations that led to a non-traditional conclusion regarding the Asharites. It also highlights how the Mutazilites may be the equivalent of modernists in the house of Islam, but they were not secularists by any measure. However, they are ranked highly among the schools that could support Muslims in a modern Western liberal secular reality with regard to the 'Rule of Law'.

In 2009, Sherman Jackson published 'Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering'. This book applies the Islamic metaethics of the four schools to the question of black suffering and slavery. It testifies to the validity of the approach of my thesis, which brings Islamic metaethics into the realm of British values to explore implications and applications that could support Muslims and their religious and educational institutions in a modern United Kingdom.

Dr Ramon Harvey's 'Whose Justice? When Maturidi meets MacIntyre' addresses the theme of two competing moral traditions: 'What is needed is a kind of metatheory that can account for the way that adherents of religious traditions can engage in reasonable public debate without compromising core commitments, such as to the revealed nature of their scripture or the binding natures of its divine law.' (Harvey, 2023, p. 50) By examining Islamic metaethics, my thesis seeks to bridge two moral traditions rather than deconstructing one for the benefit of the other: a modern liberal and secular tradition and a tradition that is rooted and governed by Islamic texts: the Quran, the Sunnah, and theological texts.

Modernity and its morals are often portrayed through emancipatory narratives that have set humanity free from the shackles of revealed religion and theological states: 'The history of modernity, insofar as it has been a series of social and political liberations and emancipations

from arbitrary and oppressive rule is indeed in key respects a history of genuine and admirable progress.' (Macintyre, 2016, p.123)

Modern moral traditions are usually framed as the fruit of an intellectual project that celebrates human reason and has cut ties with the traditional forces that used to shackle it: 'The project of modernity formulated in the 18th century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic.' (Habermas, 1981, p. 9)

Such narratives, which celebrate enlightened modernity, have been challenged by several thinkers, including one of the most notable and controversial authorities on the matter, who is understudied in Western academia: the late Dr Abdel Wahab Al-Missiri: 'This rational materialism has birthed what is labelled as 'an enlightened movement' which claims that humans can achieve a degree of knowledge that illuminates everything for them or at least most things and phenomena…so that mankind get to become god or assume the position of god who is no longer needed…' (Al-Missiri, 2020, p. 17)

The perceived contest between Islam and modernity has a historical background, and the polemics still stalk discussions in our present time, feeding the narrative of Islam's incompatibility with British values. Exploring Islamic metaethics, with modern liberal and secular traditions in the background, could help identify where metaethical tensions lie and could lead to easing these tensions, for example, by identifying metaethical common ground rather than practical common ground only.

2.3 Review of the Primary Islamic Sources: Theology and Ethics

This section sheds light on some of the primary sources, but it is not exhaustive of all the primary sources that informed this thesis. It is important to note that this list contains rare books.

2.2.a The Mutazilites

'Al-Moghni', or 'The Sufficient Treatise on the Doctrines of Divine Unity and Justice', for the Al-Qadi Abdel Jabbar, the renowned Shaffi Mutazilite scholar, who was an Asharite at one point, presents his opinions. This primary source, which was subjected to burning and systemic attempts of elimination, is still missing several of its parts to this day. Yet, this source, with its big and rich volumes, provided insight into the moral order of the Mutazilites.

Another Mutazilite reference for the same notable scholar was 'The Five Fundamental Principles' of Qadi Abdel Jabbar. There is a debate over whether this source is Al-Qadi's, but the debate tilts towards ascribing it to Al-Qadi. One of the most notable sources on this book, which is understudied in Western Academia, is Dr Othman Kareem's edition of that book and it was used for the purposes of this thesis.

For Al-Qadi, this thesis engaged with his rare book: Al-Majmoo Fi Al-Moheet Bi Al-Takleef, or 'The Compendium on the Comprehensive Treatise of Obligation'. This book is difficult to find, and two rare editions were secured, but only one was used (editor: Father Jean Houben, S. J.). This book is attributed to Al-Qadi, but it was compiled by his notable student, Imam Bin Matuyah Al-Naysaburi.

Other Mutazilite sources consulted to explore the school include: a Mutazilite jurisprudence book by Abu Al-Hussein Al-Basry: 'The Authoritative Treatise on the Foundations of Jurisprudence'; the Quran interpretation of Imam Abi Ali Al-Jiba'i; and Imam Al-Zamakhshary's 'The Revealer'.

2.2.b The Asharites:

'Al-Lomaa' for Abu Al-Hassan Al-Ashari was a source that helped shed light, whereas 'Al-Inabah' was rejected by the researcher as a partial forgery, a view later confirmed by numerous debates over the book's perplexities. Other opinions considered this book indicative of a brief transitional phase the Imam went through. Other reliable sources included: 'The Articles of Abi Al-Hassan Al-Ashari' by the prominent scholar Bin Foraq.

'The Revival of the Sciences of Religion' for Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali was sourced and used to shed light on Al-Ghazali's opinion along with other books, for example, 'The Alchemy of Happiness'; 'The Niche of Lights and the Filter of Secrets'; 'The Forty Fundamental Rules of Religion'; 'The Moderation in Belief, and 'The Jerusalem Epistle'. Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali went through a journey, and these books do capture his progress and metaethics.

2.2.c The Athari school:

Ibn Taymiyyah and his notable student Ibn Al-Qayyim were also carefully researched. For Ibn Taymiyyah, 'Majmou Al-Fatwah'; 'The Definitive path between The Truth and Falsehood'; and 'The Straight Path' were among the key resources consulted for opinions. His book 'The Legitimate Policy for Reforming the Ruled and the Ruler' was also utilised.

For Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, 'The Healer of the Unwell: On Fate, Destiny, Wisdom, and Causes' provided deep insights, and a relevant English translation was utilised: Tallal M. Zein's 'Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya: On Divine Wisdom and the Problem of Evil'. 'The Key to Abode of Happiness' was also among the primary sources for Ibn Qayyim's opinions.

2.2.d The Maturidis

'The Book of Monotheism' by the founder of the school, Imam Abi Mansour Al-Maturidi, was relied on to understand and present his perspectives. Other Maturidi scholars were also featured, along with their books: Al-Sabouni's two seminal theological works, 'The Introduction to The Foundations of Religion' and 'The Sufficient for Guidance'; Al-Bayydi's 'Signposts to the Aim: from the Sayings of the Imam'; and Abu Moeen Al-Nasafi's 'Evidential Insights'. It is important to note that the Samarqand chapter of the Maturidis dominates the Maturidis plateau within the scope of this thesis.

2.3 The Philosophical Pavilions of the House of Islam:

For Avicenna, Arabic Metaphysics was used to understand the foundations of certain theological debates examined within the folds of this thesis. For the notable moralist Ibn Miskawayah, 'Eudaimonia', a very rare and highly understudied book, and 'The Refinement of Manners and the Cleansing of Traits' were also obtained and used.

For Maimonides, an authoritative Arabic edition of the 'Guide of the Perplexed' was obtained. This work was valuable for understanding Islamic theological debates, given his notable analysis and engagement with them. For Averroes (Ibn Rushd), the focus was on 'The

Decisive Treatise' and 'The Exposition of the Methods of Proof Concerning the Doctrines of Religions' among other books as primary resources to understand and present a clear picture in this study.

2.3.a 18th-21st Century Thinkers and Scholars include:

Imam Mohamed Abduh's 'A Treatise on the Oneness of God' was the primary focus. The Imam and notable reformer is a critical figure in the halls of moral reasoning, and while he is usually classed as a neo-Mutazilite by some, as observed by his thesis, further research is required due to a historical finding presented in this thesis (chapter VI) that could indicate Maturidi influence on the Imam.

For Sayed Qutub, his books: 'In the Shades of the Quran', 'Milestones', 'Towards A Muslim Society', 'This Religion', and 'Social Justice in Islam' were used to present his opinions. Some of these books are difficult to find because they are almost out of print for various reasons. This led to securing very old and rare editions. For the iconic Egyptian Islamic philosopher, Dr Mostafah Mahmoud, the study engaged with 'The Road to Hell' and 'Some of the Secrets of the Quran'.

For the Egyptian Imam Mohamed Al-Gazaly of Al-Azhar University, the research presents: 'Towards a Thematic Analysis of the Quran', 'The Five Main Themes of the Quran', and the controversial 'The Prophetic Sunnah: between the Jurists and the scholars of Hadith'. Other primary works by notable figures were also secured and presented, including those of Imam Mohamed Metwalli Al-Sharawi. The section on Al-Azhar reveals that, despite its Asharite inclinations and loyalties, diversity of opinion flourished within the ranks of Al-Azhar scholars.

This study employed precision to focus on and present the opinions of a reasonable number of scholars, philosophers, and theologians in relation to the study's main research questions. Diversity of opinions and the contest of ideas are intended to shed light on the rich and diverse propositions and narratives of Islamic metaethics. Also, walking in the shades of notable names gives the study credibility and weight when sharing its results with the wider community for integration purposes.

This research also drew on the works of notable Western thinkers and scholars to pave the way for common ground and reconciliation, for example, the works of John Stuart Mill, Kant, Nietzsche, Sartre, De Beauvoir, Foucault and Derrida, alongside others.

Chapter III

Methodology

'We read with deep interest the works of individual genius, and trace in them the life and character of the men on whom it has been bestowed…in language we have the history not only of individuals but of nations; not only of nations but of mankind.' (Farrar, 2013, P.3)

Chapter Aims

This chapter presents the methodology used to achieve the objectives of a comparative study in theology and ethics that addresses contemporary challenges. This is an interpretivist study that employs textual analysis and contextual hermeneutics.

3.1 Field of Research

Muslims, who uphold Islam as central to their identity, tend to turn to reliable and notable Muslim scholars and thinkers, as well as Islamic sources of knowledge, to develop their understanding of life and moral values, and they usually strive to raise their children in line with those values and beliefs. Islamic metaethics is taught indirectly from an early age, and over time it becomes embedded in the minds of Muslims, shaping their moral outlooks and perceptions at both the individual and community levels, while also impacting Islamic institutions of religion and education. Hence, not only are the actual schools pertinent, but the role of recognisable and respected scholars is equally important for Muslims.

The legitimate and natural desire of Muslims to observe their religion, which is guaranteed in modern liberal and emancipative democracies, has been respected and observed in this research, which solicited, interpreted, and presented the opinions of notable Islamic schools of theology and a conglomerate of representative scholars, selected through purposive sampling on a comparative basis, to bring to light the intricate and rich world of Islamic theology, philosophy, and morality and to address the research questions and achieve the targets of this research.

To understand Islamic metaethics and the texts that reveal them, it is important to explore and shed light on the contexts of these texts and the authors who wrote them. Islamic

metaethical models and narratives are relevant today, but they carry the story of their inception and of what may have influenced the schools and the scholars when they were establishing their metaethical models and propositions, which still influence Muslims today in ways that this study is exploring theoretically.

Contextual and textual analysis is required in metaethical studies, especially when metaethical models and propositions need to be upheld, developed, or even replicated. This will also reveal which metaethical narratives are most relevant to Muslims in the United Kingdom and to its values.

Understanding the impact of semantics and moral language, and their context, is important in the realm of metaethics. Metaethics examines what lies beneath practical manifestations, such as literal interpretations of scriptures and a preference for traditional consensus over innovative individual reasoning, to understand the overt metaethical dynamics that impact such practical manifestations.

There are four core chapters that explore Islamic metaethics as they engage with modern British values, shedding light on how this could help Muslims address some challenges and conflicts that may arise as they observe their faith in modern liberal and secular realities.

3.2 The Structure of the Core Chapters (IV-VII) and the Framework of Analysis:

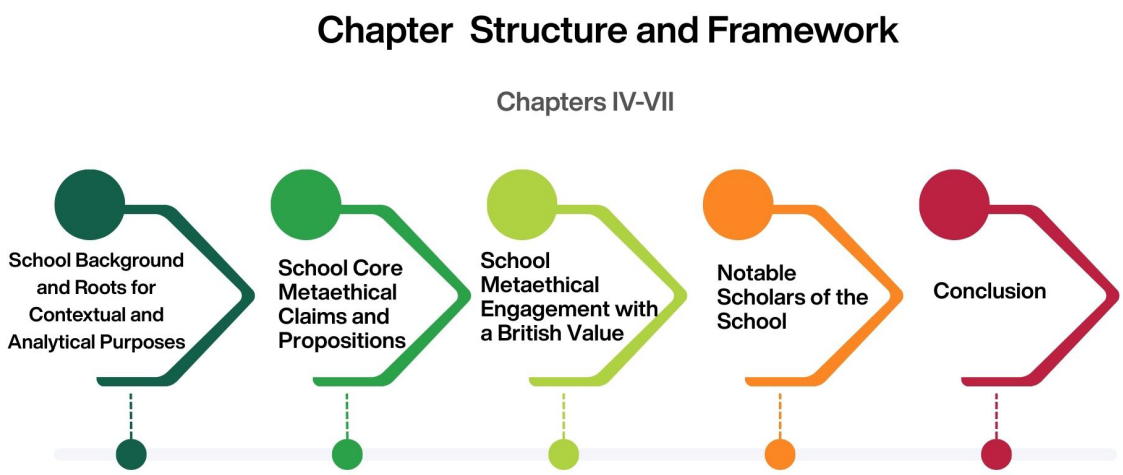


Figure 1: Chapter Structure and Framework

Figure 1 outlines the structure and analytical framework of the core chapters, which explore and present the Islamic metaethics of four schools as they engage with British values, and shed light on how this can help Muslims address the conflicts and challenges that may arise as they strive to balance the practice of their faith with the observance of modern liberal and secular British values. The analysis of the core metaethical claims and propositions will be based on each school's position about the two fundamental criteria for constructive engagement with British values (the role of human reason as a discerner of moral values or epistemic moral agency and the existence of objective moral truths). Furthermore, the sections on notable scholars for each school will highlight their positions in relation to the two basic criteria.

In Chapter I, the thesis established its alignment with conciliatory literature that aims to mediate and build bridges, which played a role in selecting which British value to engage with

for each school. Also, the aim is to explore more than one metaethical model and more than one theological school:

1. The Mutazilites: Rule of Law
2. The Asharites: Tolerance
3. The Maturidis: Democracy and Individual Liberty
4. The Atharis: Justice

The first two sections of each chapter, as indicated in Figure 1, aim to shed light on the school's contextual background. This goes beyond historical narration, as the aim is to understand what could have influenced the schools and the scholars, for example, the centrality of human reason and justice for the Mutazilites, or the lack of centralising human reason within the realm of the Asharites, and why tolerance, as a value, flourishes in their realm.

3.3 Paradigm of Knowledge and Methodology

3.3.a Interpretivism and Translation:

Interpretivism is the paradigm of knowledge that underpins this qualitative study. This research is rooted in the world of interpreting and analysing religious texts, where the interpreter matters. The focus is on the schools and the scholars as interpreters of Divine and Prophetic texts.

Divine texts and human texts are open to interpretations, and that is even evident in how the examined Islamic schools of theology operate, and it is certainly evident in this thesis.

‘Interpretation, we will say, is the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning.’ (Ricoeur, Translated by McLaughlin, K., 2007, P.13)

However, Islam is a religion of authority, credibility, and institutionalised paths to knowledge, which makes the validity and reliability of sources of knowledge very important. This has been the underlying dynamic of the purposive sampling approach adopted to select the schools and the scholars that will be relied on to answer the questions of this thesis.

On the other hand, it is important to distinguish between interpretation and translation. While translation requires a degree of interpretation, it is more disciplined, as it demands adherence to the original text while accounting for the source language (Arabic) and the target language (English). Interpretation is not confined to the letter of the text, as it allows the interpreter to introduce their own analysis and understanding, expanding beyond the literal text. This is nowhere more obvious than in the case of the Quran. There is a difference between a translation of the Quran and an interpretation of the Quran.

As the researcher began working with highly relevant medieval Arabic primary sources, she faced two tasks: translation and interpretation. She holds a BA in the English Language from a notable Egyptian university, regionally renowned for translation. This prompted her to attend courses and programmes with reliable Azhar scholars and other well-grounded UK-based academics specialising in Islamic theology, Hadith, jurisprudence and its foundations, and Quran interpretation, to achieve a technical level of understanding that would enable her to tackle this research confidently in terms of translation and interpretation.

3.3.b Contextual Hermeneutics

Contextual hermeneutics features in the works of Anver M. Emon (Islamic Natural Law Theories, 2012), Sherman Jackson (Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering, 2009), Jonathan Brown (Misquoting Muhammad, 2014), and Amina Wadud and Mariam Al-Attar. Contextual hermeneutics is present when the context of authors and interpreters matters and could have affected their propositions and claims.

This study engages in textual analysis with contextual hermeneutics in mind. This blend enables the researcher to explore and interpret the primary sources that emerged in different eras and contexts, while drawing the lines between Divine and Sunnah texts and their interpreters, who were influenced by the culture, politics, values, and other events of their times.

Contextual hermeneutics means paying attention to the context in which Islamic metaethics emerged, as it could shed light on the contextual forces that may have shaped Islamic metaethics, its propositions and semantics, and may have influenced the Islamic school of theology and its scholars when declaring their metaethical propositions, which still impact Muslims and how their institutions operate today. Islamic metaethics impacts jurisprudence, among other things, as shown in this thesis. This is how critical they are.

Anyone reading and interpreting human works or Divine scriptures and texts will be subject to the forces and limitations of their context. This means that their understanding, interpretation, and application of the Quran and Sunnah, for example, are coloured by several basic elements that they inherently possess and experience simply because they are human

readers and interpreters: time, context, place, culture, values, politics, communal utilitarian needs, psychological factors, economic factors, gender factors, etc. Exploring metaethics demands awareness of contextual hermeneutics.

For example, human reason and justice were central to the Mutazilites, and, along with their five primary foundations, they coloured their interpretations of the Quran and shaped their jurisprudence. In many ways, their metaethics dictated their sources of legislation and their relationship with revelation. The implications and applications in their case were significant, and those who uphold neo-Mutazilite metaethics seem to fall in line with the Mutazilites, even if they claim to belong to other schools. Contextual hermeneutics allows for exploring the contexts that shaped Mutazilite metaethics, for example, political and intellectual contexts, and how these may have impacted Islamic metaethical propositions and semantics that shape the moral Muslim minds today.

While Islam, as a religion, has constants and variables, the absence of understanding of its moral worldview and propositions renders any analysis in fields seeking metaethical reconciliations and solutions incomplete: ‘The parts of Shariah that are based on clear injunctions of the Quran may be more difficult to change, but a great deal of the Quran is open to interpretation…’ (Kamali, 2017, p. 24)

Time, place, and context are fundamental to Islamic metaethics, whereas basic creed tends to be treated as a constant. Ramadan (2004) highlights this, but it is important to read the term Sharia in his analysis as jurisprudence rather than morality.

'…it is a question of rereading the scriptural sources themselves with a new eye. In doing this, it is essential to remember that the corpus of the Sharia is a human construction, and some aspects of it may evolve just as human thought evolves…this renewal is not a modification of the sources but a transformation of the mind and eyes that read them, which are indeed naturally influenced by the new social, political, and scientific environment in which they live. A new context changes the horizon of the text, renews it, and sometimes gives it an original purport, providing responses never before imagined.' (Ramadan, 2004, P.37-38)

To explore Islamic metaethics, which are not only moral epistemologies, it is imperative to revisit familiar trains, but with a different lens, as the engagement with British values, as mentioned in official documents, is central to the thesis.

3.3.c The Primary Theoretical Lens for Exploring and Classifying Islamic Metaethics

This research will engage in analysing and interpreting the works of some thinkers and scholars who are no longer around to refute how this study is dealing with their intellectual gems, while relying on the **Euthyphro dilemma** to examine the metaethical positions and narratives of every Islamic school when replying to this dilemma which contribute to moral epistemologies among other things.

The Euthyphro dilemma is the lens through which we observe Islamic metaethics simply because it provided a systematic approach through a question that Socrates posed in a famous dialogue with Euthyphro, and which was narrated by Plato as a question:

‘Socrates is inquiring about the nature of piety or goodness, whether it follows the gods’ arbitrary will, or whether there is an intrinsic value in things and actions that makes them good and evil in themselves, and consequently the reason for the gods’ love or hate.’ (Alattar, 2012, P.4)

Allowing each of the four Islamic theology schools to provide its answer to this Euthyphro question through primary resources and representative scholars allows us to determine and qualify them epistemologically and ontologically in relation to two criteria, which will in turn help identify the common terrains between Islamic metaethics and moral traditions and the moral traditions of modern liberal and secular values (British Values).

Relying on the Euthyphro dilemma will streamline the process of analysing the schools and their notable representatives, with modern liberal and secular British values as a recurring theme. This requires demonstration of awareness of each school’s and every scholar’s time, place, and context, while shedding light on why it matters to do so, and this has been observed.

3.3.d The Criteria for the purposive selection of the schools and the scholars, philosophers, and thinkers, especially the Muslims, are:

1. Notable Islamic schools of theology and renowned names recognised among Muslims. The opinions and contributions of these schools, scholars, and thinkers lend credibility to the study and enhance its reliability in the eyes of Muslims who may benefit from it.

2. The selected notable Islamic schools of theology are Sunni, but Islamic metaethics transcends the boundaries of Muslim sects. As shown in this study, Islamic metaethics

transcends the boundaries of sects, religions, and time due to the universality embedded in it. However, it must be noted that the Mutazilites and their traditions are highly supported by the Shia. However, further research is required.

3. While exploring the predominant position of every school examined in relation to the questions of this thesis is central, it is the scholars, and their relevant works, that support the process of conceptualising the engagement with British values.

4. Notable Western names of significance and repute who offer this study the chance to look for common grounds and resolve theoretical tensions between Islamic metaethics and the moral traditions of modernity, which underlie it and are relevant to the modern liberal and secular values of the UK.

3.4 Strengths of Contextual Hermeneutics

'…hermeneutics involves the general problem of comprehension. And, moreover, no noteworthy interpretation has been formulated which does not borrow from the modes of comprehension available to a given epoch: myth, allegory, metaphor, analogy, etc…' (Ricoeur, translated by McLaughlin, K., 2007, P.4)

3.4.a. Strengths

1. The major sources for this study are drawn from pre-medieval, medieval, modern, and postmodern philosophers, thinkers, and scholars, most of whom are no longer alive to examine and refute what this research deduces from their works. The researcher is engaged in the challenging task of comprehending, analysing,

interpreting, and presenting the opinions of mostly absent authors. Contextual Hermeneutics facilitates this process by guiding the researcher in terms of how to proceed; it gives the researcher grounds to stand on and a reference to return to, providing the platform that enables the interpretation of texts, whether Divine or human.

2. Contextual Hermeneutics acknowledges that interpretations have limitations, for example, conflicts of interpretation over the same text. Therefore, it provides the researcher with the grounds upon which the study could be established, since this may be one of the main challenges ahead, but it is a surmountable obstacle. Different interpretations, which sometimes conflict, are the reason we have different schools of theology in the first place.

3. Contextual Hermeneutics, as an established methodology, allows the researcher to comfortably revisit her work in the future if any new insights and interpretations come to her knowledge. Hermeneutics reveals that nothing is cast in stone.

3.4.b. Limitations and Challenges

'…a problem of interpretation, it is because every reading of a text always takes place within a community, a tradition, or a living current of thought, all of which display presuppositions and exigencies - regardless of how closely a reading may be tied to the quill…the very work of interpretation reveals a profound intention, that of overcoming distance and cultural differences and of matching the reader to a text which has become foreign, thereby incorporating its meaning into the present comprehension a man is able to have of himself.' (Ricoeur, translated by McLaughlin, K., 2007, P.3-4)

1. When reading a text, one may actively and subconsciously superimpose their culture, context, experiences, values, struggles, and so forth, onto the text. The process of comprehending, analysing, and interpreting to deduce information does not only reflect the original text but rather the active reader, who may immediately, consciously or unconsciously, engage in interpreting a text that may be the only testament to an era that faded. This relates to the very schools of theology and the scholars presented. This is a core principle to be aware of when engaging with metaethics.

2. Interpreting the interpreter: It is expected that the researcher will interpret, rather than translate, the works of notable figures in relation to the research questions. This means that another layer of values, perceptions, experiences, culture, place, and time will be added, and this time these variables will emanate from the researcher herself and her own presuppositions. However, the researcher will engage in constant reflexivity to maintain an acceptable level of objectivity.

3. It is important to note that the notable names feeding into this study (pre-medieval, medieval, modern and postmodern) have produced numerous books and writings. While the researcher aimed to obtain their opinions, it has been noted that mindsets and opinions could change as people mature in age and experience. Also, it has been noted that several of these notable names held primary and secondary opinions that revealed conflicting opinions that never matured or were resolved. Since the scope and the time dedicated for this research could never encompass the daunting task of reading every single piece of work for every single name to trace changes and conflicts, there should be room for opinions that may not have been captured in this study.

4. Translating from source languages, such as Arabic, into the target language (English) poses challenges. Ensuring that English translations from other languages, such as German, are of high quality is another challenge.

Awareness is key, and acknowledging such shortcomings, while frustrating, is inspiring. It is a driving force to read further, research, and question in the hope of pursuing the truth, no matter how elusive or relative it may seem. Doubt is a powerful force if managed effectively.

3.5 Attempts to Encounter the Limitations

It is important to note that the above limitations and challenges are inherent in the art and science of comprehension and interpretation, and while one aims to reduce them, the researcher acknowledges that they cannot be eliminated.

To reduce the impact of the limitations and to achieve the most accurate comprehension and interpretation possible, given all the complexities considered, the researcher will:

1. Resort to primary sources where possible to allow direct examination of texts and opinions. The primary sources are the Arabic works of scholars, philosophers, and thinkers who provide answers pertinent to this research from religious and/or philosophical perspectives.

2. For comparative purposes, resort to primary Western sources, which may include, for example, ‘On Liberty’ by John Stuart Mill and ‘Beyond Good and Evil’ by Nietzsche.

3. Resort to notable translations, and this is an area where the researcher will employ her own technically validated abilities to select refined translations that testify to the power of the translator.

4. Keep opinions that challenge the researcher's interpretations in mind to maintain a constant state of reflection and revision, but the final presentation of Islamic metaethics will reflect the school's general opinion. This is constructive rather than deconstructive research.

5. The focus is on establishing the generic metaethical propositions of Islamic theological schools while presenting the opinions of key representative scholars, who generally align with their schools' generic positions.

6. Focus is on key works and notable names, whose significance can be easily verified through simple internet research for those unfamiliar with them. However, there is a dedicated effort to introduce some new or under-researched names to the Western field of research, which adds to the impact of this thesis.

Chapter IV

The Mutazilites' Metaethics

&

The Modern British Value: Rule of Law

Implications and Applications

'What proves this is that we know that injustice is evil, and it is evil because it is unjust; hence once we know it is unjust, we know it is evil…injustice is deemed evil because it so: it is evil…if they believe that the cause of evil being so is that we are created subjects of God, then our position with injustice and lying, and other evils, should be like our position with justice and fairness; therefore justice could be evil…' (Qadi Abdel Jabbar, 1996, P.310-312)

Chapter Aims

This chapter presents the Mutazilites' predominant metaethical perspectives in relation to the two criteria, as well as those of Neo-Mutazilite scholars, to explore the potential impact of Mutazilite metaethics on contemporary Muslim observance of the modern British value of the Rule of Law. This will then be followed by a presentation of the relative metaethical thought of the Shafi judge Abu al-Hassan Abdel Jabbar (Al-Qadi), and then of the metaethics of scholars influenced by the Mutazilites.

IV.1 Background: Contextual Hermeneutics and Textual Analysis

The Mutazilites were a theological powerhouse that flourished during the Abbasid rule of Al-Ma'moun (The Baghdad Chapter of the Mutazilites). The name of this second-Hijri-century (8th century CE) school of theology was intended to be stigmatising, as it sought to label the movement with a subtle yet notorious accusation in Islam: abandoning the consensus of scholarly bodies and the ummah (nation). The most likely account of the Mutazilites' origins is that their founder, Wasil Ibn Atta', abandoned the circle of his teacher, Al-Hassan Al-Basry, a notable student of the companions (Tabie), over the status of those who commit major sins, which had juristic and eschatological implications. This became one of the most important differentiators between the Mutazilites and other schools. The Mutazilites believed that the committer of major sins is neither classed as a believer nor as a disbeliever: an intermediate status.

As we examine the Mutazilites' metaethical thought and the compatibility of their metaethical narratives and propositions as a potential framework to influence and guide Muslims and their institutions in a modern, secular, and liberal Britain, it is important to clarify

that the term Mutazilite, when used as a predicate, may be highly contentious given the historical trials and polemics. This study is not meant to recommend the Mutazilites as the school of choice, but rather to examine their metaethics, which may transcend the boundaries of their school.

While there are two chapters of the Mutazilite school (Basra and Baghdad), we focus on the Baghdad chapter, as it is the predominant representative of the school in metaethics for political and theological reasons; however, we do touch on Al-Jahiz (775-868 CE) and Al-Qadi Abdel Jabbar (969-1025 CE), as well as, the Mutazilite jurist, Abu Al-Hussein Mohammed Bin Ali Al-Tayyeb, who were all Basran Mutazilites.

We can never understand Mutazilite metaethics without exploring their intellectual milieu to decipher their political, moral, and intellectual narratives and environment. Context matters, as it sheds light on the underlying factors and forces that shaped and propelled the Mutazilites' worldview, including their metaethics, which had a vast impact even on their jurisprudence. This will become clear when we examine Mutazilite metaethics in relation to the British 'Rule of Law' and how that could enhance the performance of Sharia councils in the UK, for example.

Some scholars describe the Mutazilites as an offshoot of a stream of thought influenced by three major companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): Umar Ibn Al-Khatab, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, and Abdullah Ibn Massoud. This is revealed in Dr Alhwany's foreword to Dr Othman's notable edition of Al-Qadi's 'Explanation of The Five Foundations': 'It leads to an opinion that was stated in the beginning of the book that identifies Ali Ibn Abi Talib as the root of Mutazilism since he was among the first to look into Kalam (theological) specifics, followed by his son Mohamed Ibn Al-Hanafiyyah, then by his son, Abu Hashem Mohamed Ibn Al-

Hanafiyyah, from whom Wasil Ibn Ataa' obtained knowledge.' (Al-Ahwany's introduction, Othman, 1988, P.7)

Upon further investigation, Al-Balkhi confirmed that Mutazilism originated in the intellectual halls of Ali ibn Talib: 'Wasil Ibn Atta' was from the people of Madinah. He was brought up by Mohamed (Bin Al-Hanafiah), the son of Ali Ibn Abi Talib… It was narrated that when asked about the knowledge of Mohamed (Ibn Al-Hanafiah), a predecessor (Salaf) said that it was to be traced in Wasil (Ibn Atta').' (Al-Balkhi, 2008, p. 64)

This school was at the forefront of the broader Islamic scholastic theology movement, which engaged with Greek philosophy to address challenges posed by Hellenistic ideas and to articulate counterarguments rooted in the Islamic paradigm. The Mutazilites also engaged in debates with their Christian and Jewish counterparts. Some of the opinions upheld by this school, regardless of the geographical chapter, were shaped by the intellectual contests that accompanied the expansion of Muslim rule into the wider region, especially since locals, who carried diverse intellectual and theological heritages, were often given prominent political and societal roles: 'The mere existence of the theologian, John of Damascus, and his likes, among Muslims was enough to have an impact, especially that the matter exceeded just coexistence as Muslims and Christians engaged in prolonged and heated debates…The Mutazilites examined the theological propositions that were stirred by Christians, Jews, and Persians, which led them to believe that some of these propositions posed a danger to Islam…' (Qasha, 2010, P.37)

The rise of the more dominant Chapter of this school, the Baghdad Chapter, was due to several ideological and political reasons. One of the reasons was the rise to power of Al-

Ma'moun, son of Haroon Al-Rashid, whose mother was a Persian female slave called Marajel (Ibn Khathir, 2010, p. 294). She might have died while delivering Al-Ma'moun, but his lineage defined his life and battles.

Al-Ma'moon came to power after a civil war that culminated in the beheading of his own brother, Al-A'meen, who had risen to power in a sudden turn of events (Ibn Khathir, 2010, p. 295). Haroon Al-Rashid had designated Al-Ma'moon as his successor, but he was secretly persuaded otherwise because of Al-A'meen's pure Arabic and Hashemite lineage, which made him a more suitable successor to Haroon Al-Rashid. Al-A'meen's reign began to unravel when he broke his covenant with his brothers, Al-Ma'moon and Al-Qassem. Al-A'meen wanted his son to succeed him, which led to the unfortunate events that followed and ultimately consumed his short-lived reign.

The Persian roots of Al-Ma'moon, together with his appointment as governor of Khorasan and Al-Rai, were the product of careful choices aimed at capitalising on his background. There are indications that Al-Ma'moon may have held sympathetic views towards Shia perspectives, and that may have played a role in the rise of the Baghdad Chapter of Mutazilites, who differed from their Basra counterparts in one major respect: their position on Imam Ali: 'It seems that the Shia grip on Baghdad, which has strengthened from the very first days of Al-Ma'moun's reign…' (Qasha, 2010)

The Mutazilites live in a world of objective moral truths, regarding the human intellect as an epistemological source of knowledge about these universal truths and as a highly empowered navigator of the Divine scriptures. That metaethical model, which flourished in Baghdad, was forged at the altar of what they believed to be an Umayyad dystopia that sowed

the seed of hard determinism to justify its transgressions: 'The Mutazilite thought on justice and freedom emerged, and matured, in the shades of events that preceded the crystallisation of the Mutazilite school as an independent brand, such as, the political, social, and intellectual struggle against the Umayyad state, which was conservative intellectually, and was established on monarchic rule, and was marred by racist ideas that plagued many of its positions and policies toward the Arabized elements that were traced to non-Arab roots. The (early) Mutazilite thought played a pivotal role in the ousting of the Umayyads, and the rise of the Abbasids…' (Immarah, 2012, P.70)

The corruption and tyranny associated with some elements and figures of the Umayyad dynasty - at a time when tales of hard determinism (Jabriyyah) were prevalent to curb resistance to the Umayyads - weighed heavily on the mind of one of its most notable and highly principled Caliphs, Umar Ibn Abdel Aziz, and shaped his reform agenda. These conditions also influenced the inception of the Mutazilites' metaethical narratives that underpinned their ethics: from epistemic moral agency to the view that man is the creator of deeds, and from justice as the central moral value to the view that God is not the creator of moral evils.

Research indicates that values sometimes emerge from voids shaped by deficits and absences in certain material or non-material needs. The lack of justice and the disempowerment of man, to the point of rendering him useless in a story meant to be his own, catalysed the rise of a school that yearned for justice, a central theme that shaped many of the Mutazilites' ideas and ideals, as well as unequivocal human autonomy in the realm of human deeds. It was a school that yearned for free human will and the epistemic agency of human reason; therefore, it placed the human intellect on a par with the scriptures in terms of legislation, while observing the fundamentals and maintaining an unceasing ability to transcend conflicts through

allegorical interpretations rather than literal ones. Hence, the Mutazilites' metaethical narratives that promote a heightened sense of epistemic moral agency and the pursuit of justice qualify them to engage with 'Rule of Law' as a British value.

IV.2 The Mutazilite Metaethics: Roots and Evolutions

The Mutazilite position on the Quran, which was strengthened through exposure to Christian and Jewish theology and the ensuing debates, is fundamental to grasping their metaethics and their role as moral agents. The view that the revealed Quran is the expression of (Asharite) or a signifier of (Maturidi) the eternal attribute of speech, which links the written book directly to an attribute of essence (the attribute of speech), is counterintuitive to the Mutazilites' theological and metaethical perspectives. This contentious argument was not just political. It was foundational and metaethical.

The Mutazilites rejected the idea that the Quran is linked to an eternal attribute of Allah; they designated it as a contingent creation of God. God creates His words and messages only to be imparted through other beings, for example, through the fire in the scene where the Divine addressed Moses for the first time: 'When he (Moses) approached it (the fire), a voice called upon him and said: blessed what resides in the fire and what is around it; and exalted is Allah, the Lord of the worlds' (Quran, 27:8). This was among the Mutazilites' key arguments that separated them from almost all other Sunni schools of theology.

According to the Mutazilites, the words God conveyed to Moses at their first point of contact were neither spoken by God nor linked to an attribute of essence. The Mutazilites upheld their opinion that Allah communicates via created words that He imparts through things

by citing God's statement (in the Quran) as explained by Al-Razi: ‘‘When He (Moses) arrived at it, He (Moses) was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot from the tree: Oh, Moses! I am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.’’ For this clearly shows that Moses, peace be upon him, heard the call from the tree while the one who issued those words is Allah, all praise is to Him, and He (God) is exaltedly not a body. This proves that God speaks by creating words in a body…’ (Al-Razi, P.6315)

The Mutazilites’ position on the Quran sparked one of the most significant debates and theological trials in the history of Islam, leaving a mark that rivals the mark left by the civil war between the companions of the Prophet, Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Muawiyah Ibn Sofian: ‘The Quran, the word of God, is a creation out of nothingness (Mohdath), and Allah the Almighty is its Creator (Mohdithoho)’ (Qadi Abdel Jabar, 1998, p. 87).

The Mutazilite position was the official state position. Al-Ma’moun’s letters reveal his passion and conviction that the Quran was a creation. While his intellectual zeal and engagement in debate may offer a clear explanation, there is suspicion regarding his real intentions and an ulterior motive to secularise the state: ‘The idea of creating the Quran, which the Mutazilites adopted philosophically, which mitigates the relation between the divine self and its traits, allowed them the opportunity to interpret the Quran because it is a godly creation and not God’s word…the Quran being one of the creations of God allows differing over its meaning and determining what is suitable from it and what is not suitable for each era.’ (Qasah, 2010)

The suspicions regarding Al-Ma’moun’s intentions, which some claimed to have centred on an attempt to secularise his rule by the standards of the times, including granting authority

to man over the Divine scriptures, crumble at the edge of his deathbed. They are dispelled when one analyses his last words before he passed away, as recorded by Al-Zahaby (2004) in his 'The Biographies of Notable Noblemen'. Al-Ma'moun clearly believed that stating that the Quran is uncreated poses a threat to the monotheistic nature of Islam by granting something other than God the trait of 'Qadim' or the 'Qidam' (pre-existent and pre-existence).

The Asharites did not stray far from the Mutazilite position, as some may think. They held that God's attribute of speech is a pre-existing attribute of the Divine Essence (Qadeemah), but without voice or letters. They affirmed divine intrinsic speech that is not of letters or sounds, yet when imparted to us, it is expressed through created letters and sounds (the Arabic language of the receivers of the Divine message). While the Quran we hold in our hands and in our memories is created in terms of letters (Midad), the Divine Speech it conveys is not created and is one of God's pre-existent Divine attributes of essence (Sifah Qadeem). The revealed Quran is an expression of the attribute, not a signifier of it.

The Mutazilite position on the Quran played a major role in the development of Ilm al-Kalam (scholastic theology). The very name of the discipline may have originated in its most contentious argument: the speech of God (Kalamu Allah). The Mutazilite position could lead to a critical realisation: the Quran presents humankind as dominant over all contingent beings in the heavens and on earth. All contingent beings that exist within the observable temporal order are subject to humankind: 'And He (God) has made everything in the heavens and on earth subject to you, indeed this is his doing (God). This carries signs for people who reflect.' (Quran, 45:13)

If the Quran is a temporal creation (Mohdath), then it is subject to humans, not the other way round. The battle between the camps of a created Quran, disconnected from any pre-existent Divine attributes, and the camps of an uncreated word of God has far deeper political and intellectual reasons and more complex implications.

In the Mutazilite order, knowing the Divine is an intellectual endeavour that is essential and obligatory. Imitation was frowned upon as the road to knowing God: 'Rational Inquiry (reflection) as the path to knowing Allah, the Most Transcendental, is the first of essential duties…' (Al-Qadi, 1996, p. 44). For them, the intellect was a source of legislation: '…know that there are four types of evidential sources: the evidence of reason, the evidence of the Book (the Quran), the Evidence of Sunnah, and the evidence of consensus.' (Al-Qadi, 1996, p. 88)

This epistemological position is markedly different from that of other theological schools, and it strongly shapes their propositions, which portray the human intellect as a monarch seated on a throne of rational reflections, enabling it to reach the shores of moral truths that possess intrinsic realities and meanings of their own and necessarily align with a Divine moral order grounded in Divine justice. This Divine moral order is inherently stable, discernible, and neither arbitrary nor fluid. Objective moral truths in the realm of the Mutazilites are universal and attest to higher meanings that transcend our reality.

In the Mutazilite order, the human intellect is not merely a receiver of revealed morality, but rather an active discerner of objective moral truths that align with Divine revelation in a natural way. Human reason is not only a discerner. It is a judge whose authority extends into the realm of what is logically and metaphysically just and benevolent for God to do, thus judging the Divine via the limited, temporal and contingent human perceptions of justice.

The Mutazilites are portrayed as a school that denied the attributes of God, which, according to other schools, are nothing more than abstract meanings that subsist within the Divine Essence without being the essence itself or separate from it. While this is a significant departure from other theological schools, the Mutazilites do not deny the attributes ontologically; they simply refuse to distinguish them from the essence, even at an abstract level, and this is understandable once the nature of their intellectual debates with the people of the book is considered.

Justice was their central theme in a world of corrupt and tyrannical rulers, making it an essential higher or terminal value (Rokeach, 1979) for the Mutazilites to observe and uphold. This is critical for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of their metaethics and its impact on their jurisprudence and its foundations, for example, how they would deal with an authentic Hadith Ahad that, in their perception, does not cater to the summit of their morality, which aligns with what pleases the Divine, whose essence deems Him incapable of committing injustice and makes justice essential for Him, not a choice.

The human intellect is on a mission to discern objective moral truths and to uphold Justice as a central moral pursuit that encroaches on the metaphysical realm. These are the streams that underline Mutazilite metaethics and which we will link to modern liberal and secular morality, as well as British values, later in this chapter.

IV.3 Mutazilite Metaethics: Man, The Legislating Discerner

'…surely, there are signs in this for those who reflect.' (Quran, 16:12)

The Mutazilites, champions of God's unity and justice, cloaked themselves in the power of human reason. Reason was the foundation of faith: 'Qadi Abd Al-Jabbar begins his text with the first principle of religion according to the Mutazilites, that God can and must be known rationally.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja,2003, P.90)

Human "fitrah", defined in this research as a priori knowledge woven into the fabric of our essences by the Divine, did not play a major role in the Mutazilite order in comparison with human reason when it came to morality and ethics, which aligns with their belief that while seeking God is an essential obligation and a function of human reason, it is certainly not self-evident knowledge (Ilam Darouri).

For some Mutazilites, human fitrah means Islam, the religion God chose for humankind to follow from generation to generation, though some parents alter the path for their children. Their interpretation of the fitrah verse, 'So steadfastly observe the religion. The natural disposition that Allah instilled into people…' (Quran, 30:30), holds that the fitrah God has granted to people is Islam. The school of human reason and intellect downplayed human fitrah as a source of morality or even of religious salvation. For them, it began and ended with the human intellect.

It is important to note that this predominant position of the school, which is more about human reason than human fitrah, was not endorsed by some key Mutazilites, for example, Al-Jahiz. This renowned man of the quill believed in human fitrah and its role in the relationship

between man and God, and its role in morality: 'From what preceded, it becomes clear that Al-Jahiz insisted that knowing God is a self-evident and essential because Allah has instilled into mankind the ability to discern between good and evil…Fitrah was perceived by Al-Jahiz as the ability to know what is good and conforming with the truth and what is accurate…' (Imam, 2016, P.61-62)

Al-Jahiz was among the most prominent Mutazilites. While he regarded the human intellect as 'the Divine guardian', as stated in his famous 'The Epistle of Life and the Hereafter', he also placed great value on human fitrah: 'Oh! This exists within Fitrah and subsists within the intellect…' (Al-Jahiz, 1964, p. 95).

The choice of words matters, and this is a very important aspect of metaethical studies. This will be explained further as we walk through the Athari terrains: human reason and human fitrah are both situated within man, but subtle differences will have noticeable implications within the Athari framework.

The Mutazilites' metaethical model is rooted in the human intellect, the function of human reason, and its capacity to reflect and discern good and evil, which should naturally align with Divine revelation. The Imams of human reason held that human intellect could navigate the terrain of morality without scriptures. This may be misconstrued as a dismissal of the Quran, but the Mutazilites were scholars of theology, sharia judges, etc. Al-Qadi Abdel Jabbr was Shaffi, and many Mutazilite-leaning scholars tend to favour the Hanafi school. The Mutazilites did not mean that divine scriptures are not needed; once they exist, they recognised their position and authority. They assumed an alignment between divine morality and rational

morality, since: '…the Scripture and the intellect come from the same Divine source; therefore, there is no reason to speak of a contradiction…' (Imam, 2016, p. 98)

The Mutazilites held that the moral worth of actions was intrinsic and could be realised by human reason: 'The Mutazilites argued: certain kinds of actions-such as lying, injustice, gratitude or ingratitude - are inherently good or bad and are known by reason to be so; the divine law merely confirms and particularizes the native knowledge.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja, 2003, p. 15) The human intellect played a pivotal role in moral reasoning for the Mutazilites: 'For the Mutazilites, the intellect is the only perfect criterion that can measure the moral worth of deeds, and it is the only criterion for Quran interpretation.' (Al-Harithi, 2021, p. 148)

What the human intellect deemed rationally evil, such as injustice, was likewise deemed metaphysically evil by them. The Mutazilites built their entire school of theology on Divine Justice from a purely human rational perspective, which led them to one of their most controversial positions: the necessity of Divine justice and the logical and metaphysical impossibility of Divine injustice.

The Mutazilite sense of epistemic moral agency is acute, as it ties legal and eschatological moral accountability to human reason rather than revelation only: 'Abu Al-Hudhayl (Basra Mutazilite Scholar and Philosopher) explains that human reason can: 1. Discern the existence of God; 2. Discern the duty for humans to give thanks to God; 3. Distinguish between good and evil; 4. Discern the duty for humans to do good and avoid doing evil.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja, 1997, p. 187)

A question demands an answer: can the human intellect overrule divine revelation in the Mutazilite order? In his 'Al-Mughni', the judge and jurist Abdel Jabbar (Al-Qadi) said: '…this includes what God, the exalted, has prohibited because this attests to the vileness of the deed, for prohibition entails the abhorring of the deed being prohibited, since it is not befitting of God, the exalted, to prohibit what is good.' (Al-Qadi Abdel Jabbar, Vol 9, 2012, P. 122)

The alignment between the human intellect and revealed scriptures in the Mutazilite order stems from the alignment between their theological logic and metaethical propositions. For example, injustice is intrinsically evil for them; therefore, it is logically and metaphysically impossible for God to commit injustice, as their human intellect, informed by the scriptures, understands it. Certainly, the human intellect takes the lead, but it stands firm on scriptural grounds: 'One often neglected difference between the Mutazilites and the Asharites (a competitive school of theology) was that Mutazilite reasoning reflected a believed premise that God, God's works, and what God asks of is all reasonable and coherent, rather than divine arbitrary or logically inconsistent (as if God is not rational and consistent). In other words, the Mutazilites had a foundational faith in the intelligent rationality of God, which God would have shared with man, so that man could use his God-given reason and sensible moral perceptions in order to know God's reason and God's sense of what is good.' (Martin, 2013, L: 551)

Regarding the Euthyphro dilemma, the Mutazilites would say that good and evil have an intrinsic nature, which is why God designated good as good and evil as evil. To navigate morality, man can depend on human reason, which shares with revelation its origin: both were created by God and are endowments of light from God. This does not cancel out scripture but rather acknowledges the role of human reason and the status of the God-given intellect, which God has bestowed on man as much as revelation was bestowed on humankind.

The Mutazilites revered the human intellect as a divine guide: ‘From what they have stated, the Mutazilites grant human reason the power to judge an act as good or evil. For an act is good or evil intrinsically, as the Baghdad Mutazilites would say, or it is so because of a genuine characteristic about it that compels it to be good or evil, or for other considerations, as some would say, including Al-Qadi (Abdel Jabbar) and the majority of Basra (Iraq) Mutazilites. The power of judging the moral worth of actions was granted by the Mutazilites to human reason, for human reason can duly discern whether an act is good or evil and therefore it can judge.’ (Al-Motaq, 2017, p. 163)

For the Mutazilites, the human intellect was metaphorically a messenger and a form of revelation from God. From the Islamic perspective, divine revelation is not confined to the written word. The Quran highlights this point: ‘And your Lord has inspired (Awha) the bees to make homes out of mountains, trees and human constructions.’ (Quran, 16:68) Here, God describes the nature He crafted into the bees, which would be the bee version of human fitrah as a divine inspiration. However, the Arabic word He uses is ‘Awha’ from ‘Wahi’, and it is the same word He uses to refer to the revelations and inspirations He granted His prophets: ‘And We inspired (Awhayna) Moses (with this command) ‘‘Throw your staff’’; then it devoured the falsehood they were propagating...’ (Quran, 7:117); and ‘And We have sent you revelations (Awhayan) as We have sent revelations (Awhaynah) to Noah, and the prophets after him…’ (Quran, 4:163)

The written word was not the only form of revelation from God to his prophets. Divine revelation to a prophet could also manifest in dreams, as illustrated by Prophet Abraham’s dream: ‘…He said: ‘‘Oh son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you…’ (Quran, 37:102)’

While the nature of the divine revelation to the prophets is substantially different from the nature of the divine inspiration to the bees, which is closer to what we refer to as human fitrah, the same word is used in all cases to indicate the process of imparting something from God to a creature, whether words, ideas, or the inner crafting of systems embedded in the fabric of the creature's consciousness: 'The first forms of revelation…is what the scholars call inspiration, for example, how God inspired the mother of Moses, bees, angels and every episode of this type is characterised by being customised and private.' (Abu Zeid, 2014, p. 40)

Our human fitrah and reason are far more complex and elevated than those of the bee, and we can metaphorically use the same words to describe them as a form of 'Wahi' or divine inspiration and revelation sown into the corners of our minds and souls. This is different from direct Divine revelation, but it nevertheless comes from the same source and plays a pivotal role in guiding us towards God and morality.

This means that God is the source of morality, revealed in scripture and expressed through rational morality, which depends on the human intellect, a God-given endowment and a guide to knowing God Himself. The idea that there are forms of revelation other than the written word is neither alien nor new: '…Imam Al-Razi, and prior to him, Mohi Al-Din Ibn Arabi, talked about the observed book of God and the written book of God. The written book of God is that revelation that He sent down to his Prophet: The Noble Quran. As for the observed book of God, it is the cosmos…' (Gomah, 2022)

IV.4. Mutazilite Metaethics and the Modern British Value 'The Rule of Law': Implications and Applications:

IV.4.a The Case for it:

If we focus on the rule of law, a key British value and a cornerstone of society, while recognising that for many Muslims Islamic law (Sharia) is meant to provide the legal framework, among other things, that is supposed to regulate their lives, some tensions may arise. Many Muslims seek advice and guidance from British Islamic Sharia councils and scholars on family and financial matters within a modern, liberal, and secular Western context.

In his evidence to the UK Parliament on Shariah councils in the UK, the notable jurist Dr Haitham Al-Haddad stated: 'Shariah is in fact Islam, and all Muslims refer to it to some extent on a regular basis: it is an integral part of Muslims' identity…there are many differences between the guidelines of Islamic marriages/divorce, and civil law...' (Al-Haddad, 2016, p. 1). In the same submission, the renowned scholar sheds light on how Muslims resort to Sharia in many aspects of their lives, from social to financial, underscoring the need for Sharia councils.

This is a position that the thesis acknowledges as valid, especially that Sharia councils, like their Jewish counterparts (Batei Din), have no legal authority to compel people to resort to them or to enforce their rulings, with some exceptions under arbitration law.

There are arguments against allowing Shariah councils to use the Arbitration law (Reiss, 2009), but the influence Shariah councils hold among Muslim communities will not cease if this happens. Shariah councils often address areas not covered by British law, for example,

advising on the validity of a marriage in relation to the menstruation cycle of a divorced or widowed Muslim woman. It might prove very detrimental for Muslim communities to lose public and open access to Shariah councils. Transparency of Shariah council practices could be lost, while less formal and less accountable bodies take over, operating away from the public eye.

The question is not about Sharia councils, but rather about the metaethical foundations and narratives they uphold, which can affect jurisprudence in ways that are more relevant to Muslims in the United Kingdom and other Western nations. There is a link between metaethics and jurisprudence. The conflicts between traditional jurisprudence and Muslim minority jurisprudence may be resolved by addressing the metaethical questions first: 'Fiqh of minorities aims to address the problems that arise every day for millions of Muslims living in the West…there are criticism of Fiqh of minority as well. One is that Fiqh of minorities is a form of innovation in religion (Bid'ah) that must be rejected. Legal positions and views that came to be accepted as standard in classical Islamic law are, from that perspective, to be respected and maintained…' (Saeed, 2013, P. 242, P.247)

Conflicts between Islamic Shariah and British law, however minor or major, will bring the value of 'Rule of Law' into the spotlight because of the implications and challenges, which the Mutazilite metaethics can address more effectively than other schools, as it brings human reason into the sources of legislation and centralises justice as a core moral value with metaphysical implications. It is important to reiterate that this is not to be interpreted as an argument that reduces or undermines the Quran and Sunnah, because the Mutazilites were not secularists. They were scholars of theology and jurisprudence whose nearest kin will be the Hanafis.

This argument has implications for matters of abrogation, interpretation, and the role of Hadith Ahad versus human reason, as well as for consensus and Qiyas (an accepted form of juristic reasoning that keeps it tied to the Quran and Sunnah). This could allow for a more tailored approach for Muslims in the United Kingdom and other Western nations, reducing potential tensions and further facilitating their contribution to society.

The Islamic legal framework is grounded in and shaped by Divine legislation and is bound by the four sources of Islamic legislation: 1. Quran, 2. Sunnah, 3. Consensus of the companions and/or the scholars, 4. Qiyas (analogical juristic reasoning for legislative purposes). By contrast, the United Kingdom's current legal framework reflects its modern liberal and secular nature.

'Rule of Law' is a British value that affirms the moral principle of commitment to the laws of the land by the state and the public. Muslims abide by the laws like any other group in the country, but there are occasions when resorting to Islamic Shariah councils may lead to outcomes that are not consistent with British law.

The Equality Act of 2010 testifies to the secular, liberal, and modern values that define the legal philosophy and ethos of the modern British legal system, which is no longer based on church teachings. The call now is for the church to reform, not for the law to observe the Bible.

It is important to note that Sharia councils are not exempt from their legal duties under British law, even when acting in a counselling capacity. However, some of the findings of an independent review into the application of Shariah law in Britain, which was submitted to parliament in 2018, reveal the existence of both good and bad practices.

In the 2018 independent review of the application of Sharia law in England and Wales, which did not recommend abolishing Sharia councils, the report alluded to practices that may be incompatible with British law: '…cultural change is required with Muslim communities so that communities acknowledge women's rights in civil law, especially in areas of marriage and divorce…' (OGL, 2018, p. 6). The report highlighted that panel members in Sharia councils include individuals who recently moved to the UK and that there is a lack of female representation, drawing attention to the possible impact of culture and values on the juristic outcomes of some of these councils.

Shariah councils have come under scrutiny in several reports. For example, The Women's Policy Centre issued a 2025 report titled 'The Sharia Question' that portrays a bleak picture of Muslim enclaves ruled by clan structures that run Sharia councils, and links these councils to gender inequality, honour-based abuse (HBA), etc. Despite extensive technical errors and questionable assumptions that undermine and mar that report and its conclusions, it does flag some serious problems, for example, honour-based abuse (HBA). This heinous crime (HBA) was addressed by Dr Bhanbhro in his submission to the UK Parliament (2022), which flagged an increase in HBA rates in the UK. This may be linked to the 2018 Parliamentary report on Sharia Law in England and Wales, which highlights the religio-cultural challenges that may find their way into some Sharia councils and their rulings.

The question is not about Sharia councils, whose existence is a technical necessity, but rather about the metaethical models and narratives they uphold. While this thesis identifies the most suitable aspects of Islamic metaethics, it is a qualitative thesis that could initiate future research into the metaethics of Sharia councils on the front lines of serving Muslim communities in the UK and other Western nations.

IV.4.b Mutazilite Metaethics and the Rule of Law: On Qiyas, Consensus, Hadith Ahad, and Abrogation and the problems of polygamy and marital rights.

This section addresses key elements of Islamic Law (Qiyas, Consensus, Hadith Ahad, and Abrogation). Depending on metaethical narratives and interpretations, these components could be a source of conflict or reconciliation in relation to the British value of 'Rule of Law'. Mutazilite perspectives on these elements, rooted in their metaethics, could help resolve potential conflicts.

The following subsections will examine each of the above elements, or sources of legislation, and show how Mutazilite metaethics influenced their engagement with these sources. This could prove useful in the future, as the use of human reason would allow Muslims to sit at the same national table in the UK with non-Muslims when it comes to legislating what is good for society.

IV.4.b.i On Qiyas and Consensus

Consensus and Qiyas are key sources of legislation for many Muslims as they constitute two pillars of the legislative aspect of Islamic Sharia. With a high influx of Muslim immigrants, the need to respond effectively to their growing need for answers and solutions that balance between the rule of law in the United Kingdom and the legal governance and frameworks of a modern liberal and secular reality demands careful examination of the metaethical models that Muslim institutions shoulder.

This is beyond the scope of Sharia councils. This would entail reflection and deeper analysis of the Islamic metaethics adopted by public conveyers of religious knowledge, in general, from mosque Imams and scholars to religious schools and Islamic media outlets.

Qiyas is a form of reasoning that addresses novelties that lack a clear resolution in the Quran and Sunnah by identifying similarities to draw upon in judging the novel, considering a similar occurrence that has been addressed or resolved by the Quran and Sunnah, for example, measuring narcotics against wine. As for consensus, this usually refers to the consensus of the companions; the consensus of scholars within a school; and the broader consensus among all schools.

Consensus and Qiyas are sophisticated, informed human efforts whose legitimacy derives from their alignment with and rooting in the Quran and Sunnah. Qiyas and consensus are not independent of the Quran and Sunnah, and the validity of their conclusions depends on their evidential compliance with the Quran and Sunnah. Wherever one finds consensus and Qiyas, the legislative frameworks and governance of the Quran and Sunnah are already operative, and this applies to all aspects of life: familial, professional, commercial, financial, etc.

Hence, there is a need to identify the most suitable metaethical models and narratives to inform the scholastic and juristic logic that underlies and shapes consensus and qiyas.

Key Mutazilite figures differed over Qiyas and consensus as being among the sources of legislation, and within the scope of this research, the Mutazilites who classed Qiyas and consensus as sources of legislation were Shaffi and one of them was an Asharite, then became

a Mutazilite (Al-Qadi). Therefore, they may function as mitigators for some of the extreme Mutazilite departures from the rest of the schools that fall within the scope of this thesis.

The Mutazilites' debate over the status of consensus is documented in one of their very few remaining books on jurisprudence, by the notable Mutazilite jurist Abu Al-Hassan Bin Al-Tayyib Al-Basri: 'Know that the consensus of the scholars of every era is accurate and binding, but (Ibrahim) Al-Nizam said that consensus was not binding, and the Imamites (Shiaa) said that it is binding because the Imam is among the people and he is the only authority. As for us, we take a middle position as indicated by God when He said: ''We have made you a centrist nation so that you are witnesses unto people.'' and taking the middle ground is always best.' (Al-Basri, 2005, p. 4)

While Qiyas and consensus are rooted in the Quran and Sunnah, their applications and implications can be shaped by, and expanded in line with, the cultural, moral, and historical norms and narratives of their time and place. The expansion of Qiyas can be observed in numerous instances, for example, by extending Quranic verses and hadiths that establish guardianship of husbands and fathers to a wider circle of male family members, and by expanding the meaning and applications of guardianship itself beyond its scope, which can sometimes transform it into the antithesis of what it is intended for. Another example is that the expansion of Qiyas sometimes leads to an imbalance between parental and offspring rights. Such Qiyas impacts the lives of Muslims in majority Muslim countries and may complicate matters further in a modern liberal and secular context, where this may eventually lead to some non-alignment with the rule of law as a value, and by law we mean the laws of the United Kingdom.

To explain what that means, there is a verse in the Quran that equates the testimony of two women to that of one man. This verse clearly addresses matters of debt and calls upon those engaged in such transactions to secure witnesses, using a clear formula in which one male witness is equal to two female witnesses (Quran, 2:282). According to some scholars, through Qiyas, this verse was extended to cover many other incidents that are irrelevant to the original verse in the Quran.

Imam Mohamed Al-Ghazali was a revolutionary Asharite, with a Neo-Mutazilite metaethical framework that invoked epistemic moral agency and justice. He brings our attention to the implication of expanding the applications of this verse (Quran, 2:282) through Qiyas which led to a form of a consensus among schools: 'It was supposed to stop at that, but a religious trend of thought emerged and went to disqualify the testimony of women in relation to some of the most important aspects of judicial processes that involves all forms of Islamic retribution and proscribed punishment (Qasas and Hodood).' (Al-Ghazali, 2012, P.84).

This effectively means that women's testimony in cases of murder and burglary, for example, risks being designated as insufficient unless it meets the numerical requirement stated in a verse that is irrelevant to the matter: 'Robbers attack homes at night or by day, so what does it mean that a woman's testimony is rejected when it comes to the penalty of burglary?' (Al-Ghazali, 2012, P.84) The same question could be extended to murder and rape since their punishment involves Hodood and Qasas.

The expansion of this verse's applications through Qiyas and the ensuing consensus effectively leaves women vulnerable and unable to secure justice when it comes to the gravest of crimes committed against them: 'Most scholars say that the testimony of women is accepted

only in financial matters, but other than that a woman's testimony is not accepted, for example, cases that have caused grave bodily harm…' (Al-Khamisi, 2021)

For example, in relation to early marriage, an older consensus among the four major schools of jurisprudence (AbdelHamed, 2021), which emerged in a different context and time, still influences cases of early marriage today. This may undermine the enforcement of modern marriage laws that separate puberty from legal eligibility for marriage. Sometimes, older and pre-modern Islamic consensus trumps newer Islamic consensus. This happens at the expense of contemporary legislation, even in Muslim-majority countries, where, for example, the legal age for marriage (eighteen) is viewed with suspicion. This allows public practices that do not conform to contemporary legal frameworks to continue. Older consensuses, which had their time and context, are sometimes used to feed a narrative that deems any new consensus as part of a secularisation project.

Some Mutazilites, like Al-Nizzam, challenged the use of qiyas and consensus altogether. Consensus was not adequate to limit or dethrone human reason in its raw and direct interaction with the Divine text. Ibrahim Al-Nizam (777-836 CE), who was a prominent Mutazilite scholar, believed that one man's opinion can negate and outweigh the consensus. The Mutazilites' intellect, grounded in justice and epistemic moral agency, warrants consideration by Muslim institutions and communities, but with reservations and clarifications that we will address later.

If consensus and Qiyas lead to a collision with the five principles of the Mutazilites (Divine Justice, Monotheism, The Intermediate Status, Divine Promise and Retribution, and Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil), which are fundamental components of their wider

metaethics, this outcome would be dismissed even by those who allow consensus and Qiyas to remain as sources of legislation due to their Shaffi backgrounds, for example, Al-Qaddi Abdel Jabbar and Abu Al-Hussein Al-Basri. This dismissal might not be direct, but will involve, for example, the reinterpretation of verses and careful consideration of what constitutes acceptable hadith, not merely the chain of narration.

A school emerging in a world that had suffered grave injustices, justified by hard determinism (Jabriyyah), including racism, despotism, corruption, and evils that befell the house of the Prophet, the Mutazilites unleashed human reason while pursuing justice and moral agency and autonomy: 'Al-Nizzam believed that consensus is not an enough valid piece of evidence since it is possible for the nation to have committed a mistake…Abu Muslim Al-Asfahani claimed that it is not legal to abrogate Sharia…The Hanafis capture some Mutazilite traces of foundational jurisprudence.' (Al-Qaysi, 2019, P.3-4)

However, the notable Mutazilite jurist, Abi Al-Hussein Al-Tayyib Al-Basri, shed light on a disagreement among Mutazilites over consensus, Qiyas, and abrogation, while he himself upheld the three. Amidst all the differences, human reason, for the Mutazilites, is a stable feature alongside the Quran and Sunnah as sources of moral and general legislation.

The question is: how relevant are traditional consensus and Qiyas to Muslims in Western, modern, liberal, and secular realities? The Mutazilites' sense of epistemic moral agency and the pursuit of justice as a terminal value served as a checkpoint for what would be accepted or not, rather than relying on consensus and Qiyas. The same principles determined which Hadith Ahad would be accepted or not, rather than the chain of narration alone, and which Quran interpretation would be accepted or not. Their metaethical narratives, which governed and

underpinned their moral and ethical thought, allowed them to emphasise these principles. This could be considered by Sharia councils and scholars when traditional consensus and Qiyas lead to a conflict with the 'Rule of Law' in the UK. However, where consensus and Qiyas do not lead to conflict, the Mutazilite approach may be deemed unnecessary, given reservations that will be presented shortly.

IV.4.b.i.a Polygamy and Marital Rights:

If we consider polygamy in the UK, for example, adopting the Mutazilite metaethical framework, which directly affects jurisprudence and its outcomes, may help reduce and potentially root out this problem, not because polygamy is inherently a problem. It is simply a matter of observing the law and upholding the rule of law as a value.

The arguments and justifications for breaking the British laws on marriage, in this case, and therefore, violating the value of 'Rule of Law', usually come from the angles of permissibility, dire needs, fear of temptations, etc. These are the usual arguments that allow such practices to exist, no matter how large or minuscule they are.

Such arguments seek a decontextualised observing of hard Taqlid (full adherence to the traditional jurisprudence of the major schools), yet they are set against a very different secular reality in which the laws do not permit polygamous marriages. Rational arguments against such practices are sometimes undermined by the perception that the human intellect has a diminished authority or role in such matters, a view that the Mutazilites and the Hanafi school would challenge, to the dismay of the Athari school, for example.

Imam Mohamed Abduh, regarded as one of the champions of the Islamic women's rights movement in Egypt, which aligns with the fundamental rights granted to women by Islam, was a grand scholar who articulated neo-Mutazilite metaethics, which feature later in this chapter as we explore his ideas and propositions. This led him to condition polygamy on obtaining permission from a judge who would consider the impact of such a permit on the first wife and the husband's family. His opinions can be examined to understand the metaethics that informed them and to reflect on solutions to deal with polygamy in the UK.

Imam Mohamed Abduh refuted the narratives that cast the marital contract as a mere exchange of sex for financial compensation, which led some of the most notable scholars of jurisprudence to permit a husband to cut off his financial assistance to an ill wife if her illness disrupted sexual intercourse, and even to refuse to pay for her funeral. The Neo-Mutazilite Imam used 'the intellect' and its centrality to human existence as evidence to end the practice of arranged marriages that do not allow spouses to get well acquainted intellectually before marriage, a characteristic of forced marriages (Ahmed, 2001).

The rising tensions between jurisprudence for Muslim minorities (Fiqh Al-Aqliyat) in Western nations, such as the United Kingdom, and traditional jurisprudence were noted by several prominent Islamic scholars and thinkers in the United Kingdom, including Dr Haitham Al-Haddad, who is an adviser to the Islamic Council of Europe on matters of jurisprudence. The solution may lie within metaethics, which impacts normative and practical ethics.

The centrality of human reason and the primacy of justice could be the only path to dealing with such contentious issues. It is scholars who uphold Mutazilite metaethical propositions and narratives who stand to offer pioneering solutions that can negate the impact of metaethical

models and propositions that reduce epistemic moral agency and the perception of a legislating intellect. However, as mentioned before, this is suitable for the context of modern Western liberal and secular realities and may not be relevant to Muslim in Muslim countries that observe Islamic Shariah.

IV.4.b.ii On Abrogation and the Rule of Law

'…Abrogation is deeming a rule inapplicable to the accountable agent...Al-Asfahani (a Mutazilite) wrote an interpretation of the Quran in which he denied abrogation and Al-Razi (Asharite), in his "The Keys to the Unknown", adopted the position of Al-Asfahani…Mohamed Abduh and Rashid Reddah, in Al-Manar journal, rejected abrogation.' (Dr Immarah, 2000's).

Dr Immarah's comment on Al-Razi is accurate to a great extent. According to Ceylan (1980), Al-Razi, despite criticising Al-Asfahani's reasons for rejecting abrogation, still restricted abrogation to a great extent. In the upcoming chapter on the Asharites, Al-Razi's Mutazilite side will be presented very briefly, but he was not a Mutazilite, which attests to the idea that adopting a Mutazilite metaethical model does not necessarily mean that you are one.

There appears to be a correlation between the centrality of the human intellect, epistemologically and juristically, and a rigid strictness towards, if not rejection of, the concept of abrogation and its different types. Epistemic moral agency, within the scope of this thesis, leads to a strict and limited application of abrogation. An extremely strict application of abrogation takes hold in the school of Abu Hanifah, which might have affected the Mutazilites.

The Mutazilites, who vehemently restricted and even rejected abrogation, justified their position by appealing to one of their pillars: Divine justice. They perceived abrogation as counterintuitive to God's justice in the process of conveying His Shariah in a stable rather than a revisionist manner: 'It is claimed that changing rules means that God was making experiments to find out what is good and what is bad for us…some scholars rejected the existence of abrogation…like Abu Moslem Al-Asafahni…has held the view that all instances of so-called abrogation in the Quran effect no more than qualifications and takhsis (restriction)…' (Suicmez, P.38-40)

'In the book of juristic foundations for Al-Jussass (a very notable Hanafi scholar), which is one of the most important foundational books, he said: 'The initial verdict (in the Quran) is not to be rejected once it is established… no verdict was removed by abrogation. Ibn Qayyim, who is among the Imams of Salafism, said that this foundationalist opinion prevents problems. Ibn Qayyim says that the graduality of legislation (in the Quran) is not abrogation…' (Dr Immarah, 1990s).'

Abrogation has implications, and in our case, it is the lack of abrogation that mostly serves the rule of law as a value. Abrogation was used to widen the scope of a verse beyond its true meaning and context. For instance, this verse is labelled the verse of the sword: 'When the sacred months come to an end, smite the polytheists wherever you find them…' (Quran, 9:5).

This verse contributes to radical narratives because it is used to abrogate other verses that promote tolerance and peace on a permanent and universal basis. It is also used in narratives that establish a state of continuous, minor global jihad (armed struggle). However, major jihad is a concept that emphasises self-refinement and discipline to achieve eudaimonia in this life

and in the hereafter: '…the Quranic verdict does not change but what it relates to may have changed in relation to the accountable agent, but the verdict remains…specifying the general; limiting the limitless; and timing the timeless counts as accurate abrogation, but it does not mean erasing the verdict.' (Dr Immarah, 1990s) This becomes clear in the case of alcohol and the abrogation of the verses that allow for a gradual approach to quitting the habit of drinking alcohol. This could be important for Muslims who are seeking pathways to exit the habit of drinking alcohol gradually in a non-Muslim environment that normalises drinking, for example, which could facilitate different approaches and narratives within Muslim circles that do not lead to chastising or disenfranchising other Muslims who may be seeking a gradual approach to observing Islamic teachings around alcohol consumption.

Metaethics influence how the Quran is interpreted and how metaphorical or literal an interpreter can be. Abrogation affects Muslims and the rules and verdicts that guide their lives. Rejecting a form of abrogation of Quranic texts, whereby the verdict remains despite the absence of the actual texts from the Quranic corpus, is highly controversial, but its acceptance directly affects whether stoning is considered essential and permanent or temporary in Islamic penal codes, for example.

Abrogation may be perceived differently depending on whether Divine justice or Divine omnipotence is emphasised. The schools and scholars who centralise the human intellect find abrogation problematic and may even regard it as ontologically confusing for the human agent.

The use of Mutazilite metaethics can, within the scope of this thesis, help achieve commitment to the rule of law in the UK without compromising religion, which is the central

worry behind the rising tension between traditional and minority jurisprudence. However, reservations are presented later in the chapter.

IV.4.b.iii On Hadith Ahad

Hadith Ahad is a type of hadith that has far fewer narrators per layer in the chain of narration than the stronger type, Motawatir, which is characterised by a substantial number of narrators at each layer of narration in the chains of transmission. While the theological schools studied in this thesis tend to agree that matters of creed must be based on Motawatir hadiths, the role of Ahad hadith versus human reason in non-creedal aspects varies among schools and scholars, and metaethics may be playing a bigger role than previously thought.

The Mutazilites limited the role of Hadith Ahad relative to the role of human intellect when engaging with the Quran. There were doubts about Hadith Ahad within the Mutazilite school, which based its judgment on the content of hadith and did not allow the chain of transmission to influence or restrict human reason in accepting or rejecting a Hadith Ahad. Rather, their five primary principles served as foundational gates that determined what they would or would not accommodate.

While the strictness of the Mutazilites with hadith Ahad did not escape the Shaffi Qadi Abdel Jabbr, his Shaffi background mitigated the strictness. Al-Qaddi demonstrated caution with Hadith Ahad but did not fully reject it as other Mutazilites did: ‘He (Al-Qaddi) argues that such traditions do not convey certainty, therefore it is forbidden from the point of view of reason to say definitely: ‘The Prophet has said it.’ For Abdel Jabbar, most traditions are of uncertain source.’ (Gani, 2016, P.61).

For the Mutazilites, Hadith Ahad that does not pass through the filter of human reason, as it seeks to understand and implement justice, along with the remaining four primary principles of their school, will not be accepted and may be reinterpreted or fully rejected. Between the chain of narration and human reason, the Mutazilites will uphold human reason when it comes to Hadith Ahad. The Mutazilite metaethics drove them to contest and deconstruct Hadith Ahad on a purely rational basis.

Abu Hanifah also approached Hadith Ahad with greater caution than Shafi'i, who rejected the Hanafi principle of Istihsan (juristic preference), which he classed as an attempt to allow human reason to roam freely and pursue its whims. Abu Hanifah rejected Hadith Ahad if it conflicted with human reason, for example, when engaging in analogical reasoning. For Abu Hanifah, the intellect takes precedence in cases of conflict that cannot be resolved by texts: 'Abu Hanifah was famous for rejecting Hadith Ahad if it contradicts Qiyas (deductive analogy which is based on the Quran and authentic accurate and reliable hadiths) …' (Ba'atwah, 2012, P.40).

This is one of the primary reasons for the deep tensions between the Athari school (Hanbali jurists) and the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, with the former elevating the status of Hadith to the point where a Hadith can abrogate a verse (rejected by the Shafie school), while the latter grants a higher position for the intellect as the locus of interpretation of the Revealed. Such framings and tensions impact Sharia councils and their verdicts.

This is a problematic aspect of the Mutazilites and may pose serious challenges for anyone who accepts their metaethical arguments. When the Asharite revolutionary, Imam Mohamed Al-Ghazali, published his most controversial work, which cast a Mutazilite shade on his

attempts to deal with the traditions of hadith. This will be presented in the Asharite section of the thesis.

IV. 5: Commitment to the Rule of Law as a British Value

Muslims and their institutions are obligated to uphold the laws of the land: 'Afterwards, the Quran insists on the obligation of fulfilling contracts and covenants between individuals; between groups; and between the Muslim nation and other nations. Here, we can refer to the following verses: 'Oh, those who believe, fulfil the contracts.' (Quran, 5:1); 'Fulfil your covenants for you shall be asked about them.' (Quran, 17:34); 'Fulfil the covenant of Allah if you get into one and do not violate your vows after affirming them… (Quran, 16:91). Since the matter of fulfilling contracts and covenants in the Quran is considered one of the fundamentals of Islam that applies not only among Muslims but even with pagans who believe in nothing of the book and the messages of God.' (Musa, 2012, P.27)

For some Muslims and some non-Muslims, commitment to the rule of law as a value must be rooted in the religious moral systems they uphold and in the moral fabric underpinning those systems. This is not a problem that law-awareness presentations can address robustly, as past and ongoing cases prove. This is a process of cultivation, community work, and institutional engagement that recognises that the problem is not superficial to begin with and cannot be addressed by the mediocre approach of lists of dos and don'ts.

These problems require metaethical propositions that recognise the intellect's central role in engaging with the Divine scriptures while navigating the real world. Jurisprudence for minorities needs to give the intellect a higher epistemic role within moral epistemology,

enabling its jurists and preachers to take the necessary steps to address problems and further standardise fatwahs (verdicts) in line with the UK's legal norms.

It is important to note that some of the most prolific traditional and notable thinkers who sought to advance the rights of women within Islamic societies have emerged from, and still emerge from, the neo-Mutazilite echelons of Islam, for example, Dr Mohamed Immarah and Imam Mohamed Al-Ghazali of Al-Azhar. Both notable scholars and thinkers have produced revolutionary works in their respective times and contexts. This may support the conclusions of this section.

IV.6 Challenges to the full acceptance of the Mutazilite position on the Components of Islamic Law:

The previous sections outline key applications and implications of Mutazilite metaethics for critical elements of Islamic Law. By centralising human reason and pursuing justice and epistemic moral agency as core themes, this approach shapes the school's engagement with other Islamic disciplines, including Islamic Law. This metaethical framework and its implications can be associated with Mutazilism and its emphasis on rationality and the pursuit of justice at both physical and metaphysical levels. This thesis sheds light on mechanisms that are indeed controversial but must nevertheless be objectively presented for assessment within the scope of the research.

The Mutazilite metaethical framework, while highly supportive of Muslim communities and institutions in a modern liberal and secular society that upholds the value of 'Rule of Law', poses serious challenges. Aside from the historical polemics, the elimination, or even the

downplaying, of consensus, qiyas, and Hadith Ahad is a feature that is rejected by other Islamic schools and groups. Such approaches could be easily mistaken for attempts to undermine the sunnah of the Prophet, the companions, and other major scholars and institutions. However, certain aspects of Mutazilite metaethics were championed by non-Mutazilite scholars and could still prove useful, offering unique solutions as explained previously.

IV.7 Mutazilite Metaethics On Justice: Muslim Contribution to the British Value of 'Rule of Law'

'Rule of Law' brings attention to 'justice' as a value. Modernity, with its secular metaethics, fluctuates between 1. justice as a purely rational concept with universal implications and applications (Kant); and 2. justice as whatever the majority decides in line with its benefits (hard utility, which was mitigated by John Stuart Mill's ethical utility). However, modernity is predominantly a project of universals, and this includes universal values that still guide international institutions operating in the realm of human rights: 'The history of the West has been marked by increasing devotion to secular, rational, universalist ideals since the Renaissance, despite counter-currents of romanticism, nihilism, and postmodernism.' (De Lee, Forward to Akroun, 1994, P.xi)

Postmodernity views justice as a tribal or community-based social construct, void of any intrinsic or inherent truth, in a deconstructed world with no true universal meanings or universal values. It is indeed a world that is 'Beyond Good and Evil', as Nietzsche would say.

The Mutazilite metaethical narratives consistently present justice as a universal moral truth and value applicable to all humans. Traces of contextualisation do not undermine the

universality of an objective moral truth within the Mutazilite framework. Mutazilite utility is not pure modern utility, as it is obliged to engage with the boundaries of revealed scripture: the Quran. Despite the different framing, the Mutazilites are closer to the enlightened modernity of universal moral laws and principles than to postmodernity. Mutazilite justice restores stability to the intrinsic meaning of justice as it relates to humankind, rather than to tribal justice.

The centrality of justice as a universal value discerned by human reason aligns with the Mutazilite moral narratives. Justice is the pursuit and implementation of fair laws, and it is what makes the 'Rule of Law' a meaningful value. Justice is a central value in Islam, and all schools uphold it, as it is a founding principle in the Quran, which demands justice-based loyalty that transcends biological, racial and ideological affiliations: 'Oh, believers! Stand firmly for justice and be witnesses to God against yourselves, parents, and acquaintances for Allah is the one who takes care of them whether they are rich or poor. Do not follow your whims lest you stray from justice…' (Quran, 4:135)

However, justice was singled out as a fundamental part of the Mutazilite foundations. This highlights a serious shortcoming of the current official list of British values. As a value, 'Rule of Law' becomes hollow if not backed by justice as a clearly stated value on that same national list. Despite its efforts to uphold universal values that emerged from its Enlightenment inception, some modernist arguments could lead the majority to define justice in ways that serve their own interests, a worrying prospect for any minority.

It is true that the emancipative framing of modernity (enlightened modernity) led to the upholding of the concept of universal values, which mitigated the dangers of an unethical form

of utility; however, placing the value of justice on the same national list of British values is becoming more necessary than ever to reassure all pertinent parties and dispel fears of double standards and parallel states.

Justice was central to the Mutazilites' metaethics, and it must be shown to be central to a modern set of British values if it is to have the maximum effect. Justice is a universal pursuit, and modernity acknowledges and upholds it only because of those who upheld justice as a universal ideal, despite postmodernity's arguments against universal moral laws and values.

Having Justice on the national list of British values is among the key recommendations of this study, as this will give meaning to the value 'Rule of Law'; protect the minority against the whims and unreasonable demands and expectations of the majority; and reassure all citizens and residents of Britain that justice is a higher moral value that is pursued by the state at all levels.

Centralising justice and the human intellect could enable British and Western Muslim jurists to address the realities of Muslims in modern Western liberal democracies more robustly than merely following hard Taqlid of traditional schools of jurisprudence.

However, Saeed (2013) argues against such an approach by suggesting that minority jurisprudence must be part of a broader project that addresses the need for reforms within traditional jurisprudence:

'For Fiqh minorities to move beyond its current limits, it must be repositioned within the broader debate on the reform of classical Islamic law.' (Saeed, 2013, P.252)

The thesis does not regard this as conducive to real change, given the firm and strong institutionalisation of Islamic jurisprudence and its historical roots, which are traced back to the Prophet himself. It would rather limit this research to the realities of Muslims in the United Kingdom, rather than the broader discussion on reforming jurisprudence.

IV. 8 Traces of the Companions of the Prophet in Mutazilite Pavilions: an important factor for its acceptance in Muslim communities

It is important to trace the Mutazilite core metaethical positions back to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, if indeed possible. This could aid the application of some of this school's positions in the United Kingdom and possibly other Western modern liberal democracies, as Muslims will most probably relate to positions that are traced back to the Companions rather than to a school that has a historically been stigmatised.

What some jurisprudence scholars have come to label the school of opinion has roots that predate the Hanafis, and the Mutazilites, on matters of empowering the human intellect. However, on a more reserved level, this earlier chapter, which was a prelude to the Hanafi school, never classed the human intellect among its sources of legislation.

This was a chapter in the lives of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), who demonstrated the impact of employing the intellect to resolve contentious problems in the reality of a Muslim state no longer confined to Madinah, where Muslims were the majority. One of the early figures of this prelude to the school of opinion, which encompasses the Hanafis, was the second righteous Caliph, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. It is documented that he

undertook interventions that would seem challenging to the current juristic mindset and difficult to initiate without Taqlid.

From suspending the penalties for theft during a famine to directly rejecting the claims of a companion regarding the Prophet's legislation on financial packages for divorced women (Ibn Al-Khattab provided a bigger package for divorced women on a basis of a verse in the Quran while not accepting a hadith that effectively meant a lesser package due to lack of conformity with the Quran), Caliph Ibn Al-Khattab was demonstrating the interaction between the human intellect and the source of legislation in such cases at a level that caused a stir with some Muslims during and after his reign, but his approach would later become a fundamental measure for when to temporarily suspend a Sharia verdict based on Islamic guidelines, for example.

The same Caliph demonstrated caution regarding the extensive use of hadith, as recounted by Abu Huriyyrah, a major companion and Hadith narrator, who shed light on Ibn Al-Khattab's caution at a time when the discipline of hadith was still not standardised in an expanding state, raising concerns about ensuring the validity of hadiths. Ibn Al-Khattab shared some of the same worries cited by Al-Qaddi Abdel Jabbar.

Ibn Al-Khattab also demonstrated the leaps in juristic reasoning when he decided to change the term 'tribute' to 'Zakah' in order to address the discomfort that the former word brought the Christians of Najran, because in reality, both Muslims and non-Muslims citizens of the Muslim state were paying the equivalent of taxes but with different classifications and it was Ibn Al-Khattab that standardised the exemption from tributes using the same matrix used for exemption of Muslims from paying Zakah (this narration is of a weak chain of referencing but

is still carries some validity because there many incidents that verify Ibn Khattab's methodology).

In addition, Ibn Al-Khattab suspended the financial payments that were designated for some of the people of Quraish (the pre-Islamic Meccan ruling tribe) and prescribed by the Prophet under the financial entry for securing loyalty and commitment. By many measures, this was a representative act of human intellect engaging directly with the Divine scriptures. There is no evidence that the Prophet said or insinuated this strategic move.

While Ibn Al-Khattab would never accept the intellect as a source of legislation, his approach, along with that of Ali Ibn Abi Talib's and Abdullah Ibn Massoud made them considered the pioneers of a robust role for the intellect when engaging with the Divine text that shaped the Hanafi school without ever classing the intellect as a source of legislation.

This is important because the Mutazilites' metaethics may prove controversial if presented to Muslim jurists in Western liberal democracies as a viable starting point for the Fiqh of minorities, given historical tensions with the Mutazilites, which still classify them as outside the Sunni category of schools.

It is important to note that in the halls of the Shias, Mutazilite metaethics has found a nuanced place to reside: 'The proposed solution, on which Murtada (Imam Al-Sharif Al-Murtada) is in full agreement with Basri Mutazilites, sought to bestow meaning on these revelational obligations by invoking Divine assistance and appealing to God's omniscience while still maintaining that moral values of acts cannot be established on Divine command…The dictates of reason are always granted pride of place…all rational beings are

subject to rational moral obligation…the dictates of revelational moral obligation, therefore, must be made to fit within the scheme.' (Abdulsatar, 2007, p. 116)

This thesis focused on three notable Sunni schools, but it also presented the Mutazilites, who, to an extent, offer insights into Shia perspectives on this study, both epistemologically and ontologically. However, further research is required to fully engage with Shia metaethics in relation to the two criteria identified by the thesis as critical for constructive engagement with British values, and to show how such an engagement would look.

IV.9 Notable scholars with Mutazilite Roots or Associations

It is also important for any modern applications of Mutazilite metaethics to examine some of the most renowned names and scholars in Muslim history that belonged or influenced by the Mutazilites. This includes Maimonides which attests to the universality of Mutazilite metaethics.

This could provide great reassurances to Muslim communities in the modern United Kingdom that such applications are rooted in pure Islamic theology rather than an attempt to re-invent Islam in a Western society or through a Western prism which is not the purpose of a thesis that seeks building bridges, rather than deconstructing.

It is not possible to visit the dwellings of all the scholars that have had one form of influence or another from the Mutazilite schools, but this section will introduce some of the most prominent names which may in many cases be recognized by Muslim communities and their current institution in the United Kingdom and other Western nations.

IV.9.a The Shafiite Qaddi Abdel Jabbar of the Basra chapter of the Mutazilites (932-1024 CE).

Al-Qaddi was an Asharite then he migrated to the Mutazilites terrains. This helped in bridging the gap between Al-Mutazilites and the mainstream schools of theology. However, Al-Qaddi's Shaffi school and Asharite roots had an impact on his brand of Mutazilism.

Al-Qaddi rose to power when he was appointed a judge by Al-Sahib Bin Abad in Al-Rai, but after the death of his enabler, Al-Qadi suffered persecution and the confiscation of his wealth. His books were among the books that survived the regional purge that targeted the Mutazilites, especially from the days of Al-Motwakil, son of Haroon Al-Rashid.

The crown jewel of Mutazilites judiciaries, Al-Qaddi, had a reply to Socrates and his Euthyphro dilemma which stems from two of his Mutazilite positions: Firstly, God did not create the deeds of man, and secondly, deeds are the full responsibility of human beings, good and evil. Therefore, moral evil is not the subject of creation as an action or as deed. Evil is the by-product of freedom. Moral evil is mentally untraceable to God's essence (no linkages).

The Imam of the Mutazilites did not believe that moral evil could be willed by God for higher purposes to fit within the order of the good like Ibn Taymiyyah and Avicenna seem to have believed:

'We say that Allah, the exalted, has predestined prosperity and hardships, etc. As for sins and disbelief, Allah is exalted from creating and predestining them, for that He informed us of

these things but to say that He (God) created and predestined them, that is impossible.' (Qaddi Abdel Jabbar, 1998, P.99) Predestination recalls the school of Jabbr (Hard Determinism).

As for natural evils, Qaddi Abdel Jabbar, clothed it with utilitarianism: Allah wills only for the benefit of man:

'We know that in His (God) order of predestination, He does not permit sickness and disease except for a benefit.' (Qaddi Abdel Jabbar,1998, P.70)

While the Imam of human reason placed the intellect on the same footing with the Quran, and sunnah, while linking consensus to the last two, and placing analogical deduction (Qiyas) under the functions of the intellect, his whole position was based on the assumption of a natural and rational alignment between divine revelation and the human intellect. For him good and evil are intrinsically so; therefore, we can arrive at the shores of moral truths even in the absence of revelation by means of the divine gift of human reason which was awarded to us by God.

In his pivotal work 'Al-Moghni', Qadi Abdel Jabbr tackles the concept of human reason and the moral worth of actions and values by means of revealing the intrinsic nature of good and evil and the moral worth of deeds, which empowers human reason. One cannot deny that there is an element of utility that hovers some of the words of Al-Qadi. The rise of utilitarian good and evil within the corridors of late Mutazilite scholars created a bridge that allowed a key Asharite like Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi to make a crossing into the Mutazilites' moral pavilions, but the basis of the Mutazilites remained clearly dominated by and founded on the intrinsic nature of good and evil, and the presence of universal objective moral truths.

‘We have proven the error of that statement of Al-Jabbris (The School of Predetermination) which states that human reason cannot distinguish between good and evil and that this solely hangs on the divine orders of dos and don’ts (The Asharite position as well). No one is to say that we need the heard word (Revealed Quran and Sunnah) for the human intellect to differentiate between what is good and what is evil.’ (Qadi Abdel Jabbar, 2012, P.154)

Al-Qaddi clearly highlights the empowerment of human intellect in the terrain of good and evil and right and wrong by default. Al-Qaddi paid attention to the types of wrong deeds and how some of them are intrinsically evil and the human intellect can distinguish the intrinsic nature of deeds, but he does entertain the concept of deeds and values made evil in a consequentialist manner rather than an intrinsic nature:

‘Deeds that are labelled bad because it is corruptive are so due to the heard word (Revealed Quran and Sunnah) and not because of the human intellect.’ (Al-Qadi, 2012, P.158)

Here, Al-Qaddi does acknowledge the overriding power of revelation in some cases where the divine word overrides the human intellect in deeming certain action evil or wrong. This is not a contradiction but rather a form of categorisation:

‘There are three categories for deeds: 1. deeds that are evil because of their intrinsic nature, for example, inequity, lying and frivolity; 2. Deeds that are made evil because of their corruptive effect; 3. Deeds that are made evil because they lead to the abandoning of a certain duty…’ (Qadi Abdel Jabbar, 2012, P.155)

If we consider lying, which is deemed intrinsically evil by Al-Qadi, he accepts that if lying is meant to ward off harm or evil; then this can make it a good deed. There is a general intrinsic nature about lying, but in certain circumstances, ethical utility could grant lying acceptance, for example, lying to an armed robber about the whereabouts of children in the house.

Al-Qadi is not contradicting himself. The more moral principles are universal, the more it is clear in the matter of being good or evil in an abstract sense that is discerned by the intellect. The Mutazilites are the powerhouse of universal values that have objective truths to themselves:

'We know that lying that carries no benefits and wards off no harms is essentially evil.' (Al-Qadi Abdel Jabbar, 2012, P.157)

As we mentioned, before, traces of utility in their narratives are not the equivalent of modern utility of Bentham or even Mill. Islamic utility is bound by revelation and in the case of the Mutazilites, there is an assumption of harmony between the intellect and revelation and that impacts their interpretation of texts and acceptance of hadiths. However, Al-Qaddi is Shaffi and that brings in new influences on the Mutazilite domain.

Al-Qadi promotes the human intellect as the most prominent force in the equation of morality: 'We have explained that evil or bad deeds are not proven to be intrinsically so by the words of a prophet, but rather that prophet reveals its nature and points at it.' (Al-Qaddi Abdel Jabbar, 2012, P. 158) Morality for Al-Qaddi is primarily intellectual without any doubt.

Al-Qadi also tries to free the human intellect from the accumulative damage of culture that could blur its moral compass: ‘How deeds seem like is not to be used to distinguish between good and evil or right and wrong. How deeds are labelled and described should not as well. The human mind needs to examine these deeds intellectually and the purposes they achieve and what it leads to; then the human mind should judge deeds by means of its essential nature, generally or particularly, via human reason.’ (Al-Qadi Abdel Jabbar, 2012, P.136)

The Mutazilites did not dispel the Quran, but enough authority was given to man that serves the purposes of this study, be it on the intrinsic nature of good and evil or the utilitarian factors that make impact how an intrinsically good or evil act rolls out in real life.

IV.9.b: Non-Mutazilite scholars and Mutazilite Influences

This attests to the universality of the Mutazilite metaethics that crosses the boundaries of religion as some of these scholars were not Muslims, but they were very integrated into Muslim societies and the intellectual institutions of the times.

IV.9.b.i: Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 CE):

Ibn Rushd (Averroes) is the son of an Asharite scholarly household that was situated in the crown jewel of Andalusia: Cordoba. Ibn Rushd’s family was notable and popular. His grandfather, Mohamed Ibn Rushd, was a judge, a jurist, Motakelim (theologian) and a philosopher. Ibn Rushd’s father was a notable judge.

Ibn Rushd's position and intellectual authority granted him access to the highest corridors of the court. Ibn Rushad travelled to Marrakesh and was introduced by Ibn Tofayl, the notable philosopher of human reason and rationality, to the third Caliph of the Al-Mohads State, Yousef Bin Abdel-Mo'men, who was known for his adoration and admiration of knowledge and intellectuals. This introduction was a turning point in the history of philosophy since it initiated the project of introducing Aristotle to Andalusia in a matter of competitive rivalry with Baghdad. (Shams El-Deen, 2014)

Ibn Rushd played a critical role in clearing some of the misconceptions about philosophy while addressing some of Abu-Hamed Al-Ghazali's criticisms of the discipline in his renowned 'The Incoherence of the Philosophers'. Ibn Rushd's 'The Incoherence of the Incoherence' provided the prolific rebuttal for the topics that Al-Ghazali refuted, for example, the nature of God's knowledge and what it encompasses:

'The origin of the problem is the likening of God's knowledge to the knowledge of man and measuring both types of knowledge against each other.' (Ibn Rushd, P. 306)

During the reign of Yacoub Al-Mansour, the 4th Caliph of the Mohads state, Ibn Rushd experienced persecution and exile. The power harnessed by the philosophers of the court, topped by Ibn Rushad, triggered plots. He was prosecuted for his works and some of his books were burnt. Later, Ibn Rushd received an adequate apology, and his position was restored, but tragically, he passed away shortly after that.

Ibn Rushd was among the most notable scholars of rationality within Islam and whose metaethics propelled the human intellect for more rational engagements with the Divine text. In an introduction to Ibn Rushd's 'The Incoherence of the Incoherence', Shams Al-Deen (2014)

identified one of the most missed potential mentors of Ibn Rushd: Ibn Bajjah. Ibn Bajjah would have met Ibn Rushd when he was 12 years old. To claim that Ibn Rushd was directly mentored by Ibn Bajjah at the age of twelve would not be founded on evidence, but the influence of Ibn Bajah could not have been skipped by Ibn Rushd as well (Shams Al-Deen, 2014)

The reply of Ibn Rushd to the Euthyphro dilemma is clear in his argument against the Asharite's position: 'But to say that there is nothing which may be called good or bad is simply intolerable. Justice is known as good and injustice as bad.' (Ibn Rushd, P.811)

Ibn Rushd further pushes the argument by posing and answering a question: 'It may be asked, what is your opinion about misleading people, whether it is just or unjust for God has mentioned many a verse of the Quran ''that He leads as well as misleads the people? (Quran, 10:45)''…We would say that these verses cannot be taken exoterically, for there are many verses which contradict them (from an exoteric perspective) for instance, He (God) says ''He likes not ingratitude (Disbelief) in His servant'' (Quran, 39:9). It is indeed clear that as He (God) does not like ingratitude even from them, He certainly cannot cause them to err…' (Ibn Rushd, 2019, P.58-59).

Ibn Rushd always took things to new peaks of controversy and intellectual challenges. He is the father of the famous rule which was quoted by Al-Jabbri in his book presenting Ibn Rushd's pivotal work 'Fasl Al-Maqal':

'Therefore we adamantly insist that if what indisputable evidence has led to happen to be contradicted by the apparent meaning of sharia, then this apparent meaning of sharia is liable

to be subjected to allegorical interpretation (Ta'wil) according to the law (governing) of Arabic allegories.' (Aljabbri,1997, P.12)

When exiled, Ibn Rushd was moved to a city populated by mostly Jewish citizens. This was not a random decision. Al-Mansour persecuted the Jews (Shams Al-Deen, 2014, 4). On the other hand, this was a godsent gift to the Jewish community which was already very appreciative of Ibn Rushd's works. The Jews of the Muslim lands played a significant role in the preservation of Ibn Rushd's works, which contained his notable commentaries, summaries and analyses of the works of Aristotle.

The following section reveals how Ibn Rushd summarised the work of Aristotle (De Anima) which influenced his position in relation to this thesis and the reply to the Socratic question that is fundamental to mapping out some aspects of the metaethics in this thesis. It is important to note that the original manuscripts from which Ibn Rushd's upcoming summaries and paraphrasing of some of Aristotle's own words were in Hebrew that was translated to Arabic by Alfed. L. Avri (1994):

'Aristotle said: it is through the senses that we become aware of what is pleasurable and what is painful. Pleasure is sought and pain is avoided because when pleasure is sensed, it is good; and when pain is sensed, it is evil. As for the human intellect, it seeks good for what it is and escapes evil for what it is.' (Ibn Rushd, 1994, P. 134)

This may explain Ibn Rushd's anti-Asharite position and the opinion he adopted which makes him closer to the Mutazilites.

‘Aristotle said: Truth and falsehood, in theoretical knowledge, is like good and evil, in practical knowledge.’ (Ibn Rushd, 1994, P.135)

No one escaped the criticism of Ibn Rushd, especially the Asharites, but if he is to be placed on spectrum, he would be closer to the Mutazilites metaethically and in relation to this study. Ibn Rushd could easily be classed as an independent school as he combined philosophy and theology in a manner that is unique to his intellect.

‘It would have been better had not he (Al-Ghazali) publicly debated philosophy; but since he did, the bodies of scholars, which think that there is a contradiction between Sharia and philosophy, should know that it does not…’ (Ibn Rushd, 2019, 152)

IV.9.b.ii: Imam Mohamed Abduh of Al-Azhar (1849-1905 CE):

Mohamed Abduh of 19th century Egypt is a well-known Azhar icon of reform whose journey of turmoil and exile was crowned with being appointed the Mufti of Egypt in 1899. Mohamed Abduh’s journey of reform took him to Paris. Along with Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani, his mentor, Mohamed Abduh was dedicated to saving Egypt from the extravagances of Khedive Ismail’s reign (1863-1879) which paved the way for the British occupation.

This dedication drove them to join a masonry chapter in Egypt in the hope of harnessing enough power to cause a change the course of events:

‘In these efforts, Afghani was aided by some of his own disciples whom he persuaded to join Freemasonry. ‘Abdu was one of them, although later in life he attempted to obfuscate his association.’ (Kudsi-Zadeh, 1972, P.28)

Despite what may make him appear to be of Mutazilite mind and heart, Abduh was not officially one. Abduh rejected the tradition of hard taqlid which was nothing less than replicating without engaging contemporary reasoning and intellectual challenges, which led to stagnation of one of the most vital disciplines of Islam: jurisprudence.

'Abduh also applied reason to textual interpretation and to the larger task of seeing the whole message of a text and not just the meaning of an isolated verse used as a narrow proof text.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja, 1997, P.131)

Abduh's Mutazilite words and thoughts may have been influenced by the knights of divine unity and justice, but he did not identify with them. Rebel with a cause, like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Hazem (Appendix II), Wasel Ibn Atta' and Al-Ashari, Abduh suffered backlash from the Islamic scholarly establishment of his time.

One cannot help seeing the words of Ibn Rushd come to live in the words of Mohamed Abduh which were quoted by Martin, Woodward and Atmaja (1997):

'But if there appears something which appears contradictory to reason we must believe that the apparent is not the intended sense. It is then free to seek the true sense by reference to the rest of the Prophet's message in whom the ambiguity occurred, or to fall back on God and His omniscience.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja, 1997, P.132)

In his transforming work 'The Message of Monotheism' of 'Risalat Al-Tawheed', Abdu, like the Mutazilites, provided a clear answer to Socrates and his Euthyphro Dilemma which helps map out his metaethical model.

According to Abduh, good and evil have an intrinsic nature and reality, but accompanying or immediate pains and pleasures could blur our judgment for a while until the intrinsic truth fully reveals itself. Human reason can distinguish between evil and good to the extent that Abduh said that such competence of the mind could be found with some animals and children who are not aware of the dictates of sharia yet:

'…acts of choice have an element of intrinsic badness or goodness…intuition or reason can distinguish between its (deeds of choice) badness or goodness…' (Abduh, 1990, P.54)

Mohamed Abduh believed in the power of human reason. One of his later students, Dr Mohamed Immarah (1930-2020) quoted Imam Mohamed Abduh in his book: 'The Status of the Intellect in Islam' (2007):

'Man is an intellectual being. Man's existence is propelled by human reason. Human reason is the criterion by which man can distinguish between truth and falsehood. Human reason is the core of man's existence. Human reason is truly the best of man's powers; it is the foundation of all human powers…' (Immarah, 2007, P.50)

IV.10 Conclusion:

The Mutazilite metaethics and moral order empowers the human intellect and invokes a sharp sense of rationality and epistemic moral agency that play out when interpreting Divine scriptures which impacts other disciplines, for example jurisprudence. By placing the human intellect as the top epistemological source for morality and for moral legislation and by perceiving the human intellect as messenger with intrinsic revelation, which is harmonious

with Divine scriptures, the Mutazilites assume their position as the guardians of human reason. Having said that, they were not secularists, and they were ardent defenders of Islamic theology in a forum of competing beliefs and philosophies.

The Mutazilites can be easily categorised as moral realists who resided in the pavilions of transcendental virtues. The Mutazilite would never accommodate a theory of Platonic forms, but their excursions into the metaphysical realm, whereby their perceptions of justice, which the intellect deduces, and revelation fortifies, determines what God can logically and metaphysically do or not, effectively makes them subscribe, unintentionally, to a theory of transcendental moral ideals which may share some intersections with Plato's theory of the forms, while being different from it.

Traces of utility in their order does not make them utilitarians in the modern sense. Factoring context, when required, does not change the fact that they recognised objective moral truths and of universal moral meanings that transcends context. The Mutazilites used objective moral truths, from their own perspective as a school, to place moral obligations and necessities on God himself, which was among their biggest blunders according to other Islamic theology schools.

For the Mutazilites: '…Legislation follows the intellect: it validates and sheds light on what the judgment of the intellect discerns in mattes of good and evil. '(Al-Zoheili, 2006, P.457)

The empowerment of human reason is critical to address the challenges that may emanate from secular and liberal values which ultimately manifests in the form of laws, policies,

cultures, norms, customs, and traditions that may not necessarily be fully accommodated from an Islamic perspective.

The Mutazilites were the non-traditionalists of their time. They relied on the presumed alliance between the intellect and the Divine order. The Mutazilites were the moral modernists of the Muslim world who tabled a universal approach to morality that did not entail abandoning the realm of God and the scriptures.

The Mutazilites also inspired very notable Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and thinkers, such as Maimonides over the centuries which is a testament to their ability to appeal to others, regardless of faith, on universal grounds because they elevated what is common among all humans and that is human reason and rationality. The Mutazilite influence testifies to their impact and universal relevance and how their metaethics and moral reasoning could hold the key for a juristic apparatus that is more relevant to Muslims in a modern liberal and secular Britain.

The Mutazilite contribution to Muslims and their institutions, in modern liberal and secular Western democracies, would be metaethics that centralises human reason with the pursuit of moral agency and justice, rather than hard Taqlid and traditionalism. Where ‘rule of law’ as a value is concerned, this could lead to easing tensions that emanate from hard taqlid and may contribute to the formulation of a new school and independent school of jurisprudence for Muslim minorities in the United Kingdom.

This could also lead to developing new educational models that reflect such metaethics, which may be traced back to the Mutazilites, but was certainly adopted by non-Mutazilites Muslims thinkers and scholars.

Older and/or contemporary dominant consensuses of the four schools of jurisprudence may outweigh the power of UK Sharia councils, for examples, as bodies operating in the UK, whose authority is mostly advisory, but there is so much Shariah councils can do to deal with challenges.

Hence the broader body of Muslim educational and religious institutions may wish to explore how Mutazilite metaethics could enhance their ability to encounter community or individual practices that do not support Rule of Law as value, for example, some older consensuses or non-UK based consensus should objectively be contextualised, and may be intellectually refuted, to strike a balance between the demands of Islamic Sharia and the demands of a liberal modern UK. This could include developing educational programs for young Muslims to acquaint them with Islamic metaethics and their impact on their lives.

We end this section by sharing the words of a modern and notable scholar, the late Dr Mohamed Immarah, who was known for his rational inclinations, which classed him a neo-Mutazilite. While this was a claim he never made, his admiration for the Mutazilites was apparent and their influence on him was clear.

In his book ‘The Status of the Intellect in Islam’, he described the intellect as one of two messengers that God sent to humankind: ‘God, the exalted, created two messengers: an esoteric one, which is the intellect, and an exoteric one and that would be the Divine messengers. There

cannot be any benefit obtained from the exoteric one, if it is not preceded by benefiting from the esoteric one…the intellect is the leader and religion is its aid for without the intellect, religion will not be sustained, and without religion, the intellect is bewildered. The union of the human intellect and religion is as God has said: ‘‘…Light upon Light...’’(Quran, 24:35) …’ (Immarah, 2007, P.10)

Chapter V

The Asharites' Metaethics

&

The Modern British Value: Tolerance

Implications and Applications

'Lying is evil because He (God) has deemed it evil…if He (God) had made it good, it would be good; and if He (God) commanded it (lying), there would be no objection…' (Al-Ashari, 1955, P. 117)

Chapter Aims

This chapter presents the generic metaethical perspectives of the Asharites with regards to the two main criteria to explore the potential impact of Asharite metaethics on contemporary Muslim observance of a modern British value: Tolerance. This will then be followed by a presentation of the metaethical propositions of Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali, as well as those of the historically Asharite Al-Azhar Institution, through notable representative scholars.

V.1 Background for the Purposes of Textual Analysis and Contextual Hermeneutics

The Asharite school, which still reigns supreme in Islamic theology, began on the day its founder, Abu Hassan Al-Ashari (874-936 CE), decided to follow in the footsteps of Wasil Ibn Atta', who had abandoned the circle of his mentor to later launch the Mutazilite school. This time, it was a bright Mutazilite student who abandoned the circle of his mentor: Abi Ali Al-Jiba'i.

Abu Al-Hassan Al-Ashari was motivated to establish a position that refutes the Mutazilites, with their epistemological reliance on human reason, while partially avoiding the extremes of hard literalism: '…many of his opinions emerged from a middle ground between human reason and the texts. It was a delicate walk.' (Qasha, 2010, p.244)

It is important to note that what makes the Asharite school particularly significant and relevant today is its prominent role in shaping the notable Azhar Institution of Egypt, which is one of the highest historical authorities on Sunni Islam, with a global academic footprint and numerous affiliated institutes and scholars all over the world, including the United Kingdom. The Asharite school also shares common ground with the Maturidi school. This further

strengthens the Asharites' position as a leading theological school impacting Muslims worldwide.

The Asharites argued mainly against the philosophers and the Mutazilites. Their investigations and arguments were intended to curb the tidal waves of Hellenistic thought and to salvage theology from being a discipline increasingly influenced by Greek and biblical streams of thought. This enabled the Asharites to build their own order of theology and morality, but their attempts increasingly came under the influence of the very traditions they sought to escape.

A Mutakalim (an Islamic theologian), while largely engaging with philosophy in a refutative manner, begins with several rational and spiritual creedal constants and principles that the philosopher, who is not a theologian, may not necessarily uphold. The Muslim theologian's epistemology designates revealed knowledge (Divine scriptures and highly authentic Prophetic traditions) as the most reliable source of knowledge, a feature absent from philosophers' epistemologies, especially in modern Western liberal democracies.

The notable and contested theologian Saad Al-Din Al-Taftazani (1322-1390 CE), in his 'The Explanation of Al-Nasafi creed', presented the epistemology of Islamic theologians as upheld by Al-Nasafi, distinguishing them from philosophers by one fundamental aspect: 'There are three sources of knowledge for human beings: sound senses, truthful reports (including mass-transmitted Islamic reports), and the human intellect.' (Al-Taftazani, 2014, p. 29)

The epistemology of Islamic theologians would be deemed alien in both a modernist and a postmodernist world of fluid meanings: 'One of the best ways of describing postmodernism as

a philosophical movement would be as a form of scepticism - scepticism about authority, received wisdom, cultural and political norms and so on…Postmodernism has drawn heavily on the example set by anti-foundationalist philosophers, perhaps most notably the iconoclastic nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose call for a 'revaluation of all values' constitutes something of a battle-cry for the movement.' (Sim, 2011, p. 3)

However, postmodernism is less hostile to religion than traditional modernism (enlightened modernity), which assumes that there is no single truth in a world of largely equally valid constructed realities and narratives. Traditional Modernism and Islam acknowledge the existence of truths and universals, but each system has a different reference point. Universal values provide a common ground between traditional modernism and Islam, distinguishing them from the prelude to postmodernism and from postmodernism itself.

Enlightened modernity, which acknowledges moral universals, is the bedrock of British values, and this is one area where Islam and liberal Western modernism intersect. Enlightened modernity and Islamic moral traditions do not epistemologically align with postmodernity: 'The Western Civilisation witnessed a critical moment with the rise of Nietzsche. Nietzsche scandalised modernism when he argued that if the world is made of matter and matter is fluid, then there is no stability in the world. If the world is fluid, then there are no absolutes. Everything is relative; then all things are equal; then there is no meaning and no morality. Any conversations on meaning and morality are delusional. Morality is a mythology invented by humans for benefits, but it has no intrinsic truth. Nietzsche argued that truth itself in a fluid world is a myth.' (Al-Missiri, 1990s).

However, the Asharites have a relative solution that can accommodate a postmodernist reality, because the Asharites themselves would have been morally postmodernists if it were not for Islam and the Quran in their metaethical narrative. Islamic metaethics is a vast space of propositions and narratives that has been tested by this thesis, and the outcomes reveal universality and balanced adaptability that do not violate universal Islamic frameworks and principles.

The Islamic epistemology of Muslim philosophers, theologians, and scientists was certainly among the factors that gave the European Renaissance and Western modernity some of its intellectual colours. Universal values and objective moral truths unite Islamic moral traditions and enlightened modernity for epistemological and historical reasons: '…but by looking at the works of these men, whether in the form of the fresh translations of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts by Andreas, or the still extant commentaries of Postel on more sophisticated astronomical texts, we cannot avoid but reach the conclusion that the Renaissance engagement with the Islamic world was of completely different order than the engagement that took place during the Middle Ages…men of science themselves became Arabists and no longer needed the translations…' (Salibah, 2007, p. 231)

Understanding the Asharites' metaethics should lead to an assessment of the suitability of their metaethical model for Muslims and their religious and educational institutions in a modern Britain that upholds British values. This will shed light on the challenges and what the Asharites can offer to improve Muslim experiences and their footprint in a modern United Kingdom.

The dawn of the Asharite school broke after the demise of the Mutazilites and the deposing of their school from its official status as the State's school of choice. Al-Ashari began sowing the seeds of Asharism after a suspected shift to the Athari school, which may have further fuelled his journey towards his own pavilions and the birth of a new school that is well situated in the middle of the spectrum, with the Mutazilites at one end and the Atharis at the other.

The Asharite school faced many storms, and aligning with the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence may have been a strategic move to distance itself from some Mutazilites who may have embedded themselves within the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, as it offered a more prominent role to human reason than other schools: '…by the command of the Suljak Sultan, Tughril Beg, and on the advice of his minister, Al-Kandri, Al-Ashari was cursed from the pulpits…' (Maqdisi, 2018, p. 28)

As the sense of epistemic and moral agency peaked during the Mutazilite period, the bold authority of the intellect in engaging with the scriptures seemed threatening to traditional thinkers and scholars, especially when combined with ideas from Hellenistic philosophy that flowed into Islamic scholarly works of interpretation and theology. As reported in Bin Forak's compilation of Al-Ashari views, Al-Ashari did not believe in the intellect's ability to discern moral truths: '…What guides the intellect to know differs from one area to another, and no rational person can rely on the intellect to determine how good or how bad an evil deed is, or what exactly is an obligation and what is recommended…' (Al-Ashari, 2022, P.86)

Asharite metaethical propositions are rooted in revealed scriptures because Al-Ashari held that good and evil possess no inherent nature or reality independent of what the revelation of the times dictates. Therefore, Al-Ashari did not believe in objective moral truths. Al-Ashari

was not a relativist in the modern sense of the word, for his was a 'Divine Command' moral order in which only revealed scriptures dictate the era's temporal and contingent moral edicts (Revelational Subjectivism).

With Divine Omnipotence as the fundamental axiom of the Asharite school, the role of human reason was constrained by the boundaries of the scriptures, and soft literalism was still pursued, despite the school's choice to defer the meaning of Quranic verses and hadiths that relate to Divine attributes rather than give them a literal interpretation (Tafweed Al-Maana). Allegorical interpretation was also permitted, but only at a later stage.

This strategic interpretive manoeuvre does not mean that they abandoned literalism. They have simply opted out of hard literalism in some verses. As for the Mutazilites, they chose to superimpose their own interpretations through extreme metaphorical and allegorical attempts to resolve what was deemed inconvenient to their metaethical models, which were influenced by the political and historical context of the times.

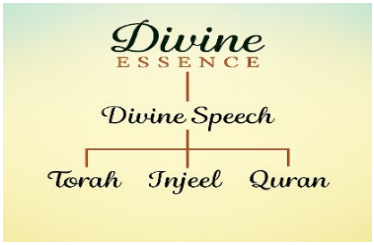
V.2 Asharites: Roots and Evolutions

The Asharites claim that God speaks without a letter or a voice. In their view, Divine speech is a pre-existent Divine Attribute of Essence (Kalam Nafsi), expressed through contingent and temporal letters and sounds in the written Quran (Midad) so that recipients of the messages can understand it in their own language (Arabic). For the Asharites, God speaks, whereas for the Mutazilites God is a communicator without having to speak. Both schools consider the written and vocalised Quran to be temporal, but for the Asharites there is a metaphysical relation that

effectively links the written and vocalised Quran to a Divine attribute of Essence, which serves as a constant reminder of its source and establishes the boundaries for humankind.

Such differences affect metaethical narratives and, by default, other Islamic disciplines, including interpretation and jurisprudence. This is being examined in the quest to identify the most suitable metaethical models for Muslims and their religious and educational institutions in the United Kingdom.

For the Asharites, the Quran is neither the Divine attribute of essence nor an emanation or an embodiment of it, but the Quran is metaphysically linked to a pre-existent Divine attribute of essence, which it expresses.



Asharites



Mutazilites

Figure 2 : Divine Scriptures

The Quran, as an expression of a Divine attribute of Essence from a speaking God, demands literalism in interpretation: from soft to hard, literalism exists among the Asharites. As for Athari Salafism, which holds that God speaks with a pre-existent voice and letters, that the Quran is not created, and that it is the actual direct Arabic speech of God, hard literalism for them is a normal consequence. Within the scope of this thesis, there may be a link between how the Quran is situated in relation to the Divine and literalism. Between hard createdness and nil createdness, the tendency to exercise literalism shifts. This has a significant impact on

Quran interpretation, jurisprudence, and morality, which in turn affects the lives of Muslims, especially in a non-Muslim reality.

The early Asharites are known for Hard Tafweed (full deferral of meaning and rejection of literal meaning), whereas later Asharites allowed metaphorical interpretations. This may give the impression that this school rejects literalism, but this methodology is pursued only when the literal meaning would lead to anthropomorphism or corporeality in relation to God. In every other aspect, especially morality, the Asharites are literalists who always prefer literal meaning to metaphorical interpretations of verses, unlike the Mutazilites, whose five primary principles govern their interpretations, not the other way around.

Divine Omnipotence defines the Asharite school's metaethics as much as it defines every theological position they uphold. In their attempt to uphold Divine Omnipotence as central to their theology and core to their school, which is why Abu Al-Hassan broke off from the Mutazilites in the first place, the Asharites declared that the relation between causes and effects is not necessary: occasionalism. In their order, there is only one active doer and real (Fa'il Haqiqi), and that is God.

This effectively amounts to denying fire's innate capacity to burn, for example, as the Divine is the real agent of change, while all other contingent agents, including fire, are secondary or apparent agents (Fa'il Majazan) only. The Asharites are soft determinists or compatibilists. They sought to move as far as possible from the hard determinists of Islam (Al-Jabbriayyh), but their pace only took them so far. The Asharite theory of occasionalism has implications for morality, the epistemic moral agency of humans, and the meaning of human freedom and autonomy.

Their theory of ‘Acquisition’ (Al-Kasb) is an attempt to grant humans the minimum level of agency required for accountability on judgment day. However, if fire does not truly burn, then nothing is inherently evil unless a revelation designates it as such. The same could be carried forward to moral values: ‘In other words, he believed that physical necessity does not equate to logical necessity. This has implications for understanding morality, too. Again, since Al-Ghazali believes that God is only bound by the law of contradiction, God can permit whatever moral system He chooses to manifest.’ (Shoaib, 2021, P. 557)

In a world where fire and burning are not tied by cause and effect, it is only logical that there would be no necessary relation between a deed and its moral worth, as there is nothing intrinsic and moral objective truth does not exist: ‘…the intellect is incapable of judging whether a deed is good or vile.’ (Ali’ji, 2016, P.150)

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the Asharites compromised the link between Divine wisdom and Divine decree. He pointed out that they eroded the notion that the welfare of man and his interests are the underlying reason for the order of the Divine: ‘…He created the creatures and gave the orders for no cause, reason or motive. He (God) did all that out of pure ontological and epistemological will…This was the saying of many sects from the people of Malik, Al-Shafii and Ahmed and others as well as Al-Ashari and his disciples…Among the reasons they had (to say such a thing) is that had He (God) created the creatures for a reason then He would be incomplete without it and complete with it…’ (Ibn Taymiyya, 2005, B8:P51) However, Ibn Taymiyyah’s analysis needs to be accepted with nuance, because it is the later Asharites who sowed the seeds of the higher purposes of Shariah.

Maimonides, who was heavily influenced by Averroes and the Mutazilite school of thought that emanated from Baghdad, the rival of Andalus, criticised the Asharites on this point: 'According to the theory of those feeble-minded persons, man is more perfect than his Creator. For what man says and does has a certain purpose, whilst the actions of God are different; He commands us to do what is of no use to us and forbids us to do what is harmless. Far be this! On the contrary, the sole object of the Law is to benefit us…' (Maimonides, 2018, p. 439)

The early Asharites rejected ethical absolutism and utility as the criterion for good and evil. Al-Zarkhan cited their argument against utility in his notable PhD thesis, which investigated Al-Razi in depth: 'If a benefit (the concept of utility) is good intrinsically, then every benefit and pleasure will be intrinsically good, and this would make fornication and homosexuality imperatively good.' (Al-Zarkhan, 1963, p. 517)

The Asharites adopted revelational subjectivism, which will be presented later in this chapter. However, it is the Asharites who laid the foundations for the higher purposes of Shariah through the works of Imam Juwayni and his notable student Al-Ghazali. The higher Purposes of Sharia is an attempt to present the core targets of Islamic legislation in accordance with revelation and Sunnah (Prophetic traditions). While, in principle, the higher purposes of Shariah (Maqasid Al-Shariah) demonstrate the general themes that underlie many modern conventions on human rights, they still operate within an Islamic framework rather than a secular liberal one.

Common grounds offer opportunities for reconciliation, but the inherent contrasts cannot be overlooked or sidelined. At the heart of the debate is the question of whether human reason or revelation is central, especially among Muslim scholars and institutions that uphold different

approaches to Quranic interpretation, the role of hadith Ahad, abrogation, consensus and Qiyas, in line with their metaethics, which remains an understudied aspect of analysis.

Also, at the heart of the debate are the values reflected in the core theological positions of Islamic schools on the attributes of the Divine. It is true that such positions reflect the moral voids and struggles of the time, but metaethics will shape how the higher purposes of Shairah play out in real life, rather than academic debates and apologetic studies that obscure true common ground and major differences, including irreconcilable ones.

If we examine the higher purposes of Shairah, it will become clear that preserving the intellect in Islam entails banning all corruptive elements that could distort it and that includes alcohol, narcotics, and pornography, for example. Preserving the offspring would entail protecting their lives in utero and protecting their minds from harmful ideologies that could distort their perceptions of reality during their most vulnerable years (formative years) when values, perceptions and beliefs are forming. It will also entail protecting them from being the offspring of adulterous and illegitimate relations that would deny them lineage, inheritance, and would cut the biological ties between them and their families, which has serious implications for family dynamics. Preserving private and public wealth would entail banning gambling and usury. All the schools within the scope of this thesis would agree on such applications of the five purposes of Shariah, regardless of their metaethics, but how that would be applied within a modern liberal and secular context is where metaethics may lead to different approaches and outcomes.

A legislating intellect, driven by the pursuit of justice, may apply the five purposes of Shairah very differently in a modern liberal and secular setting from an intellect that begins by

declaring it has no legislative authority, while pursuing soft and hard literalism and downgrading human reason in the face of hard taqlid: 'From the above, it does seem that a greater ethical convergence between the Muslim sacred texts and current international norms of human rights (also a work in progress) will require more than a modernised maqasid approach to Islamic law.' (Johnston, 2007, p. 187) However, the higher purposes of Shairah have solid foundations that can be built on and tailored for effective operation in modern Western liberal democracies.

V.3 Asharites: Man, the Active Listener (Al-Monsit)

'And I (God) have chosen you, so listen to what is being revealed.' (Quran, 20:13)

The Asharites were scripture-based in matters of morality, and the Islamic scriptures were their pure measure. Decentralising human reason, powered by centralising Divine Omnipotence, secured their full commitment to a set of moral declarations that, in their world, is not linked to any true independent meaning or reality. Decentralising human reason reduces its engagement with the consequences of moral declarations. This carries parallels with Kant's system, where consequences are not the measure but rather commitment to a set of pure principles and duties (Divine by means of revealed scripture in the case of the Asharites): 'Thus, the moral worth of the action does not lie in the effect that is expected from it, nor therefore in any principle of action that needs to borrow its motivating ground from this expected effect.' (Kant, 2012, P.16)

Laws and duties are at the heart of this type of moral philosophy, not the consequences. In the case of the Asharite order, this left little room for human reason as a vehicle for understanding and deduction in ethics and morality. This is where Kant parts ways with the

Asharites, as his was a rational morality rather than a revealed morality: 'Opposite to this is the opinion of the early Asharites which links between the goodness and badness of things in relation to what the Shariah decrees and in that area…and this means that goodness and badness are not intrinsic; they are transient traits, liable to change. A Sharia (of a messenger) may deem something good then comes after that another sharia that abrogates the judgment of the previous one deems it (the same thing) bad. The same act could be good in one context and bad in another context…' (Al-Zarkhan, 1963, 511)

If we follow the Asharite logic, as Averroes states: 'So according to them, polytheism is in itself neither injustice nor evil, but with regard to religion, and had religion ordained it, it would have been just and true. Such also would have been the case with any kind of sin.' (Averroes, 2109, p.58)

The Asharites' reply to the Euthyphro dilemma positions them as the Islamic lords of Divine Command theory. Good and evil have no intrinsic status, and there are no objective moral truths. Morality is entirely based on Divine will, which could deem what is evil good and what is good evil in an alternative reality, era, or even in scriptures. This would easily make the Asharite moral order sound arbitrary and consequentialist, with eschatological outcomes and consequences dominating their reasoning.

Islamic eschatological consequentialism, as defined in this thesis, holds that what achieves the greatest good and benefit for the individual, community, and the ummah in the Hereafter is deemed good, necessary, and morally imperative. Consequences in the Hereafter are central to any Islamic theologian or moralist. Whatever model they offer, eschatological consequences

will reign supreme. Islamic eudaimonia is rooted in the Hereafter, for salvation is not guaranteed by simply becoming a Muslim in mainstream Islam.

The schools may differ in how they manifest eschatological consequentialism, for example, the Mutazilites elevating the role of human reason on a par with the scriptures, the Asharites downgrading the role of human reason relative to the scriptures, or the Zahirites upholding extreme literalism. Yet they all upheld eschatological consequentialism, one way or the other. If the good was central to Socrates and eudaimonia the peak for Aristotle, eschatological consequentialism is what matters to all Muslim theologians.

However, the metaethics of every school leads the human agent, whether a follower or a scholar, to engage with the scriptures differently, and this, in turn, affects jurisprudence. For a school, declassifying consensus to uphold the opinion of one scholar whose arguments align with justice, for example, is how eschatological consequentialism is upheld, whereas upholding an Ahad hadith that negates modern human reason is how eschatological consequentialism plays out for another Muslim or school. Such differences affect Muslims in a modern liberal and secular society whose official worldview is irrelevant to Divine revelation.

V.4 The Dilemma of Asharite Individuals, Communities, and Institutions in the UK

The predominant Asharite metaethics poses challenges for Muslims in a modern secular and liberal context as it grounds itself in Islamic Divine revelation while eliminating rational moral reasoning, which reduces human moral agency from an epistemological perspective. Modern liberal and secular societies seek to establish arguments and solutions with no direct reference to Divine revelations.

However, the Asharite metaethical model does not operate in a vacuum. Their Divine Command theory (DCT) and metaethical model, along with their narratives, are rooted in the Quran, which mitigates the Asharite metaethical model and their DC theory by upholding universal values that the Quran upholds. Divine Command is not inherently wrong. What makes it problematic is its root. The Asharite metaethics that feed into their DC are revelation-based, which draws attention to the Quran rather than their DC model.

Assuming that a Divine Command model is rooted in a book that calls for and justifies transgressions against innocent lives, the intellect, offspring, wealth (private and public), and the freedom of religious conviction, then that Divine Command model would constitute a threat to national and international security. However, the Asharite DCT is the opposite. It is rooted in a book that preserves the intellect and elevates its role, protects offspring, and safeguards wealth and religion.

The Asharite DC model leaves moral values void of any intrinsic and discernible meaning in a modern secular liberal United Kingdom, but the universal values of the Quran, which the Mutazilites discerned independently of revelation while affirming the alignment between discernible moral values and the values revealed by the Divine, ensure that the Asharites remain highly relevant to modern liberal and secular Western realities, though with some challenges that will eventually need addressing, as their metaethical narratives do not allow them to deliver what the Mutazilites delivered and could be used to resolve conflicts and challenges in a reality that is not bound by the Quran and Sunnah and certainly not by consensus and Qiyas.

The Quran sets out a wealth of universal values: justice, individuality, liberty, environmental welfare, animal welfare, truthfulness, etc. The Asharites are bound by their own

metaethical narratives to observe these values, regardless of whether they acknowledge their intrinsic reality or recognise their discernibility independently of revelation. However, their metaethics uphold Divine omnipotence as a central value while decentralising human reason and limiting epistemic moral agency. This, in turn, affects their ability to present solutions that can emerge only when human reason is placed on a par with scriptures, for in their order the human intellect is neither an independent legislator nor an authority in the realm of moral values.

Without the Quran and its universal moral framework, the Asharites could easily have fallen into moral blunders. The absence of external mitigating factors in the cases of Kant and Nietzsche, for example, led to devastating consequences and could have led to similar consequences had Asharite metaethics been rooted in a book that violated the higher purposes of Shaira, or the universal emancipative values upheld by the Quran.

Kant's rational categorical imperatives were used to justify Nazism and its crimes in the Eichmann trials because, unintentionally, Kant left the door open to such distortions of his principles by failing to provide clearer safeguards against misinterpretations of his words. Where Kant failed, the Mutazilites and the Asharites were mitigated by the boundaries of the Quran, even if the Asharites had far stricter boundaries than the Mutazilites, who designate the intellect as the legislator on a par with scriptures.

Once the intrinsic reality and inherent nature of good and evil, and of moral values, become fluid or non-existent, the risk of mass evil being packaged as good on utilitarian or Nietzschean grounds could become viable and be accommodated. Also, if consequences are completely denied, mass evil could be unleashed as a form of moral duty towards principles that were

rationalised as good and universal through indoctrination and manipulation, as played out in Nazi Germany.

Acts of mass violence were committed due to distorted readings of the Quran as well and this is where metaethics could contribute to the reformation of such readings. The authority of the Quran and its universal emancipative values, contrary to some stereotypical assumptions, provide Asharites with references to keep them in check.

The absence of a clear reference point of moral authority that can mitigate the corruptions that plague human reasoning, which could easily deem mass murder a moral duty to save humanity from a group of humans, even when packaged with the best of human intentions, undermines the Kantian system. The loopholes that were abused by the Nazis were not a figment of their imagination.

Asharite metaethics may be problematic for enlightened modernity, but treating the Quran as the book that fuels their DCT mitigates these problems. Reassuringly, within the scope of this comparative investigation, Asharite metaethical narratives are selected to support Muslims in their endeavours to uphold the value of tolerance in a modern, liberal, and secular United Kingdom.

V.5 The Asharite Metaethics and the Modern British Value 'Tolerance': Implications and Applications

Tolerance is an essential pathway to coexistence in multicultural societies, where people come from diverse backgrounds and where the authority of one religion no longer exists in a modern national state that is liberal and secular at the institutional and/or demographic levels.

The concept of tolerance indicates the presence of ideas and individuals or groups that do not blend well within the generally accepted mosaic of ideas and people. Humans tolerate and coexist with what they do not naturally feel harmonious with. This brings our attention to Parekh's (2002) insightful and subtle comment on the difference between tolerance and recognition. Tolerance is a British value, but 'equitable recognition' might be a value that needs to be added to the list of British values.

With reservations that have been made clear, the Mutazilites may be the closest within the scope of this study to human-centric morality (enlightened modernity) due to the centralisation of human reason and the centrality of justice to their model, but it is the Asharite metaethics that serve the value of tolerance when compared to the Mutazilites.

Human-centric morality, as defined in this thesis, refers to moral systems that are disconnected from divine revelation and its moral authority, grounding morality in epistemic moral agency rather than in revealed morality. Transcendental morality, by contrast, refers to moral systems that emanate from a divine revelation or are linked to a divine being that conceives, dictates, and controls them. Within Islamic morality, there is no purely human-centric morality, but the Mutazilites come closest to such a framework in this thesis.

Human-centric morality is a tree with its roots firmly planted in the soil of the earth, while transcendental morality is a tree whose roots are in the heavens. The former is a type of morality conceived by humankind through evolution in a godless world, or through human reason created for this function, independent of revelation and direct Divine authority over morality. The latter was revealed by the Divine to guide humankind, and to such moral measures humankind will be held to account in this life and the hereafter. The locus of control for human-centric morality lies with the human, whereas the locus of control for transcendental morality is linked to the Divine will.

In general, human-centric morality is marked by troubling levels of intolerance, despite attempts to escape the perceived intolerance of transcendental morality. If having no doctrines, temples, inquisitions, and witch-hunts is the mark of progressive morality, then modern human-centric morality fails its own standards. Within the scope of this thesis, and relatively, it is the home of Islamic DCT, which offers metaethical arguments and narratives that can be capitalised on to enhance Muslim observance of the value of tolerance, which is bound to help navigate a reality disconnected from the Divine revelation that regulates their lives. The Quran is a source of tolerance and a reference point that could challenge metaethical models and arguments that undermine tolerance. However, the Asharites lead on the value of tolerance for a particular reason: a lack of confidence in epistemic moral agency.

Metaethical models that centralise human reason and justice are not synonymous with tolerance, and the Mutazilites did not demonstrate tolerance towards their opponents. When it comes to sinful Muslims, for example, the Mutazilites' moral perceptions are not far from the harsh perceptions of the Khawarij (a group that demonstrated high intolerance for sinful Muslims, accompanied by high levels of violence). Commanding good and forbidding evil is

among the five primary principles of the Mutazilites, and their standards and bar for Muslims were extreme by many measures. Within the scope of this thesis, human-centric metaethical models risk lowering the threshold for tolerance, including in enlightened modernity (traditional Western modernity). Intolerance is a feature that stalks both modernity and the failure to recognise that lies in failing to understand what tolerance and intolerance are.

Decentralising human reason from their moral epistemology, while pursuing pure transcendental morality that leaves no role for humankind but to observe morality as revealed, plays a major role in the Asharites' relative tolerance compared with the Mutazilites and other humancentric metaethical models. Linking morality and Divine retribution to the presence of revelation, while grounding their Divine and Command theory in the Quran (revelational subjectivism), makes tolerance central to the Asharite worldview.

The promise of tolerance in the Asharite moral order does not stem from moral relativism. The Asharites are not moral relativists, as Avicenna was not. Confusion between attempts to explain the problem of evil philosophically, for example, and the metaethics of a school or figure could underlie interpretations that overlook the actual moral frameworks of the school or figure at hand.

The Asharites deny objective moral truths that would place constraints on God himself, which is what undermined the Mutazilite moral logic from the Asharite perspective. The Asharites deny the existence of objective moral truths in their attempt to give absolute dominance to Divine omnipotence, which is unrestrained by humankind's definitions regarding contingent morality. The Asharites are rooted in revealed morality, as dictated by the scriptures of the times, in general, or within the boundaries of the human experience. Their moral

absolutism is rooted in what this study classifies as revelational subjectivism. This means that in the absence of revelation, there are no moral truths that carry legal necessity, while in the presence of revelation, its morality effectively becomes the moral truths of its time that supersede any human moral reasoning.

From this corner emerges the most tolerant eschatological view of non-Muslims. The Asharites believe that, in the absence of Divine revelation, people are not obligated to believe in God, and that, even so, they will still go to paradise because obligation comes from revelation. Dethroning the human intellect in the realm of morality and upholding Divine Command theory led to their relaxed view of the non-Muslims in the hereafter. Also, the Asharites attribute moral righteousness to following a revelation, which again leads to relaxed approaches towards nations that lack access to revelations.

The Asharites' views on non-Muslims eschatologically pale in comparison to the harsh and judgmental opinions upheld by the Mutazilites, who were known for making the knowledge of God the first necessary intellectual endeavour for man, even in the absence of revelation and prophets, who were also known for the controversial 'The Middle Status between Two Statuses'.

Since the human intellect can discern Divine and moral truths in the absence of scriptures, and since it can legislate independently of them, the demands on humanity in the Mutazilite order are high, and the consequences are harsher. 'The Middle Status' testifies to the rigidity of the Mutazilite moral sense, which is correlated with the concept of objective moral truths: they deemed Muslims who commit major sins to be neither believers nor disbelievers, which had serious consequences in this life and is conducive to a precarious situation on judgment

day, and the Samarqand chapter of the Maturidi school (chapter VI) follows the Mutazilite position.

The Asharites' tolerance stems from the view that the human intellect is not regarded as the path to reliable and valid morality, and that Divine scriptures are the real starting point for holding humans to account for their convictions and moral standards. This leaves a real space for tolerance that one may not find among the Mutazilites, whose rationally discerned Divine and moral truths have effects in this life and the hereafter.

It is important to note that enlightened modernity and its human-centric morality, grounded in a confident and high sense of epistemic moral agency, also lags in tolerance. Tolerance as an official British value stems from postmodernism and its relativist prelude more than from enlightened modernity.

As a value, true tolerance is not merely about coexisting. Genuine tolerance involves a reduced sense of entitlement and supremacy on the part of the moral agent. It is not a coincidence that modernity and the Mutazilites, who share a common sense of epistemic moral agency, seem to uphold an unapologetically confident worldview rooted in belief in the human intellect of the rational moral agent and in the powers of human reason of the man who creates his own destiny.

Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali could be cited as an example of intolerance towards philosophers and certain strands of Shias, yet he also demonstrated a level of tolerance that the Mutazilites failed to show, especially towards non-Muslims.

V. 6 Asharite Tolerance in a 'Decadent West'

The tolerance of the Asharites could support Muslims, both individuals and institutions, in addressing some of the meta-narratives that could constitute a barrier between Muslims and their modern liberal and secular environments. From Friday sermons to educational circles, the tolerance of the Asharites could enhance the language and ideas of some Muslims and their scholars.

One of the narratives that some Muslims uphold, which may be challenging for coexistence, is the 'decadent West' narrative. It is a tale of liberal secular modernity and feminism threatening morality by, for example, liberating women and fuelling their rebellion against their male guardians and traditions. This narrative is upheld by some American Evangelical Christians and Orthodox Jews, but the focus of the study is on Muslims.

While it is a very reductionist tale that ignores the history of self-determination and emancipative ethos of Muslim women, which were modernly born during occupation resistance and the struggle to end colonialism, this meta-narrative of 'A Decadent West' provides an instant barrier to integration, for example, on the basis of the liberal and secular values of modernity.

Such meta-narratives form an intellectual barrier that casts doubt and suspicion over many modern moral models and arguments associated with Western nations. Western modern morality is a thorny topic in Middle Eastern nations, and some Muslim communities in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, where accusations sometimes fly across the wall whenever

‘‘the Medusa’’ of modernity attempts to walk into the puritan halls of some Muslim individuals and communities.

‘The Decadent West’ is a tale rooted in misconceptions about enlightened modernity and its moral order, and the lack of clear common grounds with Islamic metaethics. This theme is common among the devout followers of other scriptural religions, as we mentioned before. It is a tale that feeds intolerance and blows the trumpets of moral supremacy and exceptionalism. Such ideas and language are not conducive to tolerance. No sane individual or community can tolerate what is deemed to be decadent.

Asharite metaethics upholds the scriptures as the Divine channel of communication, in the absence of which humankind is humbled by contingent experiences, where no objective moral truths exist, and everyone stands a chance of entering paradise at some point, except for the disbelievers, who are narrowly defined. This position is naturally more prone to a tolerant understanding of the plights and trials of non-Muslims and humanity in general. Asharite metaethical narratives foster a sense of moral humility and a deeper understanding of others' moral realities.

The Asharites' moral epistemic humility is essential to encountering narratives of moral disdain and supremacy. According to Asharites, non-Muslim Westerners may end up in paradise regardless of their lifestyles, and this is much to the dismay of other Islamic schools of theology and some Muslims.

If humans need Divine revelation to guide them towards revealed morality that is contingent and temporal and holds no intrinsic truth or reality, tolerance for those who have

not received this revelation, or do not acknowledge it for a plethora of reasons, should ultimately rise and eliminate moral supremacist thinking.

The epistemic moral humility of the Asharites could prove transformational for Muslims when engaging with hostile narratives against them in the UK, for example. Hostile and Islamophobic narratives have sometimes led to violent or hostile individual and group reactions. The Asharite brand of tolerance could pave the way for different reactions that are more constructive and that observe tolerance as a British value.

It is true that the Asharites historically did not extend their tolerance to opposing theological schools or to philosophers, but the polemics of the times necessitated the intellectual duels that coloured the debates, which primarily targeted and criticised Muslim philosophers and rival Muslim theologians. This does not undermine the fact that their metaethics provides one of the best platforms for tolerance, crowned by the sober modesty that comes from their reliance on revealed scriptures that others may not have access to or knowledge of.

The Asharite arguments lead to the conclusion that an observant Asharite, who is observant of God's laws, ends up in the same paradise as a pagan who had no chance to access or understand the scriptures, a grace the Mutazilites did not extend even to Muslims who commit major sins. The following are Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali's words that testify to this Asharite dimension of tolerance: '…I say that God willing most of the Christian Romans and the pagans of this time are within the mercy of God and I mean the ones who are afar and the message did not reach them and they fall into three classes: those who never heard of Mohammed (PBUH) in the first place; those who heard of him and his miracles and live nearby and amidst the Muslim, and disbelieve in him; and those who have heard during their childhood of

Mohammed, but do not know his characteristics and traits, while being told that he is liar and manipulator who claimed to be a prophet and those are like the first type, for they have heard of his names along with what is opposite to who he is and this would not motivate the intellect to seek answers…' (Al-Ghazali, 1993, P.84)

Tolerance is a national British value in a multicultural society, and it may occasionally require stepping away from the transcendental realms of moral ideals and moral realism, which can feed epistemic conceit. The harsh moral blade of Western enlightened modernity and the Mutazilites, for example, is not upheld by the Asharites from a theoretical perspective.

The study acknowledges that not all Asharites will recognise or see the seeds of tolerance in their metaethics, but the thesis identifies these seeds to build on them. This could be another indication of a finding in this thesis: scholars may align with theological schools because of their broader theological propositions about Divine attributes, for example, but may not necessarily share their school's moral epistemology and ontology. This has been observed within the scope of this thesis. Intolerant Asharites may be subscribing to the Mutazilite moral worldview and epistemology, knowingly or not. This point requires further research.

V.7 Notable Asharite Names and Notable Asharite Institutions (Al-Azhar of Egypt)

A. Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 CE)

The notable Asharite Imam Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali is the product of a journey in which doubt was resolved by Divine Light and pride was quenched by Sufi salvation. Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali was born in Khorasan (Tous) to a textile weaver who died when Al-Ghazali was a

young boy. A Sufi friend of the family chaperoned Al-Ghazali and looked after him, using the money his father left him. Sufism has always been Al-Ghazali's refuge. Between this father figure and his Sufi refuge later in life, Al-Ghazali found exits from his intellectual and spiritual hardships. When the funds ran out, the Sufi caretaker sent Al-Ghazali to a school where he could work and learn. Al-Ghazali's admiration for Sufism may have begun at this point in his life: the care and support of a Sufi man for orphaned children.

Al-Ghazali's notable presence and potential did not escape the notice of Nizam Al-Mulk, a high-ranking minister within the Seljuk state whom he helped shape. Nizam Al-Mulk (1018-1092 CE) pursued an intellectual project of Sunni and Asharite orientation to counter the Shia and Batinyah (esotericism) intellectual projects, with all their shades. This was the era of the Asharites, and it witnessed the blossoming of their school. Al-Ghazali's journey is one of status and recognition, as he became a symbol of the Asharites, who engaged in intellectual duels with philosophy. Al-Ghazali could not escape his own philosophical nature and tendencies.

Al-Ghazali was also directing his criticism towards certain aspects of philosophy within the realm of metaphysics, not philosophy in general: 'Interestingly, however, authors seeking to renounce philosophy were ensnared by the very methods they sought to refute; Al-Ghazali, for instance, was viewed with suspicion among traditionalists for his speculative leanings and for his use of logic in Fiqh (jurisprudence); furthermore, he was roundly condemned for simultaneously employing and being inextricably entangled with the very philosophical methods he sought to disprove.' (Tamer, 2013, p. 331)

In his attempt to dethrone aspects of philosophy that threatened the creed, Al-Ghazali became a philosopher whose world was coloured by the discipline he studied carefully.

Whether or not he would classify himself as one, Al-Ghazali was a philosopher in his own right. As Iqbal said, he was the Kant of his times: ‘The aim is to alert all those who have good faith in philosophers, and think that their paths are free of contradictions, by exposing their incoherence.’ (Al-Ghazali, 2021, P. 48)

Ironically, there seems to be more than philosophical altercations between Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Averroes. Despite the long gap between them, Averroes replied to Al-Ghazali’s ‘Incoherence of the Philosophers’ with ‘The Incoherence of the Incoherence’ to salvage Islamic philosophy. However, the scrolls of these two intellectual giants were burnt at the altar of rejection by powerful adversaries. Two great thinkers from different intellectual terrains, or so they thought, somehow ended up in the same position, with their intellectual gems deemed a threat to the meta-narratives of their times. These were signs of the true loss of Andalus, for the perpetrators in both cases were from this land that once fostered thinkers and philosophers: ‘More striking is the anti-Sufi movement which existed in Al-Andalus during the Almoravid rule there. The rulers, as well as some of the Andalusian ulama (scholars), participated in this movement, which led to the burning of Al-Ghazali’s Ihya (Revival of the Religion’s Sciences).’ (Al-Musleh, 2012, p. 68)

Al-Ghazali is an incredibly challenging figure, and he certainly does not fall into the prototype Asharite scholar, upon careful examination: ‘There are competing interpretations of Al-Ghazali. One camp believes that he was an Asharite, whereas another camp believes that he was Avicennian.’ (Shoaib, 2021, P.556)

As a leading Asharite, Al-Ghazali established an Asharite order of the good just as Avicenna established his philosophical order of the good: ‘Everything that exists came forth

by His decree and overflowing justice…He (God) is wise with His actions and just with what He has ordained. His (God's) justice is not measured against the justice of His subjects. A human subject could become unjust as he is acting in a dominion that is not his, but injustice cannot be fathomed to come from Allah, as the dominion does not belong to anyone else other than Him, so that when He acts, it could be considered unjust.' (Al-Ghazali, 1925, P.19).

Through the Euthyphro lens, Al-Ghazali was an Asharite who upheld his school's principles. This implies that universal objective moral truths do not exist in Al-Ghazali's world. Human reason does not feature in his moral epistemology.

However, in his post-Levantine phase, some of his writings may suggest a subtle departure from the Asharite Divine Command position, which is central to their metaethics. The thesis questions these claims but leaves room for further research and raises more questions than it answers definitively.

In his 'Revival of the Sciences of the Religion', Al-Ghazali attributed the capacity to commit good and evil to man's natural predisposition: '…Evil is tightly mixed with good and embedded in the fabric of Adam, and it is only cleansed by one of the two fires: the fire of regret or that of hellfire.' (Al-Ghazali, 1957, Book of Repentance, P.2). This statement may indicate that good and evil possess an intrinsic and stable nature; however, this assumption would be challenged by the fact that objective moral truths have no inherent and stable nature that is discernible by human reason in the world of Al-Ghazali whose faith in the intellect was declining rather than increasing which drove him to pursue experiential illumination rather than moral reasoning that discerns objective moral truths independent of revelation if necessary.

Also, Al-Ghazali officially classified human traits into four categories: lordly traits (arrogance, pride, love of flattery and praise, etc.); diabolic traits (envy, cheating, hypocrisy, etc.); animalistic traits (gluttony, fornication, stealing, etc.); and beastly traits (anger, grudges, violence, murder, etc.) At first glance, the classification of these traits may suggest that they possess intrinsic moral significance that can be recognised independently of revelation, which is not the case for the Asharites. The concept of inherent moral truths is questioned in the realm of the Asharites were moral truths and predicates only rest on revelation. The Asharites are the home of the Divine Command theory.

Closer analysis reveals that, from Asharite perspectives, these moral evils still lack an inherent, stable nature. Moral predicates remain contingent upon revelation rather than upon an inherently stable moral truth that cannot change because it is grounded in the Divine moral logic. It is important to note that the Asharites correlate Divine justice with Divine omnipotence. The Divine is the only creator, and this deems all Divine actions necessarily just. This is a very different argument from that of the Mutazilites. The Asharite argument leaves the door open to the possibility of changing how moral evils and moral good are predicated, a position Averroes criticised heavily. What the Mutazilites may deem as logically and metaphysically impossible, the Asharites deem logically and metaphysically possible, but scripturally impossible, which is a world of difference. This is what Asharite revelational subjectivism entails.

Objective moral truths, as espoused by the Mutazilites, which include a universal, inherent, and stable moral meaning that captures a stable Divine moral order and reveals Divine moral logic that is metaphysically and logically impossible to change, are not found within Asharite terrains.

The more one delves into the world of Al-Ghazali, who flourished in the terrains of Sufism and mysticism, the more one may be inclined to think that there is a shift in his position, but there is no straightforward evidence that he departed from the traditional Asharite metaethical order.

Indeed, Al-Ghazali has a parallel to the Platonic Parable of the Cave: '…the status of the Quran to the eye of the intellect becomes like the status of the sunlight to the physical eye; therefore, the Quran should be called a light as the light of the sun is called light…the intellect realises the ineligibles and the esoteric truths via the Quran because if the wisdom inherent in it… ' (Al-Ghazali, 2020, p. 60) It is also true that Al-Ghazali talked about an innate eye that comes from another realm or the realm of the unknown and this means that this eye, which is an innate compass that leads people to truths on an ontological and metaphysical level: 'My thirst for realising the truth ontologically was my path and commitment from an early age and throughout my youth. It was an instinct and a Fitrah (a priori knowledge) that God instilled into me…' (Al-Ghazali, 2019, P. 10).

However, Al-Ghazali's illuminative epistemology differs fundamentally from the Mutazilites' conception of epistemic moral agency in a world of objective moral truths. For the Mutazilites, the intellect functions as a divinely bestowed guide capable of independently discerning stable, universal moral truths grounded in a Divine moral order that, according to them, cannot change metaphysically or logically. The epistemic moral agency presupposed by the Mutazilites' doctrine of universal, objective moral truths is still not evident within the illuminative framework of 'The Niche of Lights', even in a nuanced form. Further research is certainly needed.

The research indicates that Al-Ghazali drifted towards spirituality and Sufism to redeem himself at a time when his confidence in the autonomous powers of the human intellect was further diminishing. Even if there were growing signs of objective moral truths, they would be due to the Divine Light rather than to the inherent powers of the intellect or to epistemic moral agency.

Divine justice and Divine omnipotence are attributes that truly drove two schools in opposite directions. Both schools can engage with modern liberal and secular values from very different angles, suggesting an inclusive approach to harvest the best Islamic metaethical narratives for the four schools to ensure the best Muslim observance of British values.

Al-Ghazali's Asharite illuminative lens is extremely important for fostering tolerance towards other humans who may not have had access to Divine Light. Narratives of moral supremacy that sometimes taint sermons and circles of knowledge could eventually be turned towards mutual understanding and indeed compassion, as the Asharites espouse humility, believing that moral salvation depends on revelation and Divine Light.

While Al-Ghazali may come off as a rigid Islamic Divine Command theorist, his spirituality and his analysis of the human condition carry intersections with Hellenistic philosophers and traditional Sufis who are in pursuit of eudaimonia or the flourishing of humankind, which was showcased in his book 'The Alchemy of Happiness.

While we may be compelled to classify Al-Ghazali's metaethics in line with his lifelong Asharite commitment, Al-Ghazali shows that the borders between Asharism, Mutazilism, and

philosophy could blur. He was a divine command theorist, but the subtle changes that emerged as he grew older and became more mystical may require further research.

However, Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, a notable Asharite scholar, did walk away from the Asharite position towards the Mutazilite position as he drifted towards philosophy. In his prolific study of al-Razi, al-Zarkan established this change in the Imam's position: ''If we finish reading the last two books of Razi…we will find ourselves facing the third stage (of his transformation), he distinguished between the deeds of Allah and the deeds of the subjects (humans): the deeds of Allah are not subject to the measures of goodness and badness. As for the deeds of the subjects, it is judged as good or bad, and the judge is the human reason.' (Al-Zarkan, 1963, P.517)

This further indicates that scholars fluctuate and change, but the school's predominant position does not: '…what we care about is that Al-Razi acknowledged moral reasoning on matters of good and evil like the Mutazilites.' (Al-Bashdri, 2020, p. 352)

V.8. An Institutional Chapter of the Asharites: Al-Azhar and its Disciples

This section focuses on notable and understudied Asharite scholars and thinkers who grew up in the shadow of the Asharite Azhar institution and upheld Asharite metaethics. The purpose of this section is to show how contemporary scholars and institutions of the Asharite school could also be used to support the value of tolerance in modern liberal and secular Western environments.

Within the scope of this thesis, Asharite metaethics may be challenging in a modern, liberal, and secular United Kingdom, but, through the principle of tolerance, Asharites stand to support Muslims in their endeavours to uphold tolerance in modern liberal and secular democracies.

At the heart of this section is Al-Azhar which coloured the Egyptian horizon and impacted those who were affiliated with it and those who opposed it. Al-Azhar Institution was born a Shiite:

'The Fatimid leader Jawhar (in 969 CE) took over Egypt, whose capital was Fustat. Jawhar established a city to the north of Fustat, where his army camped, and called it Al-Mansouriyah. The construction of Al-Azhar Mosque began in the new city in 967 CE.' (Al-Khatib, 1986, p. 6)

Al-Azhar became a symbol of Islamic knowledge and intellect in a short time. Al-Azhar experienced a transformation during the time of Salah Al-Din Al-Ayoubi (Saladin) as Egypt transitioned from a Shiite to a Sunni country, a difficult process that affected the status of Al-Azhar and its role. During the reign of Baybars, Al-Azhar underwent renovations and a gradual restoration of its golden days.

Al-Azhar, with its Asharite theology and worldview, has influenced Egypt and the wider Muslim population on a global level, but since the 1970s it has faced tough competition from contemporary Salafism and Wahabism. This competition remains as fierce as ever, with both sides casting doubt on the other.

A. Imam Mohammed Al-Ghazali (1917-1996): The Revolutionary

Mohammed Al-Ghazali was an Asharite scholar who not only graduated from Al-Azhar University but was also mentored by some of its most notable figures, including Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltoot, a former Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, and Sheikh Abdel Azeem Al-Zorqani, who authored 'The Springs of Gnosis in the Sciences of the Quran'. Al-Ghazali earned the highest degree of accreditation from Al-Azhar at the age of twenty-six and assumed senior positions within the university. Al-Ghazali's impact and reputation earned him global recognition, and he received honorary prizes from Pakistan and Malaysia.

Al-Ghazali was a prolific writer whose legacy testifies to his grand vision of reform, centred on combating stagnation, offering contextualised solutions to modern challenges, and encouraging the revival of intellectualism in the world of Islam. The notable scholar addressed the rights of women and minorities, as well as the importance of restoring the Quran's ultimate authority over the Sunnah.

Al-Ghazali sought to restore the Quran to its dominant position as the judge of the Sunnah, not the other way round. The Sheikh's mature years witnessed the final prominent and public cohort of high-impact Egyptian Islamic scholars and thinkers who sought to grant the human intellect its due rights as ordained by God, and to reform and restructure Islamic thought while standing firmly on solid Islamic foundations, in the hope of ending stagnation and triggering another 'Revival of the Religious Sciences'.

Al-Ghazali established his own methodology for dealing with hadith: 'Sheikh Ghazali explained his methodology for accepting Prophetic hadith narrations, which allowed hadiths

that contain a weakness in the chain of narration but conform with the Quran and its meanings and implications, from near and afar; while rejecting other hadiths that may have a valid chain of narration but defy what the Quran or the human intellect point to or entail, or do not comply with the general rules of Islam.' (Baoutah, forward to Al-Ghazali, 2012, p. 35)

It is important to note that the Asharite Al-Ghazali of Azhar established his methodology, inspired by major companions and scholars, for example, 1. Imam Malik, who elevated the practices of Madinah above Hadith Ahad; 2. Aisha Bint Abi Baqr Al-Sedeeq, a mother of the believers and a notable scholar herself, who rejected more than one hadith because it conflicted with the Quran or with what she experienced as an eyewitness in the household of the Prophet; and 3. Imam Abu Hanifah, who also rejected hadiths that conflicted with the Quran despite their valid chain of narration.

Imam Mohammed Al-Ghazali was neither the first nor the last of the notable reformers who sought to restore the balance between the Quran and the Sunnah, while acknowledging the Quran's higher authority. Al-Ghazali's book 'The Prophetic Sunnah: Between Jurists and Hadith Scholars' sparked a storm, as it provided evidence challenging the norms of the Hadith school, according to the hardliners of the Athari school. The backlash was tantamount to excommunicating the scholar who had carved a place for himself in the global Muslim consciousness, but the Ghazali mountain was unmovable and unshakable: 'Some youngsters succeeded in turning the tree of Islamic teachings upside down. They have made stems and roots out of light branches, and they have made important foundations become leaves that fall with the wind.' (Al-Ghazali, "2012, P.7)

Imam Mohammed Al-Ghazali was among the modern pioneers of thematic analysis of the Quran, and he identified five central themes on which the Quran centres. Al-Ghazali also decided to take women's causes on board his reformation ship. In his book, 'Women's causes: Between Stagnant and Foreign Traditions', he addressed the problems women face due to rigidity and erroneous juristic methodologies and assessments: 'In our juristic tradition, with all its glory and richness, there are verdicts that the jurists based on people's opinions but have no foundational footing to rely on in the Quran or Sunnah. Or even secondary evidence…' (Al-Ghazali, 2005, P.70)

Al-Ghazali is yet another Asharite scholar who entertained a bigger role for the human intellect (epistemic moral agency) while maintaining his Asharite identity and roots, as he always sought evidence from the Quran and Sunnah to refute what seemed to contradict the human intellect and human fitrah.

Al Ghazali's works constitute one of the biggest contributions of the Asharites to Muslims in a Western, modern, liberal, and secular reality, as they provide scholarly pathways towards tolerance by cracking down on juristic narratives and opinions that are not conducive to tolerance through centralising the Quran rather than stagnant opinions and consensuses.

B. **Imam Mohamed Metwalli Al-Shaarawi of Al-Azhar (1911-1998 CE):**

Imam Mohamed Metwalli Al-Shaarawi was an Egyptian symbol of the Al-Azhar Institution. During his lifetime, he delivered the most notable Quran interpretation programme on Egyptian TV, and he is classified as one of the most influential Quranic scholars of the 20th century.

On some occasions, the Imam made it clear that we need a divine revelation to distinguish between evil and good and what is forbidden and what is permitted as our human mind is incapable of arriving to the shores of the truth without the word of the True one (God).

However, there are traces of fluctuation in his opinion, and this point was raised in the methodology. Some scholars offer what appear to be contradictory opinions without resolving these contradictions, even when the timeline is taken into consideration: 'Evil in the universe did not emerge from the process of creation or the rules established for the creatures, but it is man's interference which has corrupted it (life)…Man by straying from the path of Allah has created social diseases and ailments which brought forth wretchedness and evil and this is why Allah, Praise be to Him, has sent messengers with a curriculum (system) to bring back to the universe its coherence and beauty.' (Al-Sharawi, 1990, p. 17)

In addition, in his book, 'Virtue and Vice', Al-Shaarawy said: '…Why should we exhaust ourselves by putting measures for goodness? The True One (God) is the one who sent His sharia and within it all the measures of goodness. The measures of goodness which are laid down by man could be imbalanced, but the measures of goodness established by God can never be imbalanced.' Good and evil are intrinsic, but we need revelation for the particulars. (Al-Sharawi, 2000, P.26)

In one of his important lectures, Al-Shaarawi clearly and without any doubt supported the concept of human fitrah and the ability of man to distinguish between evil and good, and right and wrong, independent of written revelation (Athari metaethical narratives): '…We find that divine legislation, for example, informs man not to do certain things, but some people say that even if God did not directly communicate that these things are forbidden, man still would have

shied away from committing these things…this proves that human nature has innate tendencies, if tendency drives man to satisfy a certain desire (illegitimately), another call tendency deters from doing so…' (Al-Sharawi, video lecture, 1980s)

Al-Shaarawi's contradictions may not be contradictions at all, as he may have been systematically trying to formulate his unique position that blends his Asharite roots and Athari inclinations. Al-Shaarawi's work in Saudi Arabia may have contributed to his attempt to develop his own model, in which he blends Asharite and Athari propositions, and this is even evident in his treatment of Divine attributes.

Al-Sharawi's subscription to the concept of human fitrah and man's God-given innate ability to distinguish between good and evil was not Mutazilite, but it was certainly not Asharite as well. Al-Shaarawi is an Asharite with Athari inclinations in the context of this thesis. It was an intermediate position, where the written word of God still dominated, shaped, and guided morality, but human reason and human fitrah featured highly as an inner compass capable of guiding us to the intrinsic shores of morality.

In his book, 'The Good and the Evil', the Imam clearly attributed to the absence of God in one's life: 'We know that the Quran was revealed firstly to treat diseases that appeared and festered as a result of straying from the path of Allah…The True One (God), Praise be to Him, has established His universe on the basis of rules and laws that makes beauty the defining character of this universe, but man with his granted ability to choose (between good and evil) has interfered in this universe to corrupt it. Willingly, he (man) chose things that go against the official purposes of Allah in His universe and from this evil surfaced and from here corruption occurred.' (Al-Sharawi, 1990, P.17)

Again, the Asharite metaethics that links revelation, Divine light, and morality promotes moral epistemic humility, which is central to tolerance, a feature that human-centric morality struggles with.

V.9 Conclusion:

Asharite metaethics were shaped by the urgent need to affirm Divine Omnipotence and to deconstruct what appeared to be limitations imposed by the Mutazilites on Divine will. Understanding this is key to grasping their crackdown on epistemic moral agency and the domineering role of the human intellect, which the Mutazilites elevated to a source of legislation that trumped consensus, Qiyas, and Hadith Ahad.

Nevertheless, Asharite metaethics pose challenges because they dethrone the human intellect, deny objective moral truths, and root morality solely in Divine scriptures, leaving little room for negotiation. At first glance, the Asharite school does not meet the two criteria required for enhanced engagement with British values, but on closer inspection, it becomes clear that this school supports tolerance, a core value in any multicultural society.

The Asharites offer metaethical narratives that support the value of tolerance, and by rooting their DCT model in the Quran, they mitigate the deflation of good and evil in their metaethical order.

The Asharites are the founders of the higher purposes of Shariah, which, while governed by revelation, still shares significant common ground with universal values that may appeal to modern perceptions of human rights.

Chapter VI

The Maturidis' Metaethics

&

Democracy and Individual Liberty

As

Modern British Values

'...And since the intellect recognizes the goodness of every good and the evilness of every evil, (hence) an act of evil is deemed evil, while an act of good is deemed good, command and prohibition are assigned accordingly.' (Al-Maturidi, 2003, P. 183)

Chapter Aims

This chapter presents ***the generic metaethical perspectives of the Maturidis with regards to the two criteria****, to* ***explore the potential impact*** *of their metaethics on* ***contemporary Muslim observance of two modern British values: Democracy and Individual Liberty. This will then be followed by*** *presenting the Metaethics of notable Maturidi scholars and affiliates.*

VI.1 Background for the Purposes of Textual Analysis and Contextual Hermeneutics

The understudied Maturidi school is usually perceived as the sister school of the Asharite school, as both schools agree on most of their core theological topics. The general assumption, and attempts to reconcile the two schools, may tend to eclipse the fundamental metaethical differences between them.

The inception of the Maturidi school, and its lineage, which is traced back to Abu Hanifah and the school of opinion (Madrassit Al-Ra'i), underscores the centrality of the human intellect in their metaethical arguments, to the point that, in this study, the school is closer to the Mutazilites than to the Asharites.

This does not negate the existence of a sub-branch of the Maturidi school (the Bukharah Chapter) that adopted metaethical positions closer to the Asharites; however, the Samarqand Chapter, which is closer to the Mutazilites metaethically, is classed as the predominant and representative chapter of the school in this thesis. It houses a conglomerate of scholars central to the meaning of Maturidism, including the founder, Imam Al-Maturidi himself.

The Maturidis are a Transoxian school situated at the crossroads between the Asharites and the Mutazilites. The Maturidis, whose core Divine attribute and axiom is Divine Wisdom, aim to uphold Divine omnipotence while elevating the intellect to the throne within the halls of moral epistemology. Epistemic moral agency is a spectrum, and the Maturidis are not Mutazilites, but they are the closest Sunni school to them.

Divine Wisdom offered the Maturidis the opportunity to balance the role and demands of revelation with those of the intellect as it navigates the challenges of interpretation. The school pursued moral reasoning and explanations for Divine edicts and teachings in a manner that neither negates nor sidelines the human intellect, while considering how the intellect perceives Divine perfection and what the human intellect expects from God, according to a rational, human perspective, through the prism of Divine Wisdom.

This places the school closer to the Mutazilites than to the Asharites in the fundamentals of its moral worldview, especially regarding the Divine moral order. What the Mutazilites deemed logically and metaphysically impossible was often also deemed so by the Maturidis, but the Maturidis did not necessitate anything of God, while making a number of moral givens essential by virtue of Divine Wisdom and not necessarily incumbent on God by virtue of Divine Justice.

However, this school of theology parts ways with the Mutazilites because their attempt to crown the intellect within the Maturidi epistemological framework did not grant the human intellect the power of independent legislation, nor did it place human reason on a par with revelation. For the Maturidis, justice was not the central Divine attribute; Divine wisdom was.

While some Mutazilites found a place within the Abu Hanifah school of jurisprudence and within the Shia terrains of the religious sciences, the Mutazilites might have developed their own distinct school of jurisprudence had they not faced a setback and eventual demise. This leaves the Maturidis to confidently define themselves as the legitimate inheritors of the Abu Hanifah legacy, where the human intellect is given its due rights and authority in a world of objective moral truths, but is not on par with scriptures or independent of them, and is not granted valid and credible independent legislative powers.

VI. 2 Maturidis: Roots and Evolutions

The Maturidis are a school that was born in a faraway land, obscured by geography and language. This allowed the school some autonomy in its early phase, which it gradually lost in the ongoing attempt to align with the Asharites. The reconciliation did not change the Maturidis' predominant position, which distinguishes them from the Asharites in relation to this thesis.

For the Asharites, Divine omnipotence was the answer to the incoherences of unchecked human reasoning, which was straying from traditional Islamic sources in a Muslim world that was increasingly becoming intellectually, politically, and geographically disintegrated. However, the rich and relatively calm Transoxiana plateau of an eastern Andalus of poetry and philosophy upheld Divine Wisdom as central to its theological order, in line with calmer and deeper perceptions. Transoxiana was basking in the shades of higher values of self-expression rather than survival values (Inglehart, 2018). It was a different scene from Baghdad, with all its turmoil and political upheavals.

The Maturidis are mostly Hanafi, another distinction from the Asharites, who are mainly Shafi and Maliki. The Maturidi-Hanafi Metaethics is unique and offers a more accepted and palatable approach than the Mutazilites, which is an important pragmatic assessment that escapes the champions of neo-Mutazilism, who sometimes try to portray the Mutazilites as a pro-secular order, constituting a fundamental misreading of the Mutazilites, who are Islamic scholars and thinkers who classed themselves as defenders of monotheism and Divine justice. The Mutazilites do offer a window into a form of Islamic modernism, but it remains Islamic rather than secular and liberal in the usual sense.

The impact of metaethics cannot be overstated, for example, Hadith Ahad cannot collide with the Quran or human reason in the Hanafi order, and this is why priority, when needed, goes to Qiyas and juridical preference (Isthisan) where the Hanafis are concerned, while Hadith Ahad dominates over human reason in the Shaffi order at least in principle.

For the Hanafi school, Hadith Ahad is conditioned by: 'Conditions to rely on Ahad narration (Khabar Al-Wahid): 1. It does not contradict the Quran; 2. It does not contradict popular sunnah; and 3. It does not contradict what is self-evident by human reason.' (Al-Shashi, 2019, P.201). Authority of Hadith Ahad is conditional and hangs on the above in the house of the Hanafis. While in the Shaffi order, Hadith Ahad has a presumed higher authority that does not hang on human reason within the set of conditions for it: 'Establishing Hadith Ahad…is a foundational principle on its own.' (Al-Shaffi, 2022, P.351)

When Islamic metaethical narratives centralise human reason, there is more room for Muslims to find solutions for the challenges that arise as they observe their religion in a modern and liberal secular reality that does not relate to their religion, traditions, and sometimes moral

values as well. The needs, realities and challenges for Muslims in modern Western liberal democracies are different from the needs and challenges for Muslims in Muslim majority countries whose traditions, culture, and values emanate from primarily Islamic halls of thought, history, and culture.

VI.3 Maturidis: Man, the Discerner

The Maturidis inhabit a world of objective moral truths discernible by the human intellect, but they stop short of allowing human reason to be on a par with revelation in matters of legislation. Unlike the Mutazilites, human reason was not among their sources of legislation. The Maturidis have the advantages of both worlds: the world of the Mutazilites and the world of what came to be known as Ahl Al-Sunnah and Al-Jamah.

One should assume that the human moral agent who discerns objective moral truths through the eyes of the soul, as with the Atharis (chapter VII), is no different from the human moral agent who discerns them through the eye of the intellect, since both are observing and discerning the same phenomenon. This is especially true given that some Muslim theologians use the terms ‘intellect, soul, heart, etc.’ as synonyms, referring to the human essence or the soul. However, this is not the case, and there is a difference; this is why metaethics matter.

Human reason and the soul are both Divine endowments, each with the capacity to discern objective moral truths, but this would be a superficial conclusion that fails to grasp the true, subtle connotations and meanings of the words as the speakers intended.

There is a subtle difference between the Athari and the Maturidi conceptions of moral agents, with consequences for Quranic interpretation and the foundations of jurisprudence. Human fitrah refers to a priori knowledge that the Divine sowed in our human fabric, and when it denotes an innate moral compass, it relates to the soul rather than the body. This contrasts with the need for copulation, which is an instinct of the physical body rather than of the human essence or the soul.

The discerning soul is an active moral agent, but it still lacks the powerful and bold independence of the human intellect, which carries the risk of straying from the letter of the Divine command, which is interpreted as close to literal as possible in the realm of the Atharis.

The Divine created the souls first, and they testified to His existence and His glory. To that testimony, they will be held accountable on judgement day: 'And when your Lord (God) brought forth the offspring of the children of Adam (in an unknown realm) and made them testify in front of each other (when He asked them) ''Am not Your Lord?'' and they replied: ''Indeed, we testify!''. Lest they say, on judgement day, that they were oblivious to this.' (Quran: 7:172) However, for some, this immaterial body is a shy moral force, inspired and guided, but incapable of a confident Mutazilite sense of epistemic moral agency.

The Maturidis and the Mutazilites are clear that human reason can discern objective moral truths independent of revelation. Semantics and word choice matter, as they point to subtle differences that translate into the degree of empowerment the human has as a moral agent, which trickles down and affects everything from interpretation to morality and jurisprudence.

Subtle semantic differences in the realm of metaethics translate into differences in Quran interpretation, jurisprudence, and morality. For the Mutazilites and the Maturidis, human reason is the discerner of objective moral truths, placing an obligation on man to reflect and empowering human reason as an active moral agent with legislative powers in the house of the Mutazilites.

Theoretically speaking, the Maturidis and the Mutazilites seem to be the two schools that offer metaethical models that can readily engage with modern liberal and secular realities and values, thereby supporting Muslims and helping them resolve conflicts more effectively, as these two schools meet, to varying degrees, the two criteria required for constructive engagement with modern liberal and secular British values. However, the Asharites and the Atharis also have contributions to make when metaethics are explored with care and diligence.

In the following sections on Maturidi metaethics regarding individual liberty and democracy, the thesis draws on the works of one of the most understudied thinkers, Musa Jaruallah Begiev (1875-1949), who was highly influenced by the Maturidis and Imam Mohamed Abduah.

Presenting scholars affiliated with the schools within the scope of this thesis allows for a visualisation of engagement with British values, which the predominant position alone is not sufficient to articulate beyond the two criteria.

VI.4.a Maturidi Metaethics and the Modern British Value of Individual Liberty

Potential conflicts and tensions could be identified between the modern Western meaning and manifestations of individual liberty in liberal and secular Western realities and contexts, and the traditional and theoretical Muslim understanding of individual liberty and freedom, rooted in Islamic traditions. This could pose challenges for Muslims as they seek to observe Islam in a reality that defines values differently. The Islamic definition of freedom is widely held among scholars: freedom is achieved when man submits to God and His Shariah (a set of laws).

Islam upholds freedom of religion as a fundamental right, to the point of classifying the coercion of a person into becoming a Muslim as an illegitimate act: 'Say (that) it is the truth from your Lord (and) whosoever wishes to believe (in it), they can; and whosoever wishes to disbelieve in it, they can.' (Quran, 18:29).

However, Islam defines true liberty for man as full submission to God: 'Worshipping God alone is the essence of liberating Man from being subordinate to man…Islam has a unique idea concerning liberty, its horizons, and its limitations. Man is the vicegerent of God, the Exalted, and he is tasked with making the Earth habitable. Therefore, his liberty is that of a vicegerent and not that of the master of the universe…the vicegerent is free within the framework and the fundamentals of Shariah, which constitutes the contract and the covenant of vicegerency.' (Dr Immarah, 2012, p. 10-11)

The most fundamental meaning of liberty for the Muslim is submission to God, which frees one from the enslavement of humans. By obeying God freely and willingly in both private and

public spaces, true liberty is achieved: '…Allah was merciful to us by protecting us from submission to each other (when) He ordered us to submit to Him only, which will liberate you…our submission to God has granted us liberty.' (Imam Al-Sharawi, 1980s)

Submission to God is the fundamental concept and indicator of true liberty: 'The theoretical foundation and focal centre for liberty in Islam lies in faith in God, the Exalted, and the full embodiment of submission to Him, the Exalted…' (Dr Abbasi, 2023, p. 144)

Liberty in the realm of Islam is grounded in a set of ideas that are fundamentally different from liberty in the modern liberal and secular sense: 'This form of submission means enslaving yourself to God. It is a full understanding of who God is and a full understanding of one's own individuality and of existing as a God-like human. Indeed, only in this form of captivity can the human acknowledge his or her true freedom.' (De Gruyter, 2019, p. 173)

Islamic metaethical frameworks that empower human reason could help resolve such tensions. Enlightened modernity rests on the idea of a rational human agent observing the objective world to enhance the human experience on earth. The Maturidis offer a metaethical framework that empowers human reason in a world of objective moral truths, aligning with the concept of universal values in the realm of modernity and its secular values.

The works of the Russian Muslim reformer Musa Jarullah Bigiev, who studied in Samarqand and Bukharah and personally attended the lectures of Imam Mohamed Abduh and interacted with him, reveal how the Maturidi metaethics contributed to revolutionary and reform narratives around individual liberty at a time when Muslims were facing the crushing weight of the Soviet Union. It is through scholars and intellectuals who belong to or are

intellectually affiliated with the schools explored in this thesis that a visualisation of an engagement with British values could be presented, while highlighting the common grounds and the areas that require bridge-building.

While Bigiev was not a fan of Islamic theology and did not declare himself a Maturidi, he upheld wisdom as central to Islam's superiority, a stance that reflects the Maturidi influence of his education in Samarqand and Bukhara (Altuntas, 2018). Moreover, the centrality of human reason to his reform platform makes him a prodigal, yet legitimate, son of the Maturidis, whose revolutionary ideas on individual liberty challenged the conventions of his time, especially regarding women.

Like John Sturant Mill, Bigiev took the battle of individual liberty to the rights of women in Islam: 'Moreover, Bigiev stresses that attempts to curtail women's rights and restrict women's social activity by limiting their role to that of wives and mothers locked up in their homes, would not bring any benefits for the family.' (Stopczynski, 2019, P.24)

The Hanafi-Maturidi metaethics, which empowered human reason in the realm of morality, delivered some of the most pioneering concepts around individual liberty, which were by far revolutionary at the time. The Humanist values of Abu Hanifah, which influenced Begiev, were addressed by the late Egyptian scholar, reformer, and thinker Mohamed Yousef Mousa: 'Abu Hanifah acknowledged an adult female's will and freedom to choose whom to wed, and he did not allow her guardian to have authority over her in that matter, as she was entitled to manage her marriage contract by herself… Abu Hanifah sanctified freedom and believed that no human has authority over another human unless it is on urgent grounds, because this would negate freedom, which is a right for all humans.' (Mousa, 1957, p. 108-109)

While the Hanafi-Maturidi metaethics relied on evidence from the Quran and Sunnah regarding women's individual liberty in matters of marriage, other schools of jurisprudence reached different conclusions and positions on women's freedom of choice, which would certainly pose challenges in a modern liberal and secular reality.

The argument that the Hanafi-Maturidi metaethical narratives can engage with modern individual liberty in a way unique to them is evident in the pioneering positions they have fuelled among those who observed Maturidism at a time when such ideas were unconventional. The potential of the Hanafi-Maturidi metaethics remains untapped to this day, especially given the prevalence of schools that decentralise human reason and uphold hard taqlid and literalism, which may have influenced the Maturidi-Hanafi metaethics rather than the other way around.

As Muslims navigate the complexities of their Western abodes, while maintaining their identity and traditions without being driven into a state of continuous self-defence by constant media scrutiny and the menacing gaze of the far right, being aware of what the Maturidis offer and how that points to a common ground for all (the human intellect) could facilitate their engagement with individual liberty from a modern liberal and secular perspective.

Using the example mentioned above (marriage and guardianship), the impact of the Hanafi-Maturidi metaethics could reduce family tensions over female autonomy in matters of marriage, which, unfortunately, can lead to abuse and violence in some cases. The same could be extended to matters of travel, education, and community and institutional leadership: ‘A woman in Europe marries herself off and has an independent personality. We are not meant to enforce on Europeans the opinions of Malik or Ahmed Ibn Hanbal if the opinion of Abu Hanifah is closer to their inclinations…’ (M. Al-Ghazali, 2012, P.76).

Understanding the depth and width of Islamic metaethics and diverse opinions, especially when establishing the centrality of intellect, while acknowledging the boundaries, could prove transformational for Muslims, especially those who have newly immigrated to the United Kingdom, for example, and who are trying to raise their offspring, or navigate their childhood and adolescence, in a world that may be different, or at least founded on different ethical arguments and propositions, from the ones that was embedded in the fabric of ethics back home.

The epistemological empowerment of the intellect and its role in the Maturidi-Hanafi moral order may have no impact on Islamic legislation in the area of morality, as Maturidis declare that they limit the intellect's role to discerning rather than legislating in a world of objective moral truths. However, the Maturidi school empowers the human intellect and its authority while allowing its followers to stand firm on Muslim grounds and traditions.

There are indicators that the definition of individual liberty may need to be expanded for Muslims in a modern liberal and secular Western context, while not losing grip on the original meaning that links liberty and submission to God, which is a challenging but not an impossible task: ‘The juristic and political dimensions of freedom in any legal tradition necessarily regard the status of the individual vis-a-vis the sovereign authority of the state, but since the basic structure of moral and legal values in Islam, that is, the determination of moral values of good and evil, right and wrong, rights and duties, is made by reference to the will of God, and God, on the other hand, commits His illustrious to justice, to mercy, and to compassion, there thus remains little incentive for the Muslim jurist to expound on the individual’s right to freedom, and the latter’s protection against arbitrariness with that framework.’ (Kamali, 2010, P.12)

Both the Mutazilite and the Maturidi metaethical models hold the key to revisiting the definition of liberty, producing a definition that preserves the original meaning, which predicates liberty on submission to God, while expanding it to allow for a definition that still relates to the realities of Muslims as they engage with individual liberty as a modern liberal and secular value in a Western context: 'Upon reflection the Hanafi jurisprudence is the closer to justice and human rights conventions…' (M. Al-Ghazali, 2012, P.29)

According to Asharite metaethics, there is no room for the intellect in the realm of moral values, and this may reduce the moral agency of some Muslims who subscribe to such metaethical narratives, whether consciously or not. The Asharite metaethical narratives are not in themselves problematic, but rather the way they can affect Muslims as they negotiate modern, liberal, and secular values in Western contexts. In rethinking the definition of individual and collective liberty from Islamic perspectives within Western realities, more than Asharite tolerance is needed. What is needed are metaethical models that acknowledge the role of human reason in the realm of morality and the moral agency of humankind as discerners of moral truths, not merely as receivers of moral messages that carry no intrinsic, inherently stable meanings.

However, Asharite tolerance remains the most essential requirement in a modern liberal and secular reality. This is not an insinuation that British and Western Muslims are not tolerant. Yet Asharite tolerance grounds tolerance in Islam and within its own version of Divine Command theory. This is an important contribution to cultivating tolerance among Muslims as inherent in their traditions, rather than as an alien construct imposed by narratives of Western morality.

VI.4.b Maturidi Metaethics and the Modern British Value of Democracy

Modern liberal democracies hold that the source of legislative authority rests with humankind, whereas in Islam, the legislator is God, and all authority ultimately goes back to God. The legitimacy of a ruler over Muslim lands under Islamic Shariah fully derives from their upholding of Islamic law.

At a time when Muslim engagement with Western politics is on the rise, Western Muslim politicians are often judged through a traditional Muslim lens that questions their commitment to their religion against their commitment to liberal democracies and their secular values, which sometimes manifest in ways that contradict Islamic traditions. From documented accusations of apostasy to treason, some Muslim politicians, scholars of religion, thinkers, and activists face backlash for accepting to operate on a modern liberal and secular democratic platform that may not be fully condoned within some traditional Muslim circles.

This brings our attention to the notion of democracy as a value rather than merely a system. There seems to be a conflation between democracy as a value and democracy as a system. This conflation leads to misconceptions about Islam and democracy among Muslims and non-Muslims.

There is a link between modern liberal and secular values, described by Inglehart and Welzel (2019) as emancipative, and modern liberal democracies. Welzel and Inglehart (2019) argue that commitment to democracy, in its broader liberal sense, by individuals or communities is the product of the prevalence of a set of individual and societal values. If democracy is rejected, especially liberal democracy, the investigation into the causes should

be geared towards the individual and/or community values: ‘With this conclusion, Welzel (2103: ch.8) provides compelling evidence showing that how firmly emancipative values are encultured in a population has far greater predictive power over the actual democratic quality of the respective regime than has the proportion of the population expressing an explicit endorsement of the word democracy.’ (Welzel & Inglehart, 2019, p. 136)

This suggests that a lack of support for democracy in general, especially liberal democracy, may reflect the absence of a set of values rather than the presence or absence of a specific model of rule. The values of modern democracy were shaped by the Enlightenment and modernity, which sought to escape the rule of men who cloaked themselves in the power of religion. Modern democracy is not an orphan, and the march towards it was not confined to Europe and the USA. The pursuit of modern democracy usually correlates with the pursuit of emancipation and empowerment.

The quest for democracy is rooted in the values that usually emerge from moral voids, struggles, and aspirations. The yearning for ‘liberty, equality, and fraternity’ in France shaped modern democracy in many Western nations more than what immediately ensued the French revolution itself; and the desire to achieve the maximum benefit and happiness for the descendants of the Pilgrims who boarded the Mayflower to escape a continent that was interfering with their most basic freedoms, played a fundamental role in navigating modern democracy as a value and an ideal. The values of democracy take time to mature before they yield the actualisation of, and the commitment to, a system of democracy.

At the core of modern democracy is the idea of the average citizen influencing the halls of power to ensure that legislation and policies serve their interests amid a tumultuous sea of

interests and calculations, and that the commoner can hold power to account to secure the best deal for themselves and their community. Holding power to account and securing legitimate, elected representation are the most basic realities of a modern liberal democracy.

Debates for and against a modern, liberal, secular democracy, in practice and in values, often stir conflicting opinions among Muslims, especially among those who base the legitimacy of governance on revelational sources of legislation or on the establishment of Islamic Sharia as a reference for legislation.

Yet the lack of differentiation between democracy as a value and democracy as a system still haunts such debates. Examining democracy as a value is more relevant to this study than examining it as a system. This should allow Islamic metaethics to engage effectively with democracy as a value rather than merely as a system, because, as a value, democracy flourished in the lands of Islam from the moment of the inception of the first state during the reign of the Prophet.

It was clear to Musa Jarullah Bigiev that, as a value, democracy reflects, with moderation and contextualisation, the ethos and fundamental principles of governance from the era of the first rulers (the righteous four) as well. Bigiev did not perceive the fundamental meanings of democracy as a threat or inherently wrong. Ironically, this was not always the case with him. Initially, the anti-colonialist scholar rejected democracy because of its Western modern roots. Later, his deep understanding of democracy as a value emerged from his grasp of the dynamics of Islamic rule during the era of the righteous four caliphs, leading him to adopt a more positive and accepting stance toward democracy.

Bigiev perceived Muslims as a single nation, regardless of their background. However, he left room for functional nationalism and a form of democracy centred on values, while rejecting chauvinism and national identities based on race (Akhmetova, 2008). Bigiev did not flee the Soviet Union at first, as he believed in Muslim citizenship, which entailed equal rights and duties; however, he advocated the autonomy of Muslim communities and institutions to maintain their Muslim identity (Akhmetova, 2008).

The notable reformer eventually had to flee Russia due to its crackdown on his line of thought, which sought to uphold Islam as central to Muslim identity while negotiating the realities of the Soviet Union, which he became increasingly critical of as his dreams of equal rights for Muslims vanished amid systematic attempts to dilute and erase Muslim identity.

Bigiev's advocacy for a caliphate was later replaced by a pragmatic approach to a form of democracy that serves the emancipative values of equality, justice, liberty, and security for all citizens alike, regardless of their background: 'According to Jarullah, protection of natural rights of nationalities and offering universal equality among all nations alone would provide the world with real progress and social harmony.' (Akhmetova, 2008, p. 61)

Bigiev's pragmatic change of position stemmed from his dismay at Muslim scholars' failure to meet the demands of modernity on Muslim terms (Altuntas, 2018). Bigiev opposed the secularisation of Turkey and the dissolution of the Caliphate; however, he understood the reasons, which were topped by a crippling political and intellectual stagnation that afflicted the very institutions that should have been the vanguard of the Islamic Caliphate (Altuntas, 2018).

Bigiev upheld a set of emancipative values readily associated with modern democracy. Modern liberal secular democracy is the natural outcome of enlightened modernity: 'The decline of religious authority implied liberation of man's conscience, but it also implied something else. Religious ethics had to be speedily replaced by secular, social morality. With the rejection of the church and transcendental justice, the state remained the sole source and sanction of morality.' (Talmon, 1970, P.4).

There is a correlation between Islamic metaethics that centralises or empowers human reason and the acceptance of democracy as a form of rule and this correlation becomes too clear once the works scholars and thinkers who uphold such metaethical models are analysed: '…we can establish that the Islamic legislation pioneered, among other forms of legislation, in humanist democracy which is a right earned by man to choose their government, instead of democracy being a governing mechanism to avert harms, settle divisions, or as facilitator of civil obedience to secure the services of workers and wage earners.' (Al-Aqqad, 2005, P.29)

If modern democracy is the product of a set of emancipative values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2019), then the determinants of democracy were at play in the lands of Islam long before they reached the horizons of an enlightened Europe. Al-Aqqad (2005) sheds light on the pre-Mohammedan peninsula and its history, revealing kings and tribes that lacked a governing model that even approximated rule based on justice or the recognition of human rights. It was a peninsula described by Jaffar Ibn Talib, who, debating with Amr Ibn Al-Aas in front of the Negus, spoke of blood, wars, revenge, banditry and mercilessness. The only episode in the history of the pre-Islamic peninsula that stands out as a concentrated expression of justice is 'The Alliance of Fodool', which the Prophet witnessed as a child and later praised as a Prophet: '…14 centuries ago, the Muslim upheld a creed in a region that knew no liberty within a model

of rule or constitutional rules; and Islam, which was an unprecedent creed, is what shaped his opinions of the truth, order, and justice.' (Al-Aqqad, 2005, P.23)

The legislation of Islam pioneered in the areas of equality, women's rights, and the gradual termination and intellectual eradication of slavery, which was a global and widespread practice. The struggle of early Muslims was to establish moral values that seemed alien within their context. It was a move from a world where the practice of burying female first-borns was legitimised and slaves were considered soulless non-humans, to a world where women gave the pledge of allegiance to Mohammed on equal terms with men, and slaves could become rulers (the Mamluks): 'In light of the previous chapters, we can declare that Islamic Shariah was ahead of other legislative systems in the area of establishing humanist democracy.' (Al-Aqqad, 1981, p. 43)

The dawn of Islamic emancipative values and its unique model of rule waned with the death of the fourth ruler (the Righteous Four), yet even in its waning, the Islamic model of rule still offered a far more advanced bargain compared to neighbouring civilisations. The Muslim mind regards this phase as inspirational and foundational, and rightly so.

Relatively speaking, Islam introduced its own form of democracy, as a value, to the Arabian Peninsula and the neighbouring regions, as evidenced by the emancipative values of the early years of Islamic Sharia (the reign of the Righteous Four), which linked the legitimacy of the ruler to the nation's acceptance through pledges of allegiance; held power to account; relied on councils responsible for advocacy and legislation (Shurah); and applied the laws equally to the rulers and the ruled.

For Muslims who question modern democracy because of its secular legislative framework, the focus should be on the higher values that both models, Islamic and modern, share. Modern democracy in a world of nation-states is quite different from the Islamic form of democracy that emerged in the early days of Islam, when monarchies and empires ruled the world.

It is important to note that the Islamic form of democracy gradually declined after the death of the last of the righteous rulers (Ali Ibn Abi Talib): 'Prophethood remains for as long as God wants it to remain; then He (God) lifts it when He wants to do so; then it is a caliphate guided by the way of the Prophet and it shall remain so until God take it away when He wills. Then, there will be a hereditary monarchy which will remain for as long as God wants it to remain before He takes it away…' (Prophet Mohammed, Mosnad Imam Ahmed, 2025)

Modern British democracy, while liberal and secular, is based on a model that allows bishops to participate in legislation while maintaining its secular character. This is a unique model, as much as Islam has its own distinctive conception of the value of democracy, which gradually faded as monarchic rule took hold across the lands of Islam. Democracy is not an alien value to Islamic traditions. When modern democracy emerged alongside movements that sought to deconstruct theocracies, the conflation of democracy with secularism led to negative connotations for both concepts in the minds of those who observed revealed scriptures.

The Islamic values and principles of rule share common grounds with modern liberal democracy once metaethical perspectives and narratives are explored objectively. Where the practices of modern democracy and Islamic rule meet are 1. the accountability of the individual to the state; 2. the accountability of the ruler to the nation; 3. the people as the source of legitimate authority granted to the ruler; 4. legislation through councils (Shurah Councils); 4.

non-coercive rule (Mulk Jabri); 5. non-dynastic rule (Mulk Adood); and 5. equality before the law for the ruled and the rulers: '…Al-Maturidi issued a fatwah (verdict) stating that any scholar found to be in support of a tyrannical, unjust ruler should be excommunicated (Keugelgen & Muminov) …' (Zhussipbek and Nagaveva, 2019, P.352).

Where the Islamic rule and the modern liberal and secular form of democracy part ways is in the sources of legislation. Modern liberal and secular democracies do not restrict themselves to revelation, whereas Islamic rule is governed by revelation. However, since human reason is central to the formation of modern liberal democracy based on universal principles and values, the Islamic metaethical models that place human reason at the core as the discerner of objective moral truths and universal principles are bound to offer the most promising common ground for metaethical connections and the resolution of tensions: 'If the scholars say that the nation is the source of authority, this does not contradict that the Quran and Sunnah are the sources of legislation, because it is the nation that discerns the meaning of Quran and Sunnah and uses them. It is the nation that reflects on its status to decide when to apply; when to suspend; and when to modify…Some Turkish jurists (Maturidis) suspended irreversible criminal penalties (Hodood) due to the lack of witnesses who meet the legal requirements to testify. This was not outright judgment that all people are dishonest, but rather, it was enough that such people exist, so do others who practice the craft of providing false testimonies (Shohada' Zoor) …' (Al-Aqqad, 2005, P.43-45)

The Maturidi-Hanafi metaethics is a framework in which human reason and legislation interact without losing grip on objective moral truths or on the centrality of human reason as a moral epistemological force capable of operating independently in the absence of revelation,

while seeking the best possible outcomes for the individual and the greatest possible number of people, without breaching the revelational framework of morality and laws.

Divine wisdom and human reason are central to the Hanafi-Maturidi metaethical narratives that underpin the Maturidi traditions. This framework could prove supportive for Muslims in non-Muslim contexts that are not governed by Islamic Sharia. In such contexts, the imam of the nation is usually a non-Muslim, holding the title of prime minister or president, and the source of legitimacy and legislation is not religion and Shariah, but the people and their elected representatives, who operate on a secular basis, constitutionally and institutionally.

In this context, political engagement is not governed by Islam and its Shariah. Muslim politicians and Muslim voters live in a British reality that differs from that of Madinah and the successive caliphates that governed the Muslim world. What constitutes a human right in the modern United Kingdom may or may not be so from an Islamic perspective, and vice versa, but bridges to close the gaps to a convenient level do exist, according to this thesis.

Centralising human reason is important for Muslims in Western modern liberal and secular realities when examining the political reality of Muslim politicians and Muslim voters. The Maturidi-Hanafi metaethics may pioneer in offering answers for Muslims in a non-Muslim context, where the perceptions of some sceptical and judgmental Muslims should be deconstructed by drawing attention to their Western reality rather than simply drifting into traditional questions and solutions that may not relate to that reality.

There are many practical examples that reveal how the Maturidi-Hanafi metaethics stand out. For example, Abu Hanaifah declared that Muslims and non-Muslims have equal duties

and rights before the law at a time when other opinions relied on a hadith that would sentence a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state to death if they killed a Muslim, but not the other way around: '…therefore, he (Abu Hanifah) rejected this hadith despite of its accurate chain because its content contradicts a Quranic text…Hanafi jurisprudence equates between all people in matters of blood and compensation.' (M. Al-Ghazali, 2012, P.28-31) The hadith may have been generalised through the process of qiyas, while its wording could indicate that it was a specific rule for Muslims encountering and targeting enemy Arab combatants in a hostile Arab environment that sought out wars which aimed to literally annihilate the fledgling city of the Muslims. Abu Hanaifah rejected the generalisation and made it irrelevant to non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim land (Ahlu Al-Zimmah, who were in the Zimmah of God and his Prophet, which translates to the non-Muslims of the Muslim lands who were the wards of God and his Prophet).

If modern democracy means that legislation is not a prerequisite for revelation, it is the Hanafi-Maturidi metaethics that allows Muslims to live in a non-Muslim reality by suspending verdicts that do not pertain to that reality. For example, verdicts on interest rates for Muslims in a non-Muslim reality largely become irrelevant according to the Hanafis.

VI.5 Notable scholars with Maturidi Roots or Associations

A. Imam Al-Maturidi (862-944 CE)

Imam Al-Maturidi was born in Samarqand, which was then a rebellious province that had broken away from a decaying Abbasid state. The rise of the Samanid state, which ruled the

Transoxiana region of the Muslim world, ushered in an intellectual boom that fostered the sciences and the arts to fortify its fledgling independence.

The Transoxiana pastures were rich in disciplines, from philosophy and literature to theology and medicine. In those lands, Imam Al-Maturidi grew up in the shadow of scholars who traced their authority back to Qaddi Bin Youssef and Mohamed Al-Shaibany, who were the direct proteges of Imam Abu Hanifah. Like Al-Ashari after him, Al-Maturidi set out to confront two extremes. The first was the Mutazilite rationality, which gave the upper hand to the intellect, leading to excessive allegorical interpretations of the Quran and to reserved attitudes towards the discipline of Hadith and towards jurists who favoured Taqlid over human reason. The second extreme was the philosophers, with their Hellenistic loyalties and tendencies, which led to attempts to Islamise concepts such as the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, in which ten intellects emanate from God without Divine will or an act of creation.

For example, Al-Farabi, whose writings were Avicenna's guide into the world of Hellenistic metaphysics, labelled the Active Intellect of the Neoplatonic emanation theory as the Holy Spirit: '…Al-Farabi called it (The Active Intellect) the Trustworthy Spirit (Al-Roh Al-Ameen) and the Holy Spirit (Al-Roh Al-Qudus) …' (Mohamed, 2020, P.489)

The geographical location of Al-Maturidi and his fledgling school, as well as the timing of its birth, allowed it to lay its foundations before it ever encountered the Asharites. Imam Maturidi was influenced by Abu Hanifah's theological and juristic arguments, but he furthered the theological traditions of the Hanafi school, which was far more oriented towards jurisprudence: 'Mankind has been uniquely endowed with the ability to govern the affairs of creations to manage the trials of life, while logically seeking what is the best for them and

selecting what is good and avoiding what is opposite to that; and there is no way to achieve that except through reasoning. In times of calamities, and ambiguity, people resort to reflection and pondering and this shows that reasoning guides and leads to the truth.' (Al-Maturidi, 2003, P.87)

Al-Maturidi did not draw a line between the human intellect's ability to discern the truth about God and its ability to discern moral facts. As one of the founders of Islamic theology, Al-Maturidi upheld the intellect as the instrument capable of distinguishing between the truth and falsehood. Reasoning and reflection to him were the path to eudaimonia that is grounded in faith and the hereafter: 'Whatever the intellect has deemed as good, or evil, is constant and does not change from state to state.' (Al-Maturidi, 2019, P.319)

Maturidis, like the Mutazilites, regard human reasoning, with the sole purpose of knowing God, as the first necessary duty for any human being of sound mind. The Samarqand school, unlike the Asharites, holds that in the absence of a prophet and revelation, the human intellect is required to reason its way to God, the One and only Necessary existence, in order to acquire salvation in the hereafter: 'The eighth foundation is that knowing God, the most exalted, and obeying him, is a matter of revelation and not the intellect…' (Al-Ghazali, 2016, P.41)

For the Mutazilites, human reason dictates and decrees, subject to fundamental and clear revelational truths and boundaries if they exist, whereas for the Maturidis, human reason only guides towards the truth and is not fully independent in matters of legislation unless there is no revelation; even then, such legislation is not valid by itself and may not necessarily be credible. For the Asharites, the absence of revelation renders any form of legislation incapable of justifying itself on moral grounds, because there are no objective moral truths that could be

discerned by the human intellect. For the Maturidis, the centrality of human reasoning would place them on the side of the Mutazilites rather than the Asharites, who were driven by their primary axiom (Divine Omnipotence) to the point where the human intellect was incapable of discerning moral truth in a world where there is no intrinsic reality to good and evil. Al-Maturidi deemed it not logically or metaphysically possible for God to commit evil, as defined by humans, just as the Mutazilites did, but on the basis of Divine Wisdom rather than anything being necessary for God to do to the point of obligation: 'It is not possible for God, who is wise and merciful, to commit evil or harm someone…' (Al-Maturidi, 2003, P.195)

The Maturidis and the Mutazilites have a different understanding of the roles of the human intellect and the scriptures in our lives than the Asharites do. As mentioned before. Al-Ghazali (2024) used an analogy that resonates with Plato's allegory of the cave, comparing Divine scripture (the Quran) to the sun and equating the intellect with an eye that cannot observe the truth without sunlight. Al-Ghazali acknowledged that both the Quran and the human intellect, when combined, are 'light upon light', and that the truth seeker cannot dispense with any. In the case of the Mutazilites and the Maturidis, the intellect is the sun, casting its light on a path (The Quran) that would not be observed by the intellect's eye in the absence of the light emanating from the intellect itself.

Figure 3: The Intellect & Divine Scriptures

AI Images generated by the researcher for the purpose of conceptualisation.

Asharites



Maturidis and Mutazilites



‘The Maturidi said that the intellect is a tool by which the good and evil of something are discerned, and by which the obligation of faith in and gratitude for the Bestower of blessings is realised. Through the intellect, God makes us know the obligations. Al-Ashari stated that only revelation makes things obligatory or prohibited, while the intellect may discern the good and evil of something...’ (Ibn Kamal Pasha, 2018, p. 41)

It is important to note that both the Mutazilites and the Maturidis recognised that a human’s ability to discern objective moral truths could be corrupted by many factors, including habits, instincts, and dominant practices and traditions. Here, the role of deeper reflection and revelation comes into play: ‘This is why Allah has made the intellect a guide, and not inclinations.’ (Al-Maturidi, 2019, p. 320).

B. Noor Al-Din Al-Sabouni (1263-1328 CE):

The Transoxiana scholar, born into a notable and affluent family in Bukharah and among those who debated the Asharite Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, assumed a notable position among the Maturidis of his time. As with the Maturidi school, Al-Sabouni’s meteoric rise and mastery of theology were recognised at the regional level, though initially obscured by the geography of the time. The contentious encounter and polemics between Al-Sabouni and Al-Razi shed light on the difficult path both schools had to navigate towards eventual reconciliation and consolidation, which allowed the Asharite school to dominate the intellectual scene and obscured the differences between it and its Transoxiana sister until today: ‘In the city of Bukharah, there was a man called Al-Noor Al-Sabouni…I consider you (Al-Sabouni) not to be of sound mind or among the scholars…’ (Al-Razi, 1936, P7-8)

Al-Sabouni's two seminal theological works, 'The Introduction to The Foundations of Religion' and 'The Sufficient for Guidance', are among the best Maturidi theological works, testifying to his unique command and competence in presenting the Maturidi school.

Aligning with the Samarqand chapter that dominates the Maturidi metaethics, Al-Sabouni believes that good and evil harbour an intrinsic reality. Like Avicenna and many others, including Ibn Qaiyyum, Al-Sabouni seeks philosophical responses to the problem of good and evil: 'We will shed light on the wisdom underlying the creation of what is evil, which aims to guide us to what lies beyond evil, and that includes demonstrating Divine power, for only complete power can bring into existence good and evil, and what harms and what benefits. If one moral category only existed, that may indicate an incomplete power… It also shows the good in matters of belief and worship versus the evil in disbelief and disobedience. While the good in belief and obedience is provable by means of human reason, the evil of disbelief and disobedience makes the value of obedience clearer in the mind of a person…' (Al-Sabouni, 2014, p. 275)

C. Al-Bayyadi (estimated to be 1630-1687 CE) and Abu Al-Moeen Al-Nasafi (estimated to be 1027-1115 CE)

Al-Bayyadi was born in Anatolia to a scholarly family, and he grew up to become a scholar himself. He was appointed to the highest positions, including serving as a judge in Mecca and as the chief judge in the Ottoman state. His book 'Signposts to the Aim: from the Sayings of the Imam' contains the harvest he gathered from the teachings and messages of Abu Hanifah, while demonstrating Imam Maturidi's mindset and methodology: 'I have gathered it from the

content of his books which he dictated to his companions, for example, the Major Jurisprudence, the Message, the Minor Jurisprudence…' (Al-Bayyadi, P.8)

Al-Bayyadi examined several Maturidi positions and helped identify where the Asharites and the Maturidis meet and where they part, including in metaethics: 'Firstly, the human intellect is a tool to discern the necessary existence of God, the Exalted, and to discern what is good for God to do, but on an obligatory basis, as the Mutazilites stated… Many of our scholars (Maturidis) agree that the intellect can discern good and evil, which negates what the Asharite consensus… (Al-Bayydi adds that) the intellect can discern the good and evil in some things but not all of them, as the Mutazilites stated… The intellect discerns the good in truthfulness, necessarily or reflectively, but it cannot discern the good in fasting until the last of Ramadan and in breaking the fast on the first day of Shawal, for this is a matter of revelation.' (Al-Bayydi, 1949, p. 75–77)

The attempt to reconcile the Maturidi metaethical position with the Asharites becomes increasingly impossible as the examination of both schools from a foundational perspective continues: 'Good is determined by revelation and evil is determined by revelation. A deed has no intrinsic property or meaning to it by which the good and the evil could not be interchanged.' (The Asharite Al-Ijji, 2016, p. 154)

As for Abu Moeen Al-Nasafi, he was most likely born in Nasaf to a family of scholars who mentored him in theology and other Islamic disciplines. Nasaf, which was close to the city of Samarqand, enjoyed relative stability that allowed the province to cherish scholars at a time when the Abbasid state was in decline, fuelled the slow disintegration of the Caliphate into multiple fledgling autonomous provinces and states. The brutal polemics that rocked the

corners of the Abbasid state and the ensuing violence that did not spare any group, including the Asharites at some point, stood in stark contrast to the relative calm of the Transoxiana plateau.

Al-Nasafi shared with the Mutazilites the idea that good and evil have an intrinsic nature that could be discerned by human reason, but he criticised the Mutazilites for projecting this into the realm of the unknown, because they believed that what is classed as intrinsically good or evil in our realm is so designated in the world of the unknown. He simply attributed the creation of intrinsically good and evil to the perfection of the Divine will: 'Creating what is good and evil deeds stipulates the perfection of His Power and the ability to actualise His will because it shows the ability to create opposites.' (Al-Nasafi, 1993, P.665)

Al-Nasafi draws our attention to the Mutazilites' view that the intrinsic nature of good and evil was a matter of morality and moral values, which is why they rejected the idea that the devil is intrinsically evil: '…they (the Mutazilites) claimed that apes, pigs, the Devil, and demons are intrinsically for (intrinsic) evil is a matter of deeds (moral evils).' (Al-Nasafi, 1993, p. 662)

The Maturidis do not regard the creation of intrinsic evil as a sign of Divine imperfection. To the contrary, they regard it as a sign of the perfection of Divine power and will, which is entirely in line with the primary Divine attribute in their order: Divine Wisdom. On the other hand, from that perspective, the Mutazilites rejected the attribution of evil to God and rejected the idea that God creates evil deeds, because moral evils are fully attributed to man in their order, where Divine justice was the central Divine attribute in their understanding of the Divine, along with His absolute Unity.

Divine Wisdom is sometimes not discernible by human reason and is not subject to it. The creation of intrinsic evil cannot be used to judge God negatively, because Divine Wisdom concerns consequences that we may never grasp: '…whatever has a good end is wisdom…wisdom (Divine) relates to good ends.' (Al-Nasafi, 1993, p. 664)

Al-Nasafi's belief in the human intellect is evident in his seminal work 'Evidential Insight into Theology'. He rejected basing one's faith on norms without appropriate rational thought: 'Taqlid (blind mimicking) is not how we establish the truth of a religion…if someone copies a religion then they should be asked about the evidence that backs this religion against other religions. If this person fails to provide evidence, then their Taqlid is null and void, but if this person produces evidence than he has provided his proof.' (Al-Nasafi, 2011, p. 152)

D. Sheikh Ahmed Al-Sharif (1981-presnent)

Sheikh Al-Sharif is an Egyptian scholar (Azhar of Egypt) with an established record and notable standing in the Transoxiana Maturidi plateau. As the founder of his own institute, Al-Kawathri Institute, he upholds the traditional model of Azhar Scholastica and teaching, which attracts students from all over the world. He has a media presence and has been interviewed by Western news channels and their Arab affiliates. The following opinions capture his current teaching on the Maturidi position.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Sharif's notable position is rooted in his teachers and mentors, some of whom granted him ijazahs (certifications of the highest order in Islamic scholarship), enabling him to present himself as an authority and representative of a school that is overshadowed by more prominent Sunni schools and non-traditional Muslim schools. Among his teachers and

mentors are prominent authorities: Professor Ahmed Umar Hashim (Azhar), Professor Nasr Farid (a former Grand Mufti of Egypt), and Sheikh Mohamed Taher Al-Qaddri of Pakistan.

The following is a segment of a broadcast lecture by Sheikh Al-Sharif on the topic at hand, which was personally and directly authorised by him for use in this thesis as representative of Sheikh Al-Sharif's position as a Maturidi authority:

'The famous opinion you will find in the books of the Institute (Al-Azhar), since it adheres to the Asharite school (and I am a Maturidi myself), is that of Abi Al-Hassan Al-Ashari, the Imam of the Sunnis, and the opposite of it is the Mutazilite school. You will come across Al-Kharidah, Al-Jawharah, etc. As you move from school to university (within the Azhar system), you will hear of two opinions for the Sunni Asharites: 1. good and vile (evil) are absolutely determined by Shariah (revelation), i.e., the good is neither discerned nor determined by the intellect; or 2. the good is only determined by Shariah, and consequently the intellect can discern what is good on that basis. Pay attention, please! The human intellect cannot differentiate between what is good and what is evil until it is revealed to it through Shariah. Once revelation allows or prohibits something, then the intellect can discern what is good; and what is vile (evil). This is the school of the Al-Ashari: the intellect cannot discern what is good and what is evil until it is revealed to it. Determining what is good and what is evil is solely dependent on revelation (Shariah). The Mutazilites say that discerning good and evil is matter for the intellect because human reason can discern between what is good and what is evil; and that what is good becomes a necessary matter for God to make it good and to legislate it, and what is evil, it is necessary for God (incumbent on God) to prohibit it. The Mutazilite school did not disappear. It has some foothold in the Shiaa schools including Al-Zaidiyah school…so we have two opposing schools…one of them (the Mutazilites) takes you out of the school of

the Sunnis and Consensus. As for the Maturidis, we distinguish between discerning and between allowing and prohibiting. There is a difference between the intellect's ability to discern good and evil and matters of legislation. The Intellect discerns good and evil, but legislation is for God. We belong to the Sunnis, with our brethren the Asharites, because we uphold that the intellect cannot legislate anything. The only legislator is God, and even the legislation that the Prophet did is attributed to him metaphorically, because it informs us about God's legislation.

As for consensus and Qiyas, they point at God's legislation based on evidence and not legislate independently. Consensus is conditioned by primary evidence from Quran and Sunnah. Qiyas does not establish legislation on its own, but rather points at it, for there is no legislator but God, and everything else (in the process of legislation) is attributed to God, while metaphorically categorised under (consensus or Qiyas). When the Prophet allows or prohibits, it is attributed to him metaphorically, and the same for Qiyas as it presents and points at what is traced to God. We do not legislate something because consensus simply agreed on it, but rather consensus must rely on a verse revealed in the Quran or a hadith which is a meaning revealed by God through his Prophet. For the Maturidis, discerning good and evil is not based on revelation, but matters of legislation are subject to revelation.' (Al-Sharif, 2024)

The Azhar lanes of Egypt are teeming with Transoxiana students learning all Islamic disciplines, and a significant number of them are working hard to obtain Ijazah from Sheikh Al-Sharif, which indicates that the Maturidis of Transoxiana are capable of breaking down the geographical, linguistic, and political barriers in pursuit of keeping this school and its traditions alive.

VI.6 Conclusion

The Maturidis balanced the role of the human intellect with that of revelation in a world of objective moral truths discernible by human reason. Their reply to the Euthyphro dilemma established a moral order grounded in discernible objective moral truths, allowing Muslims to trust in the power and authority of the human intellect in moral matters while upholding the traditional sources of knowledge and legislation embedded in their lives.

For Muslims living in modern secular and liberal realities, the Maturidis offer the intellect as a means of engaging with these realities through human reason, while remaining grounded in Islamic traditions. This school has a perceptual edge over the Mutazilites, and its Hanafi-Maturidi metaethical model and narratives may underlie the works of some traditionally labelled as neo-Mutazilites.

Metaethical debates among Muslims, who may not even be aware of the metaethics ingrained in them by their families, religious schools and teachers, mosques and Islamic media, most likely reflect the major contentious debates and opposite extremes, where the intellect is either completely dethroned or completely divorced from scriptures. The Maturidi school offers a sanctuary for those who seek a more balanced position, rooted in the powers of the intellect while remaining within the boundaries of traditions that cascade into daily lives and, consciously or unconsciously, shape decisions and worldviews.

Positioning intellect as a central factor in how Muslims negotiate their modern liberal and secular realities in a Western context could facilitate deeper understanding of how to assess,

respond to and accommodate the rational and logical implications and manifestations of modern liberal and secular values, which are rooted in enlightened modernity.

The Maturidis offer a space for Muslims to centralise human reason and elevate wisdom to a core value that would enable them to effectively address their Western realities, which are sometimes quite different from those of the places from which some of them trace their roots, historical alliances, and loyalties.

When metaethical narratives are dominated by Divine Command theories, the scope for negotiation and engagement with modernity and its values diminishes. This tension will also persist between any religion that upholds Divine Command theory and modern secular and liberal morality and values. This tension is not particular to Islam, but this study is concerned with Islamic metaethics and the most prominent among them for building bridges. However, what mitigates Islamic Divine Command theory is the Quran and the tolerance of the Asharites, as we mentioned before.

The balanced metaethics of the Maturidis nominate them to be a school of high significance to Muslims in a secular and liberal context that upholds values that may prove challenging to Muslim morality. It also allows for nomadic Muslim philosophers who cannot easily fit in the other theology schools to find a home, including past ones like Ibn Miskawayh (Appendix III), who would have easily found a home with the Maturidis.

It is important to note that the Maturidi metaethical model may be the underlying common factor binding Imam Mohamed Abduh and Musa Jarullah Bigiev, rather than the traditional claim that Imam Mohamed Abduh was a neo-Mutazilite, though this requires further research

to prove. Understanding the metaethical models and narratives that shaped the minds of notable Muslim reformers is central to enhancing the Muslim experience and impact in modern liberal and secular realities, as it points to what Muslim individuals, communities, and institutions need to uphold and promote to produce the next generation of Muslim reformers in Western nations and to secure prominent roles for Muslims in their Western abodes.

Exploring Maturidi metaethics alongside democracy and individual liberty as modern British values was challenging, but within the halls of this school, which may be more relevant to many Muslims than the Mutazilites, lie the seeds for exploring new definitions and understandings of individual liberty as a value that retain traditions while relating to modern liberal and secular realities. Also, this school allowed us to observe a pattern linking rationality to more effective engagement with democracy as a value within the scope of this thesis. However, further research is required to build on the findings of this section.

Chapter VII

The Athari Metaethics

&

The Modern British Value: Justice Implications and Applications

'...what the Fitrah finds to be good, Shariah has also found to be good, and it has coated it with more goodness, so it has become good from both directions, and what the Fitrah finds vile, Shariah has also found to be vile and has branded it with more vileness, so it has become vile from both directions.' (Ibn Qayyim, 2015, p. 1027–1028)

Chapter Aims

This chapter presents the predominant metaethical perspectives of the Athari school in relation to the two criteria, as well as the perspectives of Athari scholars, to explore the potential impact of Athari metaethics on contemporary Muslim observance of a modern British value: Justice. This will then be followed by a presentation of the metaethics of Ibn Tayimyyah and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, two notable scholars who hold special status among many Athari scholars and students.

VII. 1 Background for the Purposes of Textual Analysis and Contextual Hermeneutics

The Athari school bears a name that attests to its primary foundational principle. This school is committed to anchoring its ship in the ports of Prophetic traditions and the practices and understandings of the early generations of Islam.

Tracing its roots mainly to Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (780-855 CE), who carried the banner of the companions and their students, this school prides itself on being the niche from which the light of traditionalism emanates. This was in the face of a tidal wave of scholastic theology (Kalam), which allowed rationalist and philosophical tendencies to pose a threat to the authority of traditional sources of knowledge and legislation, for example, the consensus of companions and traditional scholars, who find answers in and through revelation rather than in a human intellect on a par with scripture. There is a lot of semantics, as the Mutazilites would not consider themselves anything but the inheritors of the legislative legacy of the Prophet and his companions. However, metaethics explores how language can affect the agent beyond their perception, tracing overt and covert streams rooted in the words and concepts that underpin moral and legislative philosophy.

It is important to clarify that the Athari school has given rise to stricter, and sometimes more radical, forms. There are three main streams within the Athari school: Ahl al-Hadith, Pure Salafism, and Salafi Jihadism. For valid reasons and misconceptions alike, some terms used to describe the different branches of the Athari school carry negative connotations. The boundaries sometimes blur and intertwine, but the study focuses on common themes across these streams in relation to the research questions: 'Among the most renowned scholars whose preaching laid the foundations for the Salafist approach are Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (d.855), Ahmed Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328), and Muhammad Ibn Abdel-Wahab.' (Adraoui, 2019, p. 23)

The Athari School was forged at the altar of a critical trial imposed by the Mutazilites on Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, who rejected the claim that the Quran is created. For the Atharis, the Quran is the book of God, who spoke in Arabic to the Arabs and whose speech consists of pre-existent letters and sounds. The Athari School is one of exodus: an exodus from intellectual frameworks and terminology not used by the Prophet, the companions, and their disciples (Al-Tabeen).

While Ibn Taymiyyah and his student, Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, are regarded by many as the founders of Pure Salafism, their works place them within the Ahl Al-Hadith stream of the Athari school, which engaged far more cautiously with theology and philosophy than other schools of scholastic or speculative theology. However, the Ahl Al-Hadith stream was coloured by its refutations of philosophy and scholastic theology. Much to their dismay, this stream of scholars became among the traditional philosopher-theologians of the house of Islam, such as Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah.

VII. 2 The Atharis: Roots and Evolutions

The rise of the Athari school is often framed as the defeat of the Mutazilites, who rejected the traditional understanding of the Divine attributes and placed the Quran within a realm of contingent, temporal creations (the universe), where human beings hold the highest status, since God declared that He has made what the heavens and what the earth hold to be in the service of humankind (Quran, 45:13). The Atharis present themselves as anti-Asharites and as opposed to speculative theologians in general: 'Ibn Taymiyyah also rejects the technical terms used by the theologians and the philosophers. In their doctrine, they employ terms which do not belong to the pure Arabic of the Quran, the Sunnah and ordinary linguistic usage.' (Abrahamov, 1998, p. 23)

This framing positioned the Atharis as the school attached to the original springs of Islam, a point that the notable and prolific thinker and writer Sayed Qutub, who is classified within the scope of this thesis as one of the Athari intellectuals despite his Asharite roots, reiterated many times: 'The Quran was the only spring that they drank from. Only the Quran!' (Qutub, 2013, p. 21).

While both the Athari and the Asharite schools, compared with the Mutazilites and the Maturidis, restrain the role of human intellect in the realm of morality and moral legislation to a noticeable degree, there is a world of difference between them, rooted in their metaethics and moral language.

The Athari school sought to deconstruct scholastic theology by rejecting the need for its terms, language, and philosophical concepts, which sound alien compared with those used by

the early Muslims: ‘Making a necessity out of rational reflection is different from making it a necessity in a particular way. The argument of accidents, and how they are contingents that require bodies (The Cosmological Argument of speculative theologians) is not considered an obligation on Muslims by any of the Imams who know what the Prophet Mohammed taught and follow him.’ (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2006, p. 387)

The Asharite and the Athari schools do not believe that knowledge of God is an intellectual necessity, as some Mutazilites did. However, while the Mutazilites developed their discourse and literature in the context of philosophical and biblical contests with Islam, which took the form of debates and intellectual duels, and the Asharites shouldered the Islamic cosmological argument, the Athari school was attempting to question the need for Islamic scholastic theology: ‘One of the ways to fight against rationalism is to show the dangerous consequences of the preference of reason over revelation.’ (Abrahamov, 1998, P.23)

The schools of theology, from the Mutazilites to the Asharites, utilised human reasoning to varying degrees when interpreting the Quran, seeking to reconcile their theological understanding of God with the literal meaning of verses that suggested corporeality and anthropomorphism. The metaethical narratives of these schools shaped their approaches to Quran interpretation, which in turn influenced their position on the spectrum of literalism versus non-literalism. This crucial finding warrants future investigation.

The Mutazilites resorted to metaphorical interpretations of the Quran, which may have gone to extremes in some instances, while the early Asharites and the Maturidis preferred to defer the meaning of some verses, fully rejecting their literal sense. Later, both schools accommodated metaphorical interpretation. However, the Athari school favoured literal

interpretation. Hard literal interpretation is criticised by notable scholars, for example, Al-Qaradawi (Appendix II).

While the Ahl al-Hadith branch of the Athari school, represented by Imam Ibn Hanbal, may allow limited metaphorical interpretations, pure Salafism, in many instances, has almost adopted the strictness of the Zahiriyah school, with its extreme, literal, and restrictive approach. The rigidity that lurks in the intellectual halls of the Athari school, especially with Pure Salafism, was an outcome of fear of losing the early understanding of Islam that shaped the early generation of the companions and their students: 'The highest of sayings and the clearest of proofs is the Book of God, which is the ultimate Truth, then the sayings of the Messenger of God (PBUH); and his good and pious companions, and then the consensus of the righteous predecessors: this is all to be upheld in totality until judgment day, while avoiding innovations… These inherited testaments, that are followed, and the preserved and transmitted texts, and the traversed paths to the truth, and the famous guidelines, and the amazingly victorious body of proofs that the companions, and their followers, relied on, and in their footsteps followed the scholars and the commers, and all believed it to be a sound body of proofs in front of God.' (Al-Lalaki, P.32)

For the Atharis, literalism may have been a direct outcome of their rejection of any shades of Quranic createdness, which is overt for the Mutazilites and covert for the Asharites and the Maturidis. However, it did not stop at literalism. The Athari school is extremely cautious about Qiyas but would not dismiss it, as some Mutazilites did. Hadith Ahad and consensus, however, have sa superior status in the realm of the Atharis, which is a school that demands the discipline of minds. This is why the Athari school, in general, is closer to the Zahiriyyah school of Ibn Hazem (Appendix II).

VII.3 The Atharis: The Discerning Soul

'And He (God) inspired it (the human essence) with (what constitutes) its transgression and (what constitutes as) its piety.' (Quran, 91:8)

The taming of the human intellect, which was central to the Athari school, is traced back to a theological crisis that left its mark on the collective Muslim consciousness; it still proves to be a controversial topic to discuss publicly in some corners of the Muslim world, where being labelled a Mutazilite is tantamount to an accusation of heresy; and where discussing the details of the trial imposed by the Mutazilite is classed as opening the gates to tabooed and dangerous discussions.

In the face of what the Athari school deemed an avalanche of transgressive innovations that elevated the human intellect to a position of authority equal to, or even above, the Divine Scriptures and allowed Hellenistic philosophy to taint the pure springs of Islam, the Athari school built its pavilions on the shores of the Divine revelation and Prophetic traditions. This is how Al-Athari school frames itself.

The Athari school sought to significantly reduce the role of the moral mind and the sense of epistemic moral agency, as well as the infiltration of foreign thoughts and ideas, by upholding the three sources of knowledge and legislation in Islam (Quran, Sunnah, and the Consensus of Companions and traditional Muslim Scholars) as the only true sources of what constitutes Islam. This was accompanied by the adoption of strict interpretive approaches that, in general, preferred literalism and limited Qiyas: 'Those (The Athari school) are the ones who

carried the Sharia and preserved the principles of Sunnah, and to whom the nation is indebted…' (Al-Lalak'i, P. 42)

In the seminal work: 'The Explanation of the Creedal Principles of the People of Sunnah and the Community from Quran, Sunnah, and the Consensus of the Companion; Their Students; and those Who Came After them', Al-Lalaka'i (965-1027 CE) provides an unequivocally clear presentation of the general position of the Athari school. Al-Lalaka'i was primarily a scholar of Hadith, and his works are representative of the school that was forged at the edge of the trial that inflicted their primary Imam, Ahmed Bin Hanbal, at the hands of the Mutazilites: '…it (the intellect) continuously contemplates the governance of God's kingdom with a defeated mind and a twisted understanding that delusionally determines the vileness or goodness of deeds...' (Al-Lalaka'i, P. 33)

Although the Athari school may have focused on downgrading the authority of the human intellect, by making it subject to Divine revelation rather than the other way around, this does not necessarily entail a full elimination of the role of the human intellect, while conditioning its limited authority by its association with revelation: 'This does not mean that the Sheikh (Ibn Othayymin) erased the value of the intellect, since he drew attention to God's praise of the intellect in His noble book…but the intellect here refers to the mature intellect that is safe from doubts, lusts, and ill wills.' (Al-Hazimi, 2009, P.918)

For the Athari school, the human intellect is not qualified to address matters of the unknown, including the essence of God and the nature of His attributes; therefore, the school advocates adherence to revealed scriptures on a literal basis, while endorsing literal interpretations in general. For the Atharis, acknowledging humankind's inability to grasp 'the

how' of what other theological schools classify as metaphysical is the safest route, a path pursued by the companions and their followers, who did not delve into what the schools of scholastic theology engaged with, according to the Athari school.

For the Atharis, regarding the human intellect as a source of legislation on equal footing with the Divine scriptures is heresy. However, the Athari school acknowledges a limited, tamed role for the intellect and the human fitrah, while rejecting any attempt to place either on a par with the Divine scriptures, prophetic traditions, or even the consensus of the companions and their followers. This includes pure Salafism, which rooted itself in the interpretations of the early generations of Muslims and fortified its position on the basis of strict Taqlid of the righteous Salaf.

From that corner, the Athari school distinguished itself theologically and juristically. Literalism dominated the school, which articulated its famous position on the attribute of Divine speech: it is with pre-existent sound and letter. The Quran is not to be described as created. The written Quran is neither an expression of the attribute of speech (Asharite) nor an indicator of the Divine attribute of speech (Maturidi). For the Atharis, the Quran is the uncreated speech of God revealed to us, and God speaks with a letter and a sound, without delving into the how of this.

The Atharis acknowledge man's ability to discern objective moral truths, but the locus of this ability is not the power of the human intellect, which they did not wish to bring to the table of legislation. Rather, the locus is the moral essence of man, embedded in his moral fabric. Moral human fitrah is a function of the human soul (spiritual essence). The school's moral

language frames its thinking and shapes how Muslims perceive their roles and the extent of their moral and legislative agency.

Moral human fitrah and the discerning soul are not the discerning intellect whose authority over the scriptures is independent, even if it is a Divine endowment. The sovereignty of the intellect is not made available for the discerning soul; however, objective moral truths and human ability to discern them exist in the realm of the Athar school.

VII.4 Athari Metaethics and the Modern British Value of Justice

Justice, as mentioned in chapter IV, is the missing value on the official list of British values. While the Mutazilites upheld justice as a central value within their metaethical models, it is the Athari school that will engage with justice due to its prominence within the Muslim world and its high impact on communities and the youth. Justice in this section relates to all forms of justice: legal, social, environmental, etc.

For the purposes of this study, light will be shed on how this grand and notable school (the Atharis) can support Muslims and their institutions as they engage with the values of justice in a modern United Kingdom. Within the halls of this school, we will also explore how the Atharis could contribute to the development of the value of justice in the UK and other Western nations.

The absence of justice as a value from the official list of British values does not mean that justice is not an active modern British value that guides policies and laws, however, the absence of justice constitutes an eyesore for those who have any expertise in values and their impact on institutions, communities, and individuals.

Without justice, another modern British value (Rule of Law) lacks the legs to stand on and risks not being upheld, because 'Rule of Law' hangs on justice and the perception of justice, as discussed in Chapter IV with the Mutazilites. Laws in themselves may be immoral and may legitimise abuses and transgressions, as in South Africa's apartheid system. Laws and state policies are not inherently just.

The Atharis do not centralise any particular Divine attribute, but the attribute of justice features prominently in their political narratives around the theory of the abode, which, in its historical and contextual application, divided the world into an abode of war, an abode of Islam, and an abode of covenant. The theory of the abode is not an Athari invention, but its prominence within Athari halls has historical reasons and contextual justifications.

Themes of justice and the abode of Islam in a world of despotic empires that had forsaken the truth emerged in the Athari literature at a time when the Caliphate was disintegrating. The crusades and the Mongol invasion helped fuel such narratives about the pursuit of justice at a time when the Atharis were on the rise. Modern colonialism further strengthened the theory of the abode and justice within the terrains of a school (the Atharis) that was destined to overshadow many other schools, especially in the Arab world, for a variety of social and economic reasons.

Justice, rather than civil wars or internal revolutions, was central to the Atharis' domain, both in the requirements for ruling and in the governing principles that distinguish the abode of Islam from surrounding abodes of war hostile to the Caliphate, where the laws of God are enacted justly. For the Atharis, justice was also the reality of Divine dominion on earth, but unlike the Mutazilites, the Atharis did not necessitate justice on God.

The very inception of the Athari school, as we know it today, was at the behest of unjust trials that neither spared the founder (Ibn Hanbal) nor its most notable figures, including Ibn Taymiyyah himself: '…they jailed him (Ibn Taymmiyah) in a tower for days, then they transferred him to a prison called Al-Job (Egypt)…after that, it was natural for much harm to befall the Hanbalis in Egypt and the Levant...' (Musa, 2018, p. 91)

Justice was a value that emerged from trials at the inception phase: 'The Imam (Ibn Taymiyyah) abhorred injustice and realised its terrible consequences, whether at the individual or collective level… he said: 'God grants victory to a just state despite its disbelief in Him, but He will not grant victory to an unjust state even if it believes in Him.' (Musa, 2018, p. 239).

The universality of justice transcends the official religion of the state. Such a statement by Ibn Taymiyyah, in a world of empires defined by the religions they uphold, is of high significance and is indeed revolutionary. Ibn Taymiyyah's declaration on the transcendence of justice and its higher importance in relation to Divine victory within the contingent realm of this life effectively places justice ahead of religious affiliations from the perspective of the Divine, thereby demonstrating the universality of justice and its superiority as a measure that applies equally to all humans.

In his book, 'The Legal Policy for Reforming the Ruler and the Ruled', Ibn Taymiyyah made it clear from the outset that justice is the central theme of the entire book and the central value of any functional state that claims to be Muslim. In this critical work, Ibn Taymiyyah stated that Divine revelation is intended to establish justice among people (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1971).

'…if he forfeits what is right because of kinship, personal loyalty, friendship, regional or ideological affiliations, racial ties-as in being Arabs, Persians, Turks, or Romans- or bribe for financial gains, or any other reason, such as hatred, then he has betrayed God, His prophet, and the believers…' (Ibn Tayimyyah, 190, P.20): This statement serves as a harsh rebuke from one of the notable figures of the Athari school, again demonstrating the emphasis on justice irrespective of tribe or any other affiliation, which could fit very well in a modern multicultural United Kingdom. Attempts to contextualise justice for different communities within the same borders of a multicultural society may lead to long-term perceptions of double standards and parallel laws. This is why the value of justice must be included on the official list of British values. This will be elaborated on in the recommendations section.

The universality of justice in the Athari realm aligns more closely with original modern perceptions of the value of justice than with postmodernism. Understanding the universality of justice could support Muslims and their institutions in observing justice at a level that transcends tribalism, a feature of postmodernism that may be deepening divisions in the UK by driving every community, Muslim or not, into defensive modes that focus on what differentiates communities rather than on what brings them together. A justice that transcends all ties is what the United Kingdom desperately needs to quench the fires of cultural conflict.

VII.4.a Athari Metaethical Narratives of Justice and Postmodernism – the example of Sayed Qutub as an Athari who emerged from the ranks of the Asharites.

Sayed Qutub might appear an unlikely choice to illustrate how the Athari school could support justice in a modern United Kingdom. However, this research will show that the metaethics of this highly controversial (and often misunderstood) intellectual could bridge the

gap in the application of the Athari metaethics regarding the value of justice in a modern United Kingdom.

Qutub may be perceived as the father of radical jihadism due to some of his later contentious interpretations and ideas, which may be linked to brutal incarceration. However, his footprint in the works of some of the most rational and notable Muslim thinkers of the 20th century is overlooked amid polemics, for example, Dr Mohammed Immarah, Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradawi, Dr Abdel Wahab Al-Missiri, etc.: 'Apart from my great admiration for Sayed Qutub's intelligence, mastery, and excelling, and despite my love and appreciation for him, and despite believing in his sincerity and altruism, which fuelled his intellectualism, I differ with him over his later thought direction when Qutub, the revolutionary, contradicted Qutub, the peaceful preacher.' (Al-Qaradawi, 2016, p. 98).

The themes of justice in the Athari school and its universality as an objective moral truth feature in the works of Sayed Qutub, who blended Asharism with Atharism. The impact of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim on Qutub shaped his understanding of justice and may have played a role in moving Sayed Qutub away from the generic Asharite position on good and evil and on the inability of humankind to discern them: 'J. Toth in 2013 noted that Sayyid Qutub formed his concept of Jahiliyyah under the influence of Abu Ala Maududi and Abu Hasan Al-Nadvi, as well as Ibn Taymiyyah.' (Maevskaya & Aga, 2021, P.60).

Sayed Qutub's writings attest to the influence of Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah in one of his most controversial books, Milestones, which received only modest praise from the late Al-Albani, one of the most notable Athari scholars of Hadith: 'Imam Ibn Qayyim summarised struggle in Islam in Provisions for the Hereafter (Zaad Al-Miaad) …' (Qutub, 1979, p. 55)

There is no fluidity, contextualisation, arbitrariness, or vagueness about morality and values in the realm of Qutub: 'Human values and human morals are not mysterious or fluid and they are not of an evolving nature that changes and alternates, constantly unstable and without roots, which are the claims upheld by the materialistic interpretation of history and scientific socialism…Hence, the environment and its norms are not what determines moral values…only then there will be no rural versus urban values and morals, capitalist versus socialist values and morals, or bourgeois values and morals versus proletarian values and morals. Also, there will be no morals crafted by the environment, the living standards, the context…' (Qutub, 1979, p. 111)

Qutub was a man of moral absolutes who believed that the presence of moral evils that can aid us in observing the opposite of it: '…God, the most exalted, knows that establishing absolute belief in truth and the good requires observing the opposite side which is falsehood and evil.' (Qutub, 2004, P.1105)

Qutub subscribed to the concept of a moral human fitrah and a soul that discerns objective moral truths. His Asharism pales in comparison to his Atharism within the scope of this thesis. Like the Atharis, he does not ascribe any legislative powers to man, moral or otherwise. However, man has universal epistemic moral agency, which is viable yet limited when compared to the Mutazilites, for example.

Neither Ibn Taymiyyah nor Qutub was a follower of hard Taqlid. Both were rebels in their own way: '(Islam) considers that the original state of (human) fitrah is a tendency toward the good. Man was created in the best state…Islam is adamant to lead and dominate human society to establish conditions that would liberate people from deviations that are alien to (human)

fitrah; would allow for the force of good embedded in the (human) fitrah to emerge, to be set free and to excel; and would eliminate the obstacles that stand between this fitrah and its race toward the goods embedded in it.' (Qutub, 2001, P.33)

The same claims appear in the works of another thinker who shared common themes with Qutub: 'This proves that moral rules are constant universal laws which are known to all mankind. Good and evil are not obscure so that people must search for them as they have been known since the time of Adam, for God has granted Man the ability to sense good and evil and carved it into his fitrah.' (Abu Al-Ala Al-Mawdodi, 1958, P. 10)

The Athari in Qutub offers, within his scrolls, existential questions centred on the pursuit of individual, collective, and universal eudemonia (flourishing) and universal justice in line with the Divine will. His controversial and contentious letters offer universal insights into justice that share common ground with justice from a modern perspective: 'When Islam attempted to establish social justice, it elevated justice from being merely economic…it (Islam) made justice comprehensive for all humans and established on basis of two pillars: the human conscience, which emerges from human essence, and legal liability in societies…' (Qutub, 1988, P.63)

Sayed Qutub's Athari-influenced perceptions of justice align more closely with rational modern concepts of justice than with Nietzsche's, who is regarded as a founder of postmodernism. Both highly influential thinkers lived in a world of masters and slaves, but with Nietzsche the masters were Homer's noblemen, and they were the only ones entitled by 'the will to power' to define what counts as good and evil in relation to what furthers the advancement of the Nietzschean masters, with no regard for the slaves or the meek: 'The

essential thing, however, in a good and healthy aristocracy…should therefore accept with good conscience the sacrifice of a legion of individuals, who for its sake, must be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its fundamental belief must be precisely that society is not allowed to exist for its own sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding, by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to higher existence….' (Nietzsche, 2014, P97)

Qutub's league of masters were no aristocrats. A master in the realm of Qutub is the average human being who has fine-tuned himself with the hymns of the universe in a symphony of submission to the Divine. From individual to universal and environmental justice, Qutub was ahead of his times on matters of justice, despite his controversial interpretations and contentious ideas, which drove notable scholars to criticise his works: 'Humankind's position towards natural forces is that of exploration and amicability, rather than fear and animosity…A Muslim believes that God created natural forces to aid and befriend him, and the means to earn this friendship is through reflection on these forces so that the human can get to know these natural forces…if these natural forces harm mankind sometimes, it is because mankind has failed to reflect on and explore them, and has not figured out yet the laws that govern them…' (Qutub, 2004, P.25)

Mastery for Qutub hanged on submission to the Divine, and that would entail several values to become central to the individual and to society: justice, equality, benevolence, etc.: The nature of the Islamic perspective on human life makes social justice relevant to all aspects of life, and not only the materialistic and economic aspects…Islam has established social justice on the following principles: 1. spiritual liberation; 2. total human equality; and 3. profound human collaboration.' (Qutub, 1988, P.31-32)

Nietzsche deemed such universal concepts hollow, detrimental, and a product of slave morality in a world where good and evil were mere constructs that became obstacles in the path of chariots pursuing glory and conquest: '…slaves of the democratic taste and its 'modern ideas' all of them men without solitude, without personal solitude, blunt honest fellows to whom neither courage nor honourable conduct ought to be denied, only, they are not free, and are ludicrously superficial…their two most frequently songs and doctrines are called 'Equality of Rights' and 'Sympathy with Sufferers…' (Nietzsche, 2014, P.26)'

Nietzsche's ideas on justice and equality, which he practically scorned, are problematic in a modern United Kingdom: 'Nietzsche has criticised the modern call for civility because it leads to weakness, since he madly called for 'the will to power'…' (Al-Shair, 2020, P.37)

Unlike Aristotle and even Avicenna, Qutub rejected slavery and relied on a verse in the Quran (47:4) to argue for and celebrate its full termination, while attempting to reconcile its historical presence in Muslim civilisation as a mere necessity of a world order that still used slavery as a model for managing prisoners of war (Qutub, 2004).

While Nietzsche deconstructed the meaning of good and evil, leaving man, the slave, at the mercy of the masters who must rule on the basis of their 'Will to power', Qutub universalised the concept of good and evil and gave it an intrinsic reality that could be discerned via the moral human fitrah, inherent in the human soul.

Qutub conveys some of the deepest meanings of universal justice, rooted in the average human, who can become an illuminated master only by connecting with the Divine and observing Divine laws, a state that parallels the moment humanity exits the cave in Plato's

story: ‘Islam makes of absolute justice, with all its meanings and on all levels, one of the fundamentals of Islamic society. Justice in equating all humans in rights and duties. Justice in providing life opportunities as well as developmental, educational, and vocational opportunities…’ (Qutub, 2005, P.166))

In the world of Nietzsche, there is no justice, just a constructed mirage that is void of true meaning; while in Qutub’s Athari world, justice is central and universal. The discerning soul of Qutub, which discerns universal moral values, can find a place at a table discussing British values, given their universal nature that emanates from enlightened modernity: ‘Islam does not only protect the blood, money, and freedom of non-Muslim citizens (Ahl Al-Zimmah), but it also prevents their social isolation. Islam allows them (non-Muslims citizens) to live amongst Muslims as respectable citizens who enjoy amicable relations with Muslims, while not isolating them into enclaves. Islam does not demand from them special work while not allowing them to mingle with the Muslims.’ (Qutub, 2005, P.99)

Modern universal values and objective moral truths and values offer a shared plateau between the Athari order of morality and enlightened modernity: two realms increasingly left behind in their isolated tribal existence in a postmodernist world that prefers tribalism to any form of universal meaning, no matter how realistic or scientific it is: ‘Finally, the human race has dignity that should not humiliated…dignity is for all on basis of full equality.’ (Qutub, 1988, P.51)

Despite hostility towards philosophy and a pursuit of an understanding of Islam that is puritan when it comes to the sources that feed it: the Quran and the Prophet, the Athari school offers universal understandings of values that could share common ground with modern British

values. For Britain, justice is a modern universal value, which is liberal and secular, and justice is also an objective moral truth for the Athari school and for most of the Islamic theological schools, for that matter.

Many Muslims carry cultural affiliations and a religious legacy that define their identity and their deepest conception of a true nation: the global, raceless nation of the Prophet. According to the Islamic narrative and the universal human-centric narrative, justice transcends and supersedes all ties, biological and creedal.

VII.5 Athari Metaethics and Controversial Interpretations: Where Literalism and Limited Qiyas Can be sources of Conflict.

However, for academic objectivity, it is important to examine the controversial interpretations of Sayed Qutub as an illustrator of Athari metaethics that drive towards literalism, hard de-contextualisation, and limited qiyas: 'The Fifth principle is: Qiyas when only essential. If he (Ibn Hanbal) finds no Quranic verse or hadith, or the sayings of companions or even one companion, or even a weak narration, to deal with a matter, then he would resort to Qiyas on necessary grounds…' (Dr Immarah, 2012, p. 32)

This would immediately reveal some of the obstacles this school might face in applying its metaethical arguments to the value of justice in a modern liberal and secular United Kingdom, as this school may be suspicious of any attempts to expand its definitions of moral values to bridge the gap with how values are defined in modern liberal secular realities and contexts. However, common grounds for debate exist, since man and his moral human fitrah feature in

the realm of discernible moral values, especially justice, which the Atharis mastered due to their meteoric rise during the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Sayed Qutub, who lived during very dark times in Egypt, seems to regard the Quranic narrative on armed jihad (struggle with arms) as a necessary and inevitable means to protect the religious freedom of non-Muslim nations and to liberate them from the enslavement of tyrants in power who may come between them and merely learning about Islam.

Qutub's interpretation and armed-jihadi worldview, derived from pertinent verses of the Quran, seem to differ from those of Mohamed Al-Ghazali (1917-1996), the revolutionary Asharite scholar of Al-Azhar Institution of Egypt.

Mohamed Al-Ghazali's interpretation of the Quran's teachings on armed jihad seems to be more oriented towards defensive warfare rather than pre-emptive warfare based on expanding the governing model of Islam and its sharia.

Al-Ghazali still maintained that armed jihad in Islam could be used to stop tyrannical regimes from obstructing people from learning and/or accepting Islam, but it seems less of an inevitability and more oriented towards defensive wars. However, Al-Ghazali rejected the interpretation upheld by some of the Al-Athari scholars, such as Qutub, regarding Chapter Al-Tawbah: 'The truth is that describing Chapter Al-Tawbah as a chapter that changed the nature of war in Islam is colossally ignorant.' (Al-Ghazali, 2000, p. 142)

On the other hand, Sayed Qutub's interpretation reveals his view that this same chapter, Al-Tawbah, determines the nature of the relations between the Muslim nation and all other nations on earth: 'This Medinan chapter was revealed among the last of what was revealed of the Quran, if not the last itself. Hence, it contains the final edicts governing the relations between the Muslim nation and all other nations on earth…' (Qutub,2004, P.1564)

The following reveals some of Qutub's commentaries and interpretations of the chapter in question (Al-Tawbah): 'The miserable reality of the offspring of the Muslims, who have nothing remaining of Islam but its name, along with the conniving orientalist assault on the principles of jihad in Islam, drove the defeated (Muslims) of our time to escape through contextual verses from the truth about how Islam is meant to roam the earth to liberate all mankind from worshiping anyone except Allah; submitting to any authority but His authority; or resorting to a legislative system but His…The verses they resort to are contextual verses revealed to face a specific reality. This specific reality could reoccur, and in that case, such verses could be reapplied since reality shows that the context that demands these verses, and its rulings, is manifesting again.' (Qutub, 2004, P.1581)

On the other hand, Al-Ghazali's commentaries and interpretations of the same chapter (Al-Tawbah) are different: 'It seems that some of those who considered the chapter as a declaration of an open war against infidelity were influenced by the fighting that took place in Egypt and the Levant, which was followed by Iraq then extended to terminate the state of Persia and bring down Rome. This is a misunderstanding which could have been considered had the Muslims directed their armies straight to Rome. These empires (Rome and Persia) were occupying lands that were not theirs and they oppressed helpless people…Chapter Bara'h (Al-Tawabah) is innocent of inciting violence or legislating for pre-emptive war on the innocent and the

pacifists…The Muslims focused on resisting the Romans who locked the doors in the face of the call to Islam in North of the Arabian Peninsula…' (Al-Ghazali, P.142-145)

Two renowned interpreters of the same book, the Quran, appear to hold different views on the same chapter (Al-Tawabah) regarding the legislation on war in Islam. Qutub's views seem to support a global and pre-emptive armed jihad, whereas Al-Ghazali seems to be more oriented towards armed jihad as a defensive measure. The consequences of such differing interpretations warrant another study to address them, but they are significant nonetheless.

Examining Qutub's interpretation of the armed jihad verses in Chapter Al-Tawbah (Repentance) and Al-Ghazali's interpretation of the same verses is not only an example of how metaethical narratives could impact interpretation. It shows how the metaethics of objective moral truths and the universalism of meaning, within an Athari literalist framework of interpretation that limits Qiyas, led to a very different outcome in interpreting the same verses. Hard literalism and hard decontextualization impact interpretations. On the other hand, soft literalism and tolerance (Asharites) may offer different interpretations

Qutub offers a universal understanding of the human experience, which often resonates with modern universal values, while upholding some of the loftiest ideas regarding the emancipation of humans from the chains of slavery, especially when compared with the harsher views of notable Muslim philosophers who carried the Hellenistic footprint in their works, such as Ibn Miskawayh (Appendix 3) and Avicenna.

Qutub offers an elevated understanding of the harmonious existence of humans in a universe meant to synchronise with humanity, rather than portraying it as a bundle of natural

and competing evils that threaten the existence of man, which is very different from how other Muslim and Western scholars portray the forces of the universe as natural evils.

However, some of Qutub's interpretations must be balanced and tempered by more balanced and tolerant interpretations from Muslim scholars at his level and above. The discerning soul of Sayed Qutub did curb his appetite for human reason to take over the interpretations, and that pushed him towards a form of literalism that sometimes led to a decontextualised universalist approach to interpretation that backfired, and this is what Mohamed Al-Ghazali refuted.

Metaethics determines one's approach to interpretation. It could pin the quill to human reason as it interprets the text; or it could pin it to an immaterial and transcendental soul that yearns to subdue its powers to the book in pursuit of eschatological safety; or it could pin it to the contingent letter and the verbatim of the revelation, thereby affecting the degree of literalism or non-literalism, as in seeking the higher purposes of the verse.

VII.6 The Athari Scholars on Epistemic Moral Agency in a World of Justice and Evil

A. Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328 CE):

Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328 CE) was born in Haran during a period of turmoil and witnessed the exodus of Muslims to the Levant, which became a hub for renowned scholars fleeing the Tartar onslaught. Ibn Taymiyyah grew up in a learned family, with both parents of high intellectual calibre: '…The Tartar raided it (Haran) and its people escaped, including the family of Ibn Taymiyyah. This was a family of knowledge, and its most precious belongings

were books, which they tried to salvage by means of a rowing boat…' (Al-Nahlawy, 1986, P,11)

Ibn Taymiyyah waged an intellectual war against philosophy, Asharite theology, and traditional scholarship, which had become devoid of new contributions and locked within the cages of stagnant traditions. Ibn Taymiyyah's war on philosophy and the Asharites, the Mutazilites, etc., was no less ferocious than the war waged by Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali. Ironically, these very wars brought forth the latent philosophers residing within the intellects of Ibn Taymiyyah and Al-Ghazali, or what we have come to call: the prodigal philosophers.

'Ibn Taymiyyah, likewise, found himself criticised for his simultaneous rejection and absorption of philosophical principles. Though he had railed against philosophers and repudiated the exalted position of their science, the Shafi scholar and historian Sham Al-Din Al-Zahabi, in a famous statement, excoriated Ibn Taymiyyah for having ''repeatedly swallowed the poison of the philosophers and their works''. As a result, Ibn Taymiyyah's body had become addicted to the frequent use of poison, so that it was secreted in the very bones; through this route, his speech had likewise been corrupted.' (Tamer, 2013, 331)

Ibn Taymiyyah was not only a scholar but also a warrior who carried the sword to defend the lands against the Tartars: '…he led the soldiers and fought mightily. He was a role model for might, bravery, and chivalry. Allah granted them victory on the fourth day of Ramadan. The Tartars departed and never came back.' (Al-Nahlawy, 1986, p. 19)

Ibn Taymiyyah had the opportunity to govern, which gave him a fleeting moment when the legislative and executive powers were combined: 'Ibn Taymiyyah became the leader of

Damascus and its ruler. He, along with his elite students, shattered wine containers and closed the bars. People started observing the rule of the Quran and the revival of the era of the reign of the Prophet.' (Al-Nahlawy, 1986, p. 17)

In relation to metaethics, Ibn Taymiyyah is closer to the Mutazilites than to the Asharites. Although he sought to develop his own position, dissatisfied with the positions of the theological schools mentioned, he still did not move far enough from the Mutazilites when it comes to objective moral truths and their discernibility by the human agent: 'Ibn Taymiyyah's contribution presents itself as an affirmation of via media and also as a claim parsed in distinctively objectivist and rationalist terms. Good and bad are objective qualities, and they can be known by reason, Ibn Taymiyyah articulating a position that had earlier counted the Mutazilites as its most vocal exponents.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja, 2003, p. 16)

Ibn Taymiyyah was not vague about his position, and his answer to the Euthyphro Dilemma is loud and clear. Vasalou (2016) states the Taymiyyah position: 'God's choices are not the result of mere arbitrary will. There is something ''in the reality of things'' that weights (drives) God's will toward commanding one action against another. We heard Ibn Taymiyyah frame this point clearly in the stage setting exposition of his via media…' (Vasalou, 2016, P.167)

Ibn Taymiyyah also stressed that innateness of our ability to reach broad conclusions regarding the moral worth of acts and values but insisted that revelations are required for the particulars: 'Couched in the idiom of fitrah, we hear this message in Ibn Taymiyyah's Kitab Mufassal Al-I'tiqad as a claim that our natural constitution that is revealed by God; for the natural condition knows a given thing in general form, and the Shari'a particularizes and

clarifies it and attests what the natural constitution has no independent access to.' (Vasalou, 2016, P.96)

This is why, despite the fact that the school of Ibn Taymiyyah must be framed within eschatological consequentialism, its metaethical positions are closer to the Mutazilites and the Maturidis than to the Asharites within the scope of this thesis.

The Athari school holds that good and evil have an intrinsic reality, and that this can be discerned universally by our moral human fitrah (rooted in the human soul) if it remains pure, functional, and uncorrupted. The Mutazilites held that there is a natural harmony between the human intellect and the Divine scriptures, and that both guide towards the same objective moral truths. By contrast, the Athari school undermines the role of the intellect because of its susceptibility to temptation and corruption and dethrones it in the face of the light of Divine revelation.

The Quran for Ibn Taymiyyah, in his 'The Great Exegesis' sheds glaring light on good and evil and the areas where vagueness may dominate when it comes to morality: 'Allah, the exalted, has sent Muhammad with guidance and the truthful religion to usher people from darkness into light; to distinguish between truth and falsehood, guidance and misguidance, correctness and deviancy, truth and lies, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil…' (Ibn Taymiyyah, P.87)

In his book: 'The Straight Path Demands Being at Odds with the People of Hell', he said what may allow us to assume that despite believing in moral huma fitrah, and even moral reasoning, as tools to distinguish between good and evil, he did not seem to uphold the

epistemic role of Man as high as the Mutazilites did: '…People in Jahiliya (a predominant state of ignorance) are ignorant; they hold on to sayings which they consider knowledge but it is ignorance; they do what they think is righteous while it is corruption; and the purpose of the ones amongst them who have excellent knowledge and deeds is to acquire what little they can have from earlier prophetic knowledge for truth and falsehood have become matters of doubt…they exert efforts, as philosophers do, and find joy in the study of natural phenomena, mathematics and the reform of manners, but after immense effort they collect but droplets which do not quench their thirst when compared to Divine knowledge…' (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1907, P.3)

Martin, Woodward and Atmaja (2003) state that Al-Mutazilites claimed that God cannot act in an evil or unethical manner, a position that falls under their doctrine of Al-Adl (Justice). 'Cannot' is not a term entertained by Ibn Taymiyyah or his most notable student, Al-Jawziyyah, but the Taymiyyah school of thought refuses to attribute 'absolute evil' to God because of His essence and attributes. No pure or absolute evil deed is to be attributed to God. This is a significant leap and principle that would be rejected by Al-Asharites, as it is logically possible for God to do anything, and it can never be unjust because Divine justice is rooted in Divine ownership of all creation.

Justice may not have been the central Divine attribute for Ibn Taymiyyah, but his life and battle indeed centralised it. In the realm of Ibn Taymyyiah and his student, who will be discussed shortly, there is an order of the good where evil leads to good.

In Book IX of 'Majmou Al-Fatawah', 'The Logic', Ibn Taymiyyah clearly sets out his position on human reason versus divine knowledge: 'If by knowledge we mean the knowledge

of God which was revealed by Him, the exalted, which is the book (the Quran)… than this is better than human reason for it is the trait of the Creator while human reason is the trait of man, and the trait of the Creator is better than the trait of the creature… if by human reason we mean the instinct that Allah instilled in man to acquire knowledge and act, which leads to better deeds, for knowledge is what is meant to be and the instinctive human reason is the means to acquire it.' (Ibn Taymiyyah, Book IX, L:8899)

The Sheikh of Islam rejected the idea that we are born without a priori knowledge ingrained in us by Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that our natural disposition is Islam: '…their saying that (people) are created void of knowledge…that the heart is like a scroll that captures what is inscribed on it, as in faith or disbelief, and that the heart is not more inclined toward one than the other is very a corrupt statement.' (Ibn Taymiyyah, Translation of the researcher, Book IV, L:7876)

Ibn Taymiyyah's reply to the Euthyphro Dilemma, which is central to his metaethics, is that good and evil have an intrinsic reality, and that human fitrah can discern them to an extent. Without divine scriptures, both human reason and moral human fitrah could easily lose the path, confuse truth with falsehood, and fail to realise the true state of things or their intrinsic nature. Neither will be capable of helping mankind determine the eschatological outcomes of their deeds.

B. Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (1292-1360 CE):

Like Socrates and Plato, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah were locked in a mentor-pupil relationship that shaped an entire chapter of the Athari school: Pure Salafism. Ibn

Taymiyyah had a transformative impact on Ibn Al-Jawziyyah, who was more inclined towards Sufism until he met his notable mentor.

Al-Jawziyyah witnessed the persecution of Ibn Taymiyyah as much as Plato witnessed the persecution of Socrates. Ibn Qayyim also suffered severe persecution. Socrates was murdered by means of a poisoned cup, while Ibn Taymiyyah died in a Damascus jail, tasting the cup of oppression and persecution. At the edge of his deathbed, his notable student was a witness, having been imprisoned with him.

Ibn Qayyim possessed the intellect and the quill of a philosopher. In the following section, we explore his metaethics and some of the parallels he shared with Avicenna, revealing that, among the key founders of Pure Salafism, philosophy and metaphorical interpretation were present. We attempt to diagnose Ibn Qayyim's metaethics and the philosophy that helped shape his moral order.

Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah shared with Avicenna the concept of the order of the good (Nizam Al-Khayr), by which God does not create absolute evil and existence is good on the ontological level, i.e., if something exists, it is good unless it chooses to commit misplaced evil: 'If it is asked, ''Why did He create something if it is evil? I respond, 'Both His creation and of it and His actions are good; they are not evil. The creative action subsists with God (Glory be to Him), and it is impossible that He (SWT) would perform anything evil or be characterised by it. Whatever evil is present in a creature, it is because of its lack of association or connection to Him (God).' (Al-Jawziyyah, Translation of researcher, 2017, P.24)

The parallels in the problem of Evil in Ibn Qayyim's book 'The Healing of the Ill: on Matters of Fate, Destiny, Wisdom, and Causes' contain sections that reveal the extent of the influence that Avicenna and the philosophers had on Ibn Qayyim: 'Privation is evil, and existence is not evil or a cause for evil. Existential matters are not evil ontologically, but evil could be traced back to accidents which may include unessential or unbeneficial things. You will always find evil deeds to be a form of perfection for their doer, while its evil from another angle. An example would be the injustice that comes from a power that seeks domination and overpowering, which is the beastly force, which is perfected by conquering, and for which it was created. This power is not existentially evil because of its impact. Evil occurs when this force has no impact whatsoever, which makes it weak and incapacitated. Evil is an accident that happens to the one suffering from injustice due to loss in money, life, or freedom. Evil is an accident for this domineering force takes place for misplacing domination, overpowering, and usurping where they do not belong.' (Al-Jawziyyah, 2019, P.91)

Avicenna and the philosophers shaped Ibn Qaiyym's perception and language when discussing the problem of evil, and they also influenced his metaethics. Examining some Avicennian propositions reveals the parallels: 'When considering evil acts, we found that evil acts are a realisation of wholesomeness for their enactors; while they could relatively be evil for the receiving side; or for another enactor who is more deserving of the act in question but is being prevented from it (by the principal committer of the evil act). For example, injustice emanates from a force that seeks predominance such as the irascible soul which finds wholesomeness in predominance; hence it was created irascible…' (Avicenna, The Metaphysics, 9:7, 2017, P.893)

Like Avicenna, Al-Jawziyyah denied the existence of absolute evil. While this might suggest relativism to some, neither thinker was a relativist by our modern understanding of the term. Both scholars believed in objective moral truths that transcend any limited relativism they may have harboured to justify the existence of evil in God's order. Both Avicenna and Ibn Qayyim upheld moral absolutism grounded in a transcendental realm, yet they understood the role of evil in the Divine grand scheme of things.

Ibn Qayyim believed that good and evil have an intrinsic reality that is stable and does not change, even if evil is permitted under dire and exceptional circumstances, such as lying to save oneself: 'What proves that is what God, the exalted, said: ''And He (God) permits for them the good and prohibits them from the vile'', which clearly shows that what is permitted was good before it was permitted and what prohibited was vile before it was prohibited… This proves that moral evils are intrinsically evil and that moral evils are not perceived as good rationally…' (Al-Jawziyyah, P.875-876)

Ibn Qayyim rejected the Asharite position and seems to be closer to the Mutazilites in some aspects of his metaethical words: 'There is no evidence that the good and the vile were determined on the basis of permission and prohibition, for then God would have just said that He allows what He allows, and He Prohibits what He prohibits...' (Al-Jawziyyah, P.875)

For both Avicenna and Ibn Al-Qayyim, what they deemed as moral evils were clearly defined. It is their attempt to justify their presence in relation to the order of God (Nizam Al-Kehir) that prompted them to draw a line between the very fact that such moral evils do exist, and their actual intrinsic worth, and the consequences that they should unleash on their committers. Culture, time, and context did not matter, and it did not reduce or change how both

thinkers classed evil as inherently and intrinsically so: '…and to be forbidden are deeds, which if licensed, will oppose the foundations of the city, for example, fornication and sodomy, which calls for the abandonment of one of the best pillars of the city: marriage (legal, child-bearing copulation)' (Avicenna, The Metaphysics, 10:4, 2017, P.919)

Any relativism that seems to emerge from the moral corners of Ibn Qayyim, or Avicenna for that matter, must not be interpreted in modern, or even postmodern, terms and must be filed under the deliberations of jurisprudence when dealing with existing situations and necessities.

Ibn Qayyim's reflection on the problem of evil did not affect his moral absolutes, which were dictated by Islam, but he attempted to justify the existence of evil in a world that God created:

'The above is confirmed by considering that there are two types of evil: [1] absolute essential evil and [2] relative evil. The first does not even exist. If something exists, it cannot be purely evil.' (Al-Jawziyyah, trans. of Zein, T.,2017, P. 25)

Al-Jawziyyah had a utilitarian flair that feeds into jurisprudence, but it was constrained by the limits of a Divine-based framework (Islamic) of morality founded on objective moral truths and realities, and like the Mutazilites, Ibn Qayyim assumed a natural harmony between Divine revelation and the human intellect, unless it becomes corrupted, which impacts its moral compass. Ethical absolutes determine the outcome of moral equations, in which God, the legislator, deems certain deeds evil and worthy of punishment and eternal damnation for ontological, not arbitrary, reasons.

One must note that this concept of limited relativism within a framework of moral absolutism is embedded in the moral philosophy of the Quran, which is why it dominates the moral philosophy of Islamic theological scholars and impacts their metaethics regardless of their affiliations. Islamic utilitarianism does not reduce belief in moral absolutes, but it gives depth into the meaning of absolutes in a contingent existence fraught with trials and tribulations.

Both Ibn Taymiyyah and his student worked within the context of Sharia, and the Sharia of Islam has a unique moral system that blends moral absolutes with limited relativity and exceptions that may, in exceptional circumstances and dire emergencies, override moral absolutism to a limited extent.

The fact that Islamic Shariah, for many scholars, centres on five great purposes (the preservation of faith, life, reason, offspring, and money) testifies to this blend of absolutism and a controlled form of ethical utilitarianism. The governance of this form of utilitarianism is not as simple as pleasure or pain in this life, or even benefits, for eschatological consequences override earthly ones.

If the benefit or happiness of the greatest number of people proves threatening to the fundamental principles of Sharia, its moral absolutes, and the eschatological consequences for the individual and the nation, the demands of utility will not be followed, and any form of relativity will be abandoned. Principles such as ‘the lesser of two harms’ are confined to the boundaries of the Islamic moral system.

This is a significant difference between Bentham's utility and the utility of Ibn Taymiyyah's school, which emanated from the halls of the Atharis, and produced Ibn Qayyim and Pure Salafism. This difference may help explain the birth of Mill's more principled and ethical utilitarianism, and his breakaway from his mentor, Bentham: '…the real intention of the Sharia was the public good, maslaha. In all matters where the commands and the prohibitions of the Quran and Sunna of the Prophet were silent or unspecific, the principal of maslaha could be considered identical to the intent of Sharia.' (Martin, Woodward & Atmaja, 1997, P. 125)

VII.7 Conclusion

The Athari school's reply to the Euthyphro dilemma places it, along with the Mutazilites and the Maturidis, within the realm of objective moral truths, where good and evil have an intrinsic nature and human fitrah can discern them. However, within the Athari school, the human intellect was not a source of legislation and was not placed on a par with Divine revelation. Literalism and guarded Qiyas are outcomes of Athari metaethics.

Rational morality, in its modern sense or even in the Mutazilite sense, is not endorsed by the Atharis from the perspectives of semantics and wording, to avoid the transgressions of the Hanafis, for example, which has led some Athari schools to condemn certain aspects of the Hanafi school. This condemnation was tantamount to accusing Imam Abu Hanifah of heresy within the halls of pure Salafism, which remains a dominant chapter of the Athari school.

According to the Athari school, the attempt to tame the human intellect, which was consumed with speculative theology and philosophy at the expense of Hadith and the traditions

of the early generation of Islam, contributed to the Athari school's preference for a literalist approach to interpretation, which only became stricter and sterner with the rise of Pure Salafism, which carried the legacy of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim and their attempt to crack down on speculative theology and philosophical escapades.

What this school offers Muslims in a modern, liberal, secular context is a tamed and restricted form of rational moral reasoning, when compared with the Mutazilites and the Maturidis. However, their position is more tenable than the Asharites'.

Most importantly, the Athari school offers universal understandings and meanings of justice that relate ontologically to justice as a value in a modern, liberal and secular United Kingdom, more than those of a notable Western philosopher: Nietzsche. While this is not going to eliminate the differences between the Athari school’s justice, which is a value tightly governed by the Quran, the universality of justice is core to Muslim observance of such a value that relates to all humans regardless of their background.

Chapter VIII

Critical Analysis of the Role of Human Reason: A Prevailing Narrative

'Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love, by name to come called charity, the soul of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath to leave this paradise, but shalt possess A Paradise within thee, happier far.' (Milton, p.315, 2014)

Chapter Aims

This chapter identifies an underlying, prevailing metaethical narrative that shapes moral epistemology despite the polemics and semantic differences among the schools within the scope of this thesis. This common moral epistemology is likely to enhance engagement with British values. Evidence from the Quran and Sunnah is provided to support this common moral epistemology.

VIII.1 Proposition One: Epistemic Moral Agency in a World of Objective Moral Truths and Values

Objective moral truths and universal values flourish within the house of Islam; their presence is accompanied by the notion that human reason and/or human fitrah can discern them even in the absence of revelation, a proposition that is more prevalent in the samples provided in this thesis.

Epistemic moral agency is a dominant feature of Islamic moral traditions, though to varying degrees. Even within this spectrum, epistemic moral agency in a world of objective moral truths can foster better engagement with British values without compromising the boundaries of the Muslim faith. The two criteria identified as requirements for constructive engagement with British values are found within Islamic metaethical narratives, and they constitute the thesis's dominant finding.

In Islam, as this thesis shows, human fitrah is an all-encompassing system of a priori knowledge embedded in our spiritual essence. In this context, human reason and human fitrah are among the gifts God gave humankind, alongside the senses and instincts. Many Muslim

thinkers and scholars discussed in this thesis uphold that human intellect has an innate ability to arrive at moral truths, which is still traced back to God, even in the absence of revelation: 'And by the self and He (God) who fashioned it. He (God) then inspired it (the knowledge of) what would be its transgression and what would be its piety.' (Quran, 90:7-8) and '…This is the natural disposition that Allah embedded into people and there is no change to what Allah has created (ontologically)…' (Quran, 30:30)

In 'In the Shades of the Quran', Sayed Qutub, the post-colonial quill of the Atharis, interpreted the above verse as: 'This is how He (God) links the natural disposition of the human self with the nature of this religion (Islam), as they are both made by Allah and both go well with the convention of existence… human fitrah is unchangeable and the (divine) law is unchangeable… if the human selves deviate from human fitrah, only this religion (Islam) brings them back to it (human fitrah) because it (Islam) is compatible with this fitrah.' (Qutub, 2004, p. 2767)

Moral human reason and moral human fitrah are epistemic endowments that could be capitalised on in modern liberal and secular realities, where revelation, in general, and the Quran, in particular, are not among the official governing forces morally and legally.

The underlying power of the moral human fitrah and/or moral human reasoning argument is that any sane human, regardless of background, is naturally endowed with the capacity to uncover and engage with moral truths, values, and realities. This does not mean that scripture is unimportant, for one of its roles is to ensure that moral human fitrah and moral human reasoning are restored to order if they have been corrupted by poor company or by a corrupt society or environment, for example. Also, revelation sheds light on matters of worship and

the practical side of morality, rather than on the abstract alone. In addition, it serves as a reference and a checkpoint: '……despite of the care the Mutazilites had given to human reason and how it is the moral legislator for them…The Mutazilites believed that human reason alone is not the moral legislator; and that divine revelation comes in the second place…' (Imam, 2016, P.902)

This is not a contradiction. None of the Islamic theological schools within the scope of this thesis would discard revelation or undermine its role or authority. The Mutazilites placed human reason on a par with revelation in matters of legislation, whether moral or not, but this does not mean discarding or ignoring revelation; rather, it means seeking interpretations that do not conflict with human reason and their school's five primary foundations, while preserving the integrity of the religious text being interpreted.

The crucial point is the presence of an innate power that qualifies man to play an active role in the realm of morality, rather than remaining in the passive position of merely receiving moral instructions and legislation that carry no inherent, discernible truths independent of that revelation. Muslim theological and philosophical thinkers who uphold human reason and/or the moral human fitrah argument would expect a man with no access to a divine book to grasp moral truths and values and to legislate accordingly, even in the absence of revelation.

This could serve as a critical argument that points to the basic ability of non-Muslim individuals and states to legislate in the realm of morality without resorting to revelation, in a non-Muslim reality. While, from an Islamic perspective, this is not the optimal route to moral legislation, as it omits the critical pillar of Divine guidance, it is still not inherently wrong or illegitimate, especially where Islamic revelation is not officially part of the legislative process.

Humans can exercise their epistemic moral agency through moral human reasoning and/or moral human fitrah. Islamic metaethical narratives that recognise epistemic moral agency offer Muslims a space to engage effectively with moral values that emanate from alien, different, or competing moral traditions, especially when these traditions manifest in laws Muslims are required to observe.

If we set semantics aside, the Mutazilites, Maturidis, and Atharis hold that moral human reasoning and/or moral human fitrah are embedded in the fabric of humankind, implying that humankind possesses epistemic moral agency and autonomy, albeit to varying degrees. This sets these schools apart from the Asharites, whose Divine Command propositions undermine epistemic moral agency, especially in a modern liberal context. However, the Asharites hold the key to mitigating one feature of Muslim moral realists: lower tolerance. Moral realists, Muslim or not, especially those who align with Western enlightened modernity, are more likely to exhibit lower tolerance, particularly in a postmodernist world.

VIII.2 Proposition Two: Absence of Epistemic moral agency in a World with no Objective Moral Truths

It is in this hall of Islamic morality that humankind exists in a world without objective moral truths that possess an inherent, stable, and discernible nature independent of revelation. This is the world of the Asharites. This is where doubts arise about universal moral values and epistemic moral agency, which in turn call into question engagement with British values.

In these halls of Islamic morality, only Divine revelation determines moral laws and values. Moral truths are dependent on the revelation of the times, which is what Averroes (Ibn Rushd)

criticised. This suggests an element of arbitrariness, yet it is more a matter of revelational subjectivism than of moral arbitrariness in the modern liberal or postmodern sense. The Asharites are the lords of the Islamic Divine Command theory.

According to this thesis, Islamic revelational subjectivism, which fuels the streams of Islamic Divine Command, remains bound by the Quran and must therefore uphold the Quran's universal moral values, laws, and understandings, as a book that speaks not only to Arabs or Muslims but to humankind in general and to Muslims in particular.

Islamic Divine Command theory is counterbalanced by the Quran's universal nature and its values, such as freedom of conviction, justice, and equality. Another unique finding in this thesis is that the value of tolerance takes hold within the Asharite tradition, which represents Islamic revelational subjectivism and Divine Command theory. The Asharites lead in this crucial value in modern liberal and secular democracies.

Moral epistemic humility and basing morality on revelation, while dethroning human reason, have led to one of the most tolerant views of non-Muslims in this life and the hereafter, which is extremely important to build on and promote to address some of the alienating sermons and public comments and views that cast doubt on the tolerance of some Muslims and their ability to adapt to Western moral realities and discourse.

VIII.3 Critical Analysis of the Asharite position (Proposition II):

Within the scope of this thesis, "Proposition One" appears to be the dominant metaethical position, albeit on a spectrum. The thesis challenges the Asharite position and provides

independent evidence to support the House of epistemic moral agency and moral realism in Islam, while objectively presenting its limitations. This could have a profound impact on the observation of British values, as has been demonstrated previously.

If we examine some of the evidence supporting the Asharites' position, we encounter this verse in the Qur'an: '…and an asserter of what there is of the Torah and to allow for you some of what was forbidden for you…' (Quran, 3:50). According to Ibn Kathir, the meaning of the above verse: '…indicates that Issa (Jesus) peace be upon him, abrogated a part of the sharia (set of laws) of the Torah, and this is the most accurate of the two opinions.' (Ibn Kathir, 2000, p. 367) This may give the impression of general arbitrariness and fluidity, with no inherent stability or nature in things that grounds the Divine Command in good and evil as intrinsic truths that predicate the essences and nature of things.

However, on closer analysis, it is important to note the exact kind of transformation here: by divine decree, things that had been forbidden were to become allowed. However, verse (4:160) in the Quran mentions that God punished the Israelites by deeming permissible things forbidden, and these might be the very things that Christ would later permit for them again as the divine punishment came to an end: 'Because of the inequity of those who profess to Judaism, We (God) have forbidden for them good things that were allowed for them and that is for they obstruct the path to Allah many times.' (Quran, 4:160).

Along this line of interpretation, verse (Quran, 3:50) could be referring to things that have always been permitted but were temporarily banned as punishment only for the aforementioned Israelites. This may be read as an exception and therefore by itself does not justify the denial

of objective moral truths which is rooted in the inherent, stable, and discernible nature of good and evil that rationalises the Divine moral order.

These forbidden things were restored to permissibility as a signal of the end of punishment, rather than as a change in their intrinsic, stable, and discernible nature. This is not necessarily indicative of any arbitrariness, fluidity, or changeability in what is evil and what is good, and in what is vile and what is not. Good, evil, and moral values have an intrinsic, stable, and discernible nature, and temporarily denying the Israelites access to good things is unrelated to their inherent goodness. Had God prohibited those Israelites from marriage or freedom of speech and thought, it would not have changed the intrinsic and stable nature of these outlawed universal human phenomena.

To be specific, these verses may mainly be referring to permitted foods that were banned as punishment. Revelational subjectivism may seem conveniently proven in this instance and through these verses, but the matter is not about forbidding and allowing. It is rather about whether the moral essence of things, which is rooted in their inherent, stable, and discernible nature, independent of revelation, exists or not.

Asharite revelational subjectivism suggests that polytheism, or murdering the innocent, for example, could be considered good if a revelation indicates so, because polytheism lacks an inherent nature that is stable and discernible independent of revelation. The Asharites claim that murdering the innocent, for example, would be scripturally forbidden, but it is logically possible that it would be allowed and made into a moral good by means of revelation. It all depends on the revelation of the times. There is no inherent evil in murdering the innocent. Moral values and truths in the Asharite realm are dictated by revelation only.

In the Asharite framework, there are no objective moral truths deemed such for their inherent, stable, and discernible nature. Only Divine revelation dictates what is good and evil, which could change from revelation to revelation.

It is important to understand moral epistemology, moral values, epistemic moral agency, and morality in the home of Islamic Divine Command theory. The Asharites acknowledge that the intellect is a source of knowledge, but not in the realm of morality. They acknowledge objective reality, but they are not moral realists.

Two further pieces of evidence used to support the Asharite metaethical claims are the fact that, according to the Islamic narrative, siblings were allowed to copulate at the beginning of Adam's journey, and the reference to wine in chapter 'Yousef' (Joseph) in the Quran as a sign of relief. This again fortifies revelational subjectivism, which denies any intrinsic reality to good and evil and points to the absence of objective moral truths that are deemed so because of their inherent, stable, and intrinsic truth. Also, Chapter the Cave (18:60-82) is used as evidence to argue for the lack of any intrinsic reality to good and evil.

However, a critical analysis of these two pieces of evidence that appear to support the Asharite metaethical position shows the following:

1. The evidence did not recognise extreme need and exceptional circumstances as grounds for exceptional rules that could temporarily bypass, but not change, objective morality and moral truths rooted in their stable intrinsic truth. The second Caliph of Islam, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, suspended the penalty for minor theft during the famine, as people may

be forced to steal morsels to keep themselves alive. This neither changes the intrinsic nature of theft as an act of moral evil nor makes evil and good of no intrinsic nature. Likewise, consuming a forbidden animal in the wilderness to avoid starvation does not change the impurity of its flesh. The same could be applied to the case of the siblings in the time of Adam, as this was a very exceptional circumstance.

The same applies to the story of the Cave in the Quran (18:60-82), where a pious man carries out, under God's command, evil deeds that defy God's commands as communicated to Moses through revelation and moral reasoning, including the murder of an innocent child. There is nothing in the story that deems the killing of an innocent child intrinsically good. It is still perceived as an evil act by the messenger of God: Moses.

The intrinsic nature of this deed is also reinforced by the pious man's use of the pronoun 'we' as the subject of the verb in this case to indicate that he was the one who killed the child, but that it was God's orders and will, rather than using the pronoun 'He' and attributing it to God directly like what he did in the case of the rebuilding the fence (Quran, 18: 78-82). This is a matter of decorum and a pattern upheld by the pious, so as not to attribute evil to God, even though God is the creator of evil deeds in a world that is fully subject to His Divine will.

The morale of the story is that evil can lead to good, not that evil is not evil, or that evil lacks intrinsic reality; however, God does not permit evil that leads to absolute evil, but He could permit evil that leads to good, eschatologically first and foremost. This is how

we understand the Divine logic in allowing, permitting, and creating the inferno that consumed believers alive in chapter Al-Borooj (Quran, 85).

2. Regarding the wine, the evidence did not recognise that it was used as a sign of relief for a prisoner, and later for a non-Muslim nation that normally consumes it. This is a typical example of contextual hermeneutics. The wine was a symbol in a dream that the nation's people could interpret in relation to their reality, and it would not constitute evidence against the presence of objective moral truths grounded in the inherent nature of things, including moral values.

VIII.4 Evidence from Quran and Sunnah Backing Proposition I: For Asharite Ears

Epistemic moral agency, in a world of objective moral truths rooted in their inherent and stable nature, is central to Islamic morality. Humanity is equipped with an innate capacity to discern objective moral truths and the universal moral laws that govern humankind.

However, revelation, when present, is central and binding. In the house of Islam, revelation provides mechanisms to guard against the corruption of moral reasoning, for instance, the transgressions of the rationale of the majority over minorities, or the corruption of moral reasoning and human fitrah, which could happen for numerous reasons. If the moral epistemic tool has been corrupted, this does not negate the presence of objective moral truths grounded in their intrinsic truth, nor does it negate the role of a functional moral human fitrah or moral human reasoning. Also, God is the creator of these objective moral truths, and He is the creator of their intrinsic truths within a coherent Divine moral order that aligns with, but does not fully and comprehensively grasp, Divine truth and essence.

Further critical analysis of the Asharite claim that there are no objective moral truths brings to light a notable hadith in Sahih Muslim that appears to cast doubt on this aspect of Asharite metaethics (Proposition II). This hadith and the story behind it were recorded in Ibn Hisham's pivotal work 'The Life of Prophet Muhammad' and in Al-Mubarakpuri's monumental work 'The Sealed Nectar'. The Asharites endorse the validity of this popular story, yet it could form the basis of a nuanced argument against their proposition (Proposition II).

This is the story of a mysterious event that occurred during Prophet Muhammad's childhood, when he was under the care of his wet-nurse, Halimah Al-Saadiya: 'The Prophet stayed with them until he was about four or five years old. Then as related by Anas (May God be pleased with him) in Sahih Muslim, Gabriel (Peace be upon Him) came down, opened his chest and took out the heart, he then extracted a blood clot out of it and said: ''That was the part of Satan in thee.'' And then he washed it with Zamzam in a gold basin. After that, the heart was joined together and restored it to its place.' (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002, P.74)

According to the Islamic narrative, the clot removed from the chest of the Prophet (PBUH) contained evil elements associated with the lower self, which makes mankind disposed towards moral evil. This disposition indicates that evil is not purely a revelational construct but rather possesses a stable and inherent moral truth to which humans can be inclined. If moral evil were fluid, subjective, or based solely on revelation, then removing this clot would be meaningless, as there would be no pre-existing object towards which this clot is disposed. Analogously, human ears can detect certain sound waves because they exist. If they did not exist, our ears would not be able to detect them, but this indicates that sound waves exist independently of our ears. If physical senses imply an objective physical world, then moral dispositions that

could be removed, as indicated in the story, from a human at such an early age imply an objective moral realm that exists and functions, or dysfunctions, in the absence of revelation. This removal indicates an ontological meaning to evil that supports its inherence rather than arbitrariness.

This further links the argument to what the Quran calls the vice-inciting self (Al-Nafs Al-Amarah Bi Al-Soo'). There is something in human nature that inclines people to yearn for and, consequently, pursue moral evils, as supported by verses (Quran, 90:7-8), in which God clearly says that He has inspired man with the knowledge to distinguish between good and evil. Human fitrah and/or human reason recognise evil. This results in a continuous state of inner conflict, accommodated by freedom of choice. Human fitrah and/or human reason function in the presence and absence of revelation. This testifies to the presence of corresponding objective moral truths that are detectable via human reason and human fitrah, independent of revelation, and to their inherent truth and intrinsic nature.

However, discerning objective moral truths, which occurs via an innate ability, must be set in the context that such an innate ability is liable to compromise and, like a compass, can rust and malfunction. This could explain why humanity has a vast record of transgressions. These transgressions are not contextual but rather the product of corruptions that plague moral reasoning.

Further critical evidence appears in Sahih Muslim. In the Book of (Prohibiting) Injustice, Abi Zarr narrated that the Prophet said that God said: 'O my servants, I have prohibited for myself (the practice of) injustice and I made it forbidden amongst you, so do not be unjust.' (Muslim, Book of (Prohibiting) Injustice, P.997)

From this hadith Qudsi, a verbal tradition conveying a non-Quranic saying from Allah, one may safely infer that God has decreed that injustice is prohibited for an intrinsic reason. The act of forbidding injustice was a Divine restriction placed by God on Himself; then came the decree for humankind. Injustice is a moral evil that is shunned by God. The Divine moral order is attuned to the Divine essence, and from that angle emerges the universality of moral values and laws, which have an inherent, discernible, and stable nature.

VIII.5 Into the depth of Islamic Metaethics; further critical analysis of the position of objective moral truths:

God forbidding Himself from committing injustice supports the idea that objective moral truths are intrinsic. This may mean that, had human consciousness not been created, God would have issued the same ruling or decree and placed it on Himself (forbidding Himself from committing injustice) in relation to all His creations and actions, thereby making good and evil objective moral truths independent of human perception and of revelation itself, since revelation may not even be needed in the absence of human consciousness.

The forbidding would be linked directly to the nature of the Divine Essence and Attributes, but this would imply the existence of objective moral truths that transcend human consciousness and the observable world. The Asharites would vehemently reject this, as it risks subjecting the Divine to transcendental moral meanings and standards, even though He is the Creator of all meanings and standards. However, these transcendental moral standards and meanings may simply point to a Divine moral order rather than serve as measures or restraints that would contradict Divine omnipotence.

For the Asharites, no creation, abstract or otherwise, is to serve as a measure by which God is held to account. Therefore, the Hadith Qudsi is given an Asharite interpretation that differs from other schools. The Asharites redefine injustice as ownership, claiming that Divine ownership of all realms renders all Divine actions automatically just, even if this entails sending the pious to hell for eternity. Ensuring that good and evil have no objective truth secures Divine Omnipotence and rules out the existence of transcendent Platonic forms, bringing the idea closer to a pre-existent meaning.

For the Maturidis, the Divine Attributes of Action are directly traced to the pre-existent Attribute of the Essence of Takwin, or the act of bringing things into existence. This is why God forbids Himself from committing evil: committing evil would be traced back to a pre-existent Divine attribute of essence. Creating the concept of evil and creating evil for people to acquire is different from committing evil. The Maturidis settled on Divine Wisdom as a Divine attribute that ensures that Divine omnipotence is preserved, while making the committing of evil by God an impossibility (can but would never). Therefore, for the Maturidis, it is logically and metaphysically impossible for God to commit evil because of Divine Wisdom.

The Maturidis do not make the observation of transcendental moral truths obligatory on God, but rather hold that Divine Wisdom would not allow the Divine to commit evil. Hence, objective moral truths, which are created meanings, are still temporal and are not pre-existent, but they nonetheless possess a truth about them and an intrinsic nature that would make The Wise (God) not commit evil, while allowing His creations to commit evil. The Divine creates good and evil deeds for others to acquire in line with their free will, which He has bestowed on them, but creating deeds for others to acquire in line with their free will and intention is not

equal to God being the real doer of evil. For many Atharis, life is far simpler. God has made it upon Himself not to commit evil, and that is the end of the story.

The birth of objective moral truths that could be discerned by human reason is related to this delicate theological discussion, which impacts the theoretical structure of the Muslim moral mind. While one can safely assume that many Muslims may not be able to trace their moral thinking, which is often forged consciously or subconsciously by such complex debates and ideas, nevertheless, these schools carve the structure of the moral Muslim mind at least theoretically.

VIII.6 The position of the Thesis in relation to the role of Human Reason

'…the intellect penetrates things innately and realises their truth and essences…' (Al-Ghazaly, 2020, P.55)

This thesis holds that within Islamic metaethics, there are transcendental moral meanings, created by God, that lie beyond our observed realm and human consciousness. While contingent and temporal, these transcendental moral meanings are not used to measure God against them or to restrain Him. Their reflection is what we call objective moral truths, and our innate ability, via human reason and/or human fitrah, to discern them is linked to the actual existence of such abstract meanings. This idea, which would seem controversial to some schools of theology, is expressed in the Quran and the Prophetic traditions, for example, in the contrast between justice on earth and Divine justice on judgment day. This points to two different meanings of justice, one manifesting in the world (Al-Alam) and a far more refined and absolute justice delivered by God on judgement day.

Islam has its own realm of moral forms, reminiscent of the Platonic forms yet very different. There are contingent and temporal transcendental moral meanings that point to a coherent Divine moral order that exists whether human consciousness exists or not. These transcendental moral meanings, whose reflection on earth becomes clearer as humankind marches towards the meaning of objective moral truths, and as one gets closer to Divine Light are the signposts of the Divine moral order.

This idea of illuminative realisations thrives in the work of Al-Ghazali, the Divine and Command theorist, as he moves towards the Divine Light through traditional Islamic Sufism: 'The intellect is like an eye that is free from diseases and ailments, and the Quran is like bright and overflowing sunlight…' (Al-Ghazali, 2024, p. 33). The idea of Man observing the truth as he draws closer to the light (the Quran) is the Islamic allegory of the cave (Plato): 'For each eye (esoteric and exoteric) there is a sun and a light by which it can fully see. For the exoteric eye, which belongs to the realm of testament, there is the Sun, and for the esoteric eye, which belongs to the transcendental realm, there is the Quran.' (Al-Ghazali, 2024, p. 61)

The quest for objective moral truths, which is central to Islamic metaethics as surveyed in this study, is a legitimate pursuit, and this helps in the engagement with British values, which are modern liberal and secular values that are, in reality, presented as universal values and incorporated into international laws and institutions.

VIII.7 Further Critical Analysis to Support the House of Epistemic Moral Agency in Islam as a Prelude to Robust Engagement with Modern British Values as A Shaper of British Values and not only a Receiver

There is a verse in the Quran that clearly states the grounds for prohibition or permission and ties them to an intrinsic description of the action itself: 'I shall ordain My mercy for those who are conscious of God and pay the prescribed alms; who believe in Our revelations; who follow the Messenger-the unlettered Prophet they find described in the Torah that is with them, and in the Gospel - who commands them to do right and forbids them to do wrong, and who makes good things lawful to them and malignant things unlawful…' (Haleem, Quran Translation, 2015, P.105)

In his interpretation of this verse, Ibn Kathir states: 'Ali Ibn Abi Talha said that Ibn Abbas said: such as swine meat and usury… Some scholars say that whatever Allah has deemed allowed (halal) is good and beneficial for the body and faith, and whatever He forbade is malignant and harmful for the body and faith.' (Ibn Kathir, 2000, p. 791)

Although the verse seems to be dealing with food, according to Ibn Abbas as cited by Ibn Kathir, on the authority of Ibn Abi Talha, the verse could be referring to deeds or actions such as usury and if usury is mentioned, we can add all what is labelled as sin by Islam to it: cheating, stealing, false testimony, murdering innocent people, extramarital relationships, breaking covenants, etc.

The verse points to something intrinsic about such forbidden acts or sins: they are malignant by nature, as this is how they are described. This is their status, and this is how they are labelled: the malicious or the malignant. This is not a neutral choice of words; in another revelation, God would not change the labels and call these malignant deeds good simply because He can. However, He can outlaw good things as a punishment. On the other hand, God would never command us to commit moral evils (Quran, 16:90), even as a punishment.

Extreme and exceptional circumstances are not the norm, and even in such situations, there are moral limits. Objective moral truths are inherent, stable, and discernible within the Islamic realm. In general, they are not contextualised to the point of losing their stable reality or moral truth.

Hence, there are circumstances in which consuming the malignant, such as swine, would be permitted, namely when there is dire need, no other options are available, and one's welfare is at threat, e.g. starvation. However, this does not change the intrinsic nature of swine. We can extrapolate that to usury, since, according to what Ibn Kathir reported, usury could be placed with food, and this would bring us to an earlier point where incest, which is forbidden by God in Islam, was allowed to populate the earth as a matter of extreme necessity.

To summarise, at the core of this study is a general acceptance of objective moral truths, discerned by human reason and/or moral human fitrah, grounded in innate knowledge that God has instilled in mankind. This is critical for engagement with British values, which are meant to be universal and apply to all UK citizens regardless of their background, and for aligning with the UK's universal and international moral commitments, in line with human rights acts and conventions.

VIII.8 Conclusion

Born and raised on an island with no access to divine revelation, humankind, like Bin Tofeil's 'Hai Bin Yaqzan', should still be able to distinguish between good and evil, even in a broad sense. Human reason can assess the implications and applications of moral values, but for the Muslim, all of this must be done within the boundaries of Islam and Divine decrees.

This thesis upholds the Islamic metaethical position, which resonates with many notable Western names, including Thomas Aquinas, and is a testament to the advanced position of Islamic metaethics when it comes to moral epistemologies and moral values:

'Aquinas affirms that people know the difference between right and wrong by reason, and that the fundamental principles of morality are ineffaceable from the human mind. But he did not find that knowing something to be true by reason is opposed to knowing something to be true by God's disposition; for reason is the God-given means for the discovery of God-ordained reality and truth. Aquinas maintains that the difference between right and wrong is written into the nature of man and the nature of things, but he does not find this incompatible with or alternative to holding that the difference between right and wrong is determined ultimately by God's mind and will, because the nature of man and of things is determined by God. Aquinas repeats again and again that acts are right and wrong in themselves, and not by an arbitrary fiat of God…' (Daly, 2015, p.41)

The researcher, like St. Aquinas, Maimonides, Mohamed Abdu, Averroes, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Al-Razi, places the Divine at the top of the moral order as the creator of the moral order and absolute morality, but revelation is not only a matter of written scripture. Human reason and human fitrah are identified as active, God-given epistemic tools and innate faculties of moral reasoning that can construct moral arguments and expand the space for better engagement with modern British values, thereby resolving tensions in a non-Muslim modern liberal reality.

Recognising the importance of epistemic moral agency in Islam is crucial and should be promoted among Muslims, while its limitations are acknowledged. This thesis reveals that Islamic metaethics can strongly support Muslims in a non-Muslim reality: ‘Living through the intellectual revolution that we propose is, without a doubt, the best path to a union between a respected faith, an affirming identity, a confident rapport with our environment, and a demanding active partnership with our fellow citizens.’ (Ramadan, 2012, p. 25-26)

Chapter IX

Conclusion:

A Proposed Theoretical Conceptualisation of the Muslim Moral Mind & Comparative Rankings of the Islamic Metaethical Propositions in relation to a Modern United Kingdom & its Values

'Originally, injustice and irrationality are evil, while justice and wisdom are good…' (Al-Maturidi, 2019, P.313)

Chapter Aims

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the research findings, presenting a conceptualisation of the Muslim moral mind, and providing a comparative ranking of the Islamic metaethical models against modern liberal and secular realities, while also recapping the core findings in relation to the engagement with British values.

This research identified two criteria required for constructive engagement with British values: epistemic moral agency (human reason as a discerner of objective moral truths) and the ontological acknowledgement of objective moral truths that possess an inherent discernible meaning that is independent of scripture. While other criteria may exist, the research focuses on these foundational ones. The results of the research reveal that these criteria are clearly present within Islamic moral arguments and frameworks once Islamic metaethics are considered. Within the scope of this thesis, the presence of these two criteria constitutes the dominant narrative within Islamic metaethics.

This thesis emphasises an important argument in the Parekh report (2002): the need for common values that apply to all citizens of the UK, not just the majority. While the current guidance on fundamental British values could serve as a starting point, the recommendations of this thesis shed light on some of what is required to achieve this set of common values.

However, Islamic metaethics equip Muslims at the individual, community, and institutional levels to engage constructively with the guidance as it stands. The thesis explored how Islamic metaethics could enhance Muslim engagement with British values on a value-by-value basis.

Islamic metaethical narratives also allow for active Muslim participation in any future development of the discourse on British values. British values may be rooted in the moral traditions of enlightened modernity, a movement characterised by the secular pursuit of higher universal moral laws and values for the betterment of the human condition; however, Islamic metaethics allow Muslims in modern, liberal, and secular realities to engage with this pursuit for the purposes of social cohesion and the betterment of their communities and Britain as 'a community of communities' (Parekh 2002).

The challenges that require bridge-building and future research have been objectively presented, but the research findings negate and deconstruct the narratives that insist on Islam's incompatibility with Western nations based on values. The thesis shows that, from the perspective of moral epistemology and moral values, Islam is more compatible with enlightened modernity than Western postmodernity is, for example.

At the core of the thesis is the argument that Islamic metaethical frameworks which emphasise the epistemic role of human reason within a moral realist structure of universal objective moral truths are the most effective in supporting Muslims as they navigate the complexities of a modern Western liberal context, and that they are indeed the dominant framework within Islamic moral discourse within the scope of this thesis. The following is a summary of the findings and the conclusions:

IX.1: A Conceptualisation of the Muslim Moral Mind:

The Moral Muslim Mind **The Modern Western Moral Mind**

Theoretically

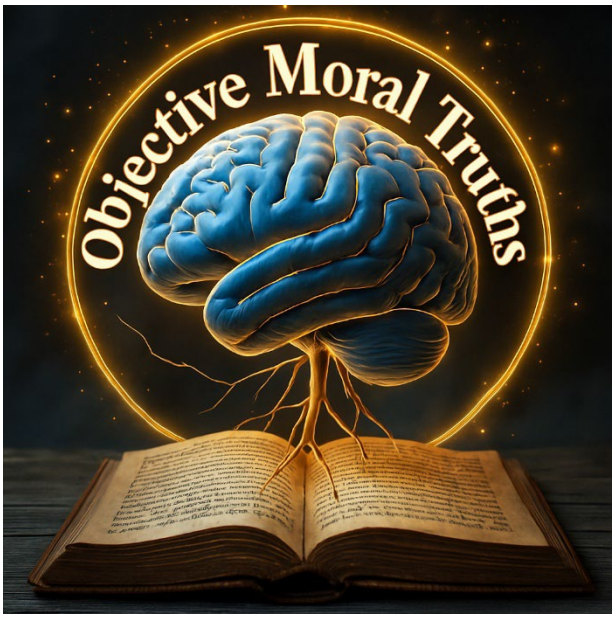


Figure 4 : Moral Values in Islam



Figure 5: Universal Moral Values in Modernity

AI Images generated by the researcher for the purpose of conceptualisation.

Within the results of this research, an attempt is now made to visualise or conceptualise the moral Muslim mind theoretically. This may not apply to every Muslim, but it is a conceptualisation that emanates from the findings of this thesis, which reflect the major Islamic theological schools that shape the moral narratives that run through Islamic moral discourse in mosques, the media and religious schools, and may be influencing various Islamic disciplines. This attempt is crucial, as one of the major obstacles facing some Muslims in engaging with British values is the question of morality.

The Muslim moral mind could be viewed as a discerner of objective moral truths and universal moral principles, values, and laws. This is the mind of moral realists, rooted in the

Divine word, which guides their endeavours to ensure they do not stray due to internal or external corruption. Within the halls of Islamic metaethics, humans are active moral agents engaging with moral truths that can be discerned and observed independently of scripture, even when scripture is absent. Epistemic moral agency is established within the terrains of Islam, though to varying degrees.

The location of this moral mind may change due to semantics, but nevertheless, it is housed within humans regardless of whether it is pure cognitive function or linked to the immaterial soul: 'Ghazali (Abu Hamed) regards the seat of knowledge as the heart. He uses the term heart (qalb) most often, however, relative to the context of usage, it can also be called spirit (ruh), soul (nafs) or intellect (aql).' (Yasien, 2024, P.14)

In the presence of the scriptures, this moral mind is guided and disciplined by the Divine word. Contexts do not alter objective moral truths or universal moral values, but reflection is required when applying universal moral principles to specific cases, especially in non-Islamic contexts, and here jurisprudence takes over. Ethical Islamic utilitarianism leads to considerations but does not change the intrinsic reality of objective moral truths that align with Divine revelation from the Islamic perspective.

Based on the research in this thesis, it is proposed that the Muslim moral mind is theoretically structured in a way that enables it to engage effectively with the concept of universal values that relate to all humanity. With appropriate education and awareness, the Muslim moral mind could engage positively with the idea of national values that bind communities in a modern liberal and secular reality. The point of tension arises over how these values are defined, whether universally or in British terms, and this is where moral reasoning

and epistemic moral agency come into play, while observing boundaries that, in theory, Muslims cannot violate.

Divine revelation is central to how moral values are defined in Islam. On the other hand, more tailored definitions that are particularly relevant to Muslims in a non-Muslim reality could emerge to support Muslims and their institutions in resolving any tensions and conflicts and in further enhancing engagement with British values.

Such a project requires Islamic religious and educational institutions, which have a significant impact on Muslim individuals, communities, and spaces, to approach Islamic metaethics in a less polemical manner, introducing it in a balanced and objective way, as it holds the key to resolving conflicts and tensions as presented in this thesis. This requires strategies that bypass ideological and theological affiliations and loyalties.

IX.2 The Conceptual Moral Mind of the Muslims and the Asharite Muslims:

Within the scope of this thesis, the Asharites and their metaethics are not the dominant force theoretically shaping Islamic moral philosophy regarding objective moral truths and the role of human reason in discerning moral values. The Asharite generic position does not support moral realism, which would bring into question engagement with universal values and British modern liberal and secular values. However, the Asharites stand out as the school that can guide on engagement with tolerance as a modern British value in a liberal and secular reality.

This research has shown that, since the major Islamic theological schools have granted human reason the capacity to discern moral values (epistemic moral agency), there should, at least from a metaethical perspective, be no reason why Muslims in Britain cannot sit at the same table with non-Muslims on a common platform of universal and British values. It has also shown that British values could, in principle, be supported by the major schools through the exercise of human reason. Metaethics informs Islamic disciplines, such as interpretation and jurisprudence, thereby enhancing engagement with British values in a reality where laws are guided by these values.

As for the Asharites, it is also important to highlight that this notable school influenced the early founders of what we today describe as the higher purposes of Sharia, which hold or point to universal principles that are core to international human rights conventions that protect human life, children, private property, intellectual integrity, etc: 'The meaning of Maqsid Al-Sharia is the purposes which the texts aim to achieve via obligations, prohibitions, and permissions…' (Al-Qaradawi,2008, P. 20) Al-Ghazali played a role in laying the groundwork for Maqsid Al-Sharia: 'The intellect penetrates the hidden aspect of things and grasps their secrets; it realizes the nature of things and their essences.' (Al-Ghazali, 2020, P.55)

Hence, even with the Asharite school, which rejects the role of the human reason as a moral authority, the reliance on a scripture (the Quran), which upholds universal values that can relate to values in a liberal, modern and secular UK, does not exclude them from the same table with non-Muslims on a platform of universal values. However, Islamic schools that uphold frameworks of moral realism that encourage epistemic moral agency would lead to deliberations with the concept of British values which emanate from enlightened modernity.

Having said that, the Asha rites might be better at leading such deliberations in a postmodern context that centralises tolerance.

IX.3: The Muslim Moral Mind and Postmodernism:

The Muslim moral mind can accommodate the basic principles of enlightened modernity, which emphasise the epistemic moral agency of humankind as it grapples with universal moral questions in pursuit of universal moral formulae to guide international laws and human rights conventions. However, postmodernism poses serious challenges for moral realists - any moral mind that speaks the language of universal values and objective moral truths, whether Muslim or not, including many modern Western moral realists.

The deconstructive hand of postmodernism sought to question and deconstruct universal meanings at every possible level, even at the biological level of human existence. In recent times, postmodernism has increasingly influenced many aspects of life in the United Kingdom and Europe, for example, from history to science and from language to morality: 'Postmodern philosophers applied the theories of the literary deconstructionist to the world as a whole. Just as a text will be read differently by each reader, they said, so reality will be read differently by each knowing self that encounters it. This means that there is no one meaning of the world, no transcendent centre to reality as a whole.' (Grenz, 1996, p. 6)

Postmodernism could be viewed as a rebellion against the epistemic confidence of enlightened modernity, yet enlightened modernity remains the foundation of modern British values and universal values, which are still embedded in the fabric of international laws and human rights institutions.

The postmodernist deconstructive rebellion is affecting many facets of life but it has not changed the foundations of British values: 'The current sexual vision in America; (I mean) in the Western civilisation, among one of my popular statements is that when you see something sexual (phenomenon) in the west, it is actually not about sex. It has to do with something else completely. Do not stop at what is halal (allowed) or haram (forbidden); when you read about a sexual phenomenon, rather look for the intellectual dimension…I discovered that it has nothing to do with sex. Here, we have a philosophical, intellectual vision and sex is a detail or a language (expressing that vision).' (Abdel Wahab Al-Misiri, lecture, 1990's)

In a postmodernist world, it is the tolerance of the Asharites that can become central to the Muslim moral mind as it negotiates a reality that is indeed alien to Islamic morality and even to Western enlightened modernity. However, with British values, it is the schools that propel epistemic moral agency in a world of universal moral values and objective moral truths, taking the lead in bridge-building.

IX. 4: Comparative Summary of Findings:

This study investigated Islamic metaethics comparatively with British values in mind to show some of the tensions that Muslims and their religious and educational institutions may face when balancing Islamic practice with British values. This study strove to reveal how Islamic metaethics can help resolve some of these tensions and conflicts.

The study upholds that understanding Islamic metaethics allows for an in-depth analysis of the fabric of Islamic morality, and that this would identify the theoretical common grounds and

tensions between Islamic metaethics and the metaethics that underpin these very modern liberal and secular values, which form the bedrock of British laws and culture.

This would allow us to identify the most appropriate Islamic metaethical propositions and narratives to support Muslims as they engage with British values. Modern liberal and secular traditions, which gave birth to modern British values as manifested in the Equality Act of 2010, for example, emerged from the temples of the enlightened human, a rational agent of change who believes in human reason and the human ability to examine any phenomenon objectively with the sole purpose of enhancing the human experience: 'Building on the Renaissance, the Enlightenment elevated the individual self to the centre of the world…Specifically, the modern mind assumes that knowledge is certain, objective, and good…' (Grenz, 1996, p. 2-4)

The enlightened moral agent pursued individuality while seeking universal moral laws and understandings to mitigate the loss of religion as a unifying force that explained and dictated moral reality. 'Modernity and Star Trek… the message was obvious: we are all human, and we must overcome our differences and join forces in order to complete our mandate, the quest for certain objective knowledge of the entire universe…' (Grenz, 1996, p. 5)

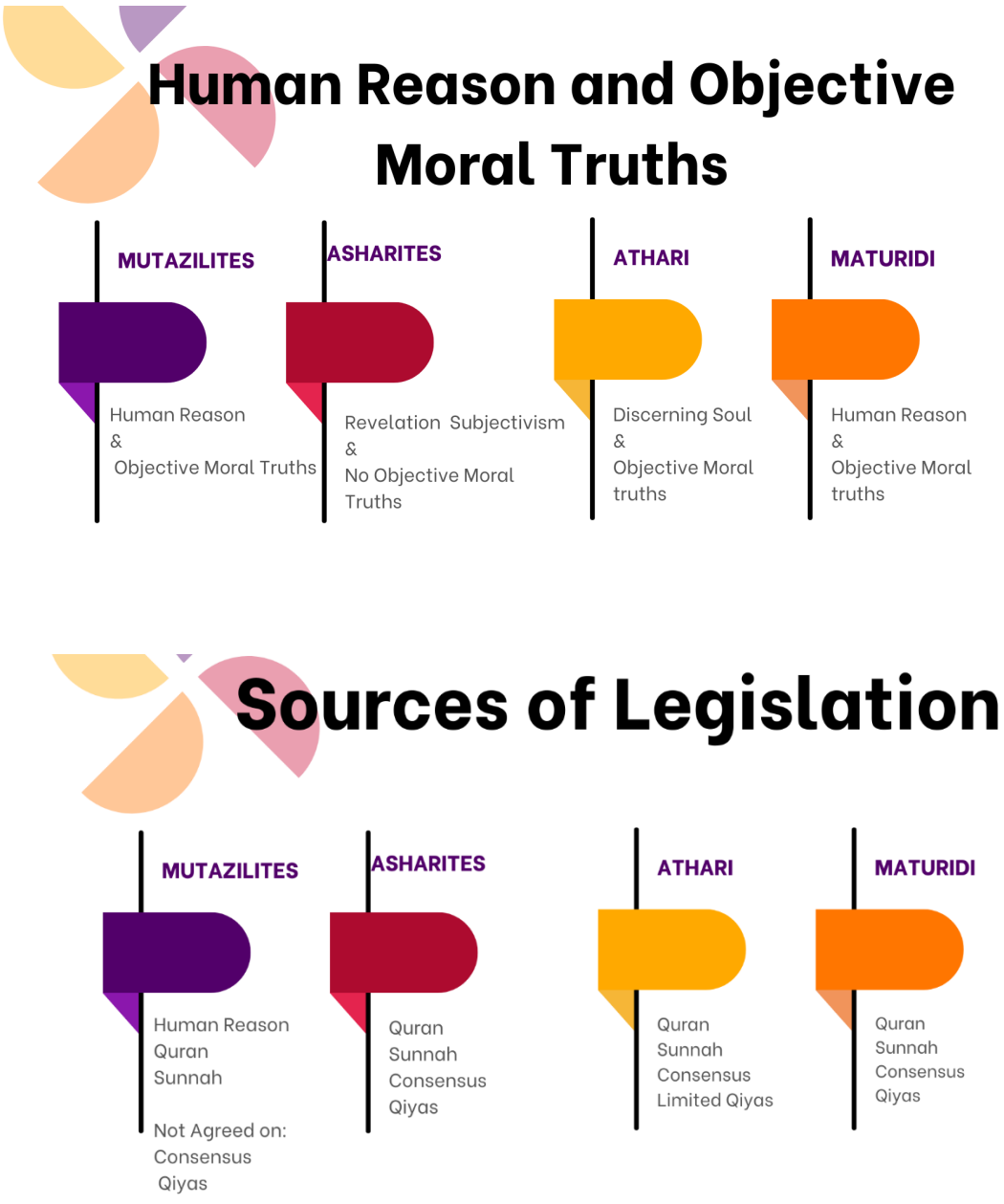
Islamic morality, while firmly rooted and guided by revelation, also upholds moral reasoning in principle, with the Mutazilites on one end and the Atharis on the other, while placing the Asharites outside that spectrum theoretically.

The following section schematically summarises the key findings which ranks Islamic metaethical narratives and models with British Values in mind.

IX. 5 Schematic Representations of the Research Findings:

IX.5.a: Islamic Metaethical Propositions on Moral Epistemology and Corresponding Sources of Legislation:

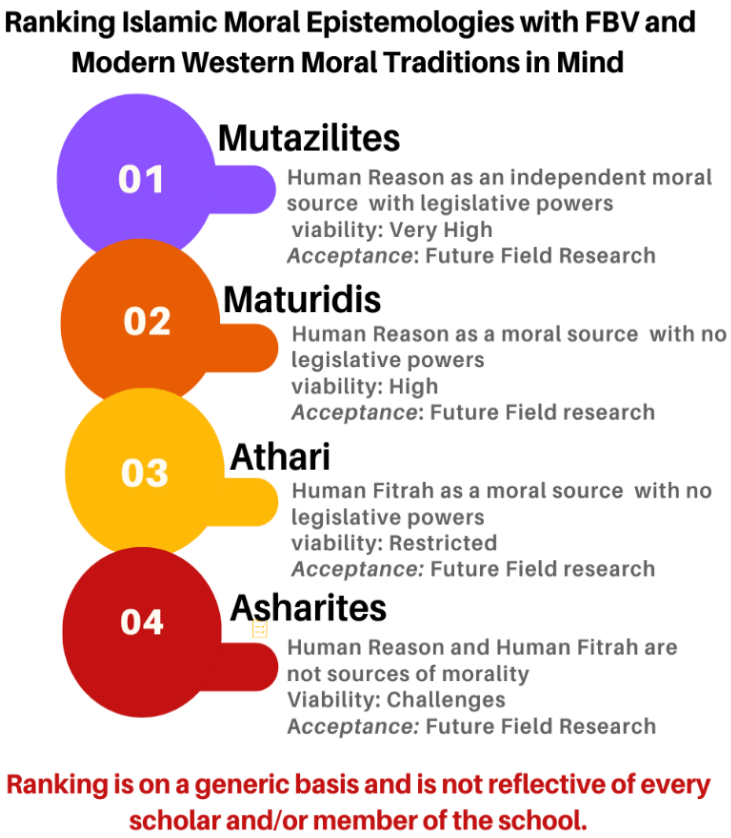
Figure 6: Schematic Comparison of the Metaethical Thought of the Schools and Its Potential Impact on Sources of Legislation



IX.5.b: Summary of the Rankings of the Schools in relation to Modern British Values in a liberal and secular reality:

The diagram below illustrates Islamic moral epistemologies and narratives of human epistemic moral agency in relation to British Values. This shows the ranking of each school's metaethical propositions, while highlighting the limits and boundaries of each school.

Figure 7: A Ranking of the Four Schools Relative to FBV



The Mutazilites reign supreme as the school that offers the most suitable metaethical propositions, simply because they empower the human intellect and grant it a prominent moral legislative authority (a heightened sense of epistemic moral agency) that is more relevant to

the foundational principles of modern liberal, secular realities and enlightened modernity. However, the thesis does highlight the limits of the Mutazilites and where their metaethics will start causing tensions.

The demise of the Mutazilites leaves us with lingering questions about how they would have evolved had they contained their meteoric rise. The appeal of the Mutazilites also stems from the fact that their metaethics, which upholds justice as a core value, stands a chance of resonating with Muslims across factional and sectarian divisions, as well as with non-Muslims and in non-Muslim contexts and environments.

Certainly, the harsh polemics among Muslims against the Mutazilites and the neo-Mutazilites cast doubt on the acceptance of Mutazilite metaethics within Muslim ranks, as indicated in figure 7 (viability). Viability in a Western modern liberal context may not necessarily lead to acceptance among Muslims. Future field research is required in that area.

The Mutazilites' metaethics engaged with 'Rule of Law' as a British value, revealing how their metaethics can impact Quran interpretation and jurisprudence in a manner that could support Muslims in a non-Muslim reality. However, reservations were expressed about their position on consensus, qiyas, and hadith Ahad, which form the bulk of the Sunnah, especially given that the Mutazilites who came from non-Mutazilite backgrounds were more conservative and mainstream in their positions on these primary sources of Islamic legislation.

In second place comes a major mainstream school: the Maturidis. This understudied school shares with the Mutazilites a core metaethical proposition: the human intellect is a discerner of objective moral truths, which, in turn, aligns with basic modern metaethical narratives that

underpin enlightened modernity. In the house of the Maturidis, the intellect is not a legislator, which has affected their sources of legislation compared with the Mutazilites (Figure 6). The Maturidis' ability to hold this position, while conjuring fewer negative connotations and reactions than the Mutazilites, gives them a greater likelihood of being central to community and institutional initiatives and debates around moral reasoning.

The Mutazilite and Maturidi metaethics uphold a model in which epistemic moral agency is embedded within their moral traditions. It is true that enlightened modernity has a freer hand, as it is not bound by revelation, but this does not negate the common ground, which can be built upon. This indeed dispels the incoherent idea that Islam is incompatible with Western moral systems and their rational morality, which is independent of revealed religion.

The Maturidis engaged with democracy and individual liberty. This research brought forward the distinction between democracy as a system and democracy as a value. It also helped to establish that democracy, as a value that orbits emancipative values which are the prelude to democratic systems, is not alien to Muslims. As for individual liberty, more attention is needed to revisit the definition of this value in order to usher in a new definition that retains its Islamic essence while expanding it to meet the needs of Muslims in a non-Muslim reality where individual liberty has expanded beyond freedom of religious conviction.

The Atharis rank third because they also acknowledge moral agency within a framework of moral realism and objective moral truths. What restrains the Athari school is its ever-growing drive towards stricter literalism and the limitations on Qiyas: this dynamic constrains the Atharis in a modern liberal, secular reality rooted in enlightened modernity.

The Athari school engaged with the missing value on the official list of British values: justice. The absence of this value is detrimental to the official list of British values that guides laws and state policies. One of the most controversial Athari figures was chosen to objectively shed light on what this school can offer, despite some stereotypical negative ideas about it, including unfounded generalised associations with jihadism and radicalisation. This decision aligns with the cultural option declared in Chapter I. Reconciliation and bridge-building require inclusiveness rather than exclusivity, while highlighting boundaries. The Athari school remains a predominant force shaping the Muslim moral mind and including it within the scope of this thesis was necessary.

The Asharites rank last because their narratives are not particularly conducive to epistemic moral agency or to the acknowledgement of objective moral truths rooted in inherent, stable intrinsic truths independent of revelation. However, Islamic revelation mitigated the Asharite position and ensured that it did not become a postmodern Nietzschean labyrinth where there is no moral truth, with all the ensuing loss of true meaning in the realm of language as the relation between the signified and the signifier disintegrated: 'The rationality…which governs a writing thus enlarged and radicalized, no longer issues from a logos and it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification of the truth…' (Derrida, 1976, P.11). Rooting their Divine Command theory in the Quran compels the Asharites to observe the universal moral truths and values of the Quran. The Asharites do not question revelational moral truths, but they do not believe that moral values have an inherent nature, and they remain subject to the revelation of the times in a world where Divine omnipotence is the core theme and the dominant force shaping their narratives.

Enlightened modernity and its sisters in the Islamic realm inhabit a world of universal moral values, objective moral truths with inherent meaning and nature that can be discerned independently of revelation, and that relate to all humanity, and therefore can guide international law and international moral understandings and standards.

This resonates with the story of the Alliance of Al-Fudool and its moral foundations. This Arab alliance, which was praised by the Prophet Muhammad, was witnessed by him during his youthful pre-prophetic years. The alliance was formed to uphold justice and was composed of pagan tribes. The Prophet declared that he would always join such an alliance if ever invited.

Objective moral truths, as a concept, denote universal meaning rooted in inherent moral realities that humans can discern independently of scriptural authority. This gives objective moral truths the ability to unify people regardless of their backgrounds, but it also reduces tolerance for those who do not comply with them. This is where postmodernist tolerance raises the threshold of tolerance within enlightened modernity, and where Asharite tolerance is required to raise the threshold of tolerance within Muslim ranks. The Asharites engaged in tolerance, which is one of the British values. This school can support the growth of tolerance among Muslims, especially if a postmodernity overtakes Western abodes, provided the ongoing modern-postmodern cultural conflicts end in favour of postmodernity.

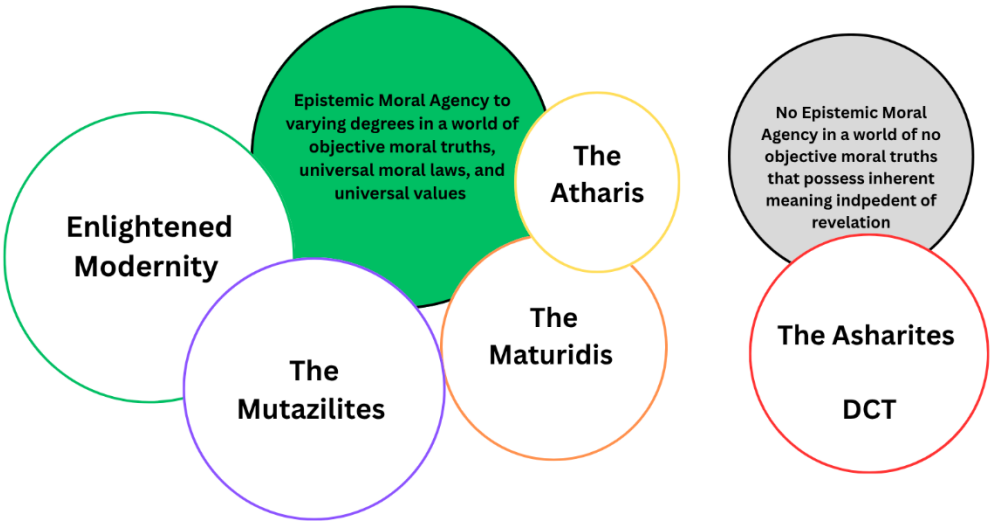
This thesis presents the general positions of the Islamic schools of theology examined but does not claim that every scholar or member of each school adheres to them. Within each school, there are scholars and even chapters that may not align with the school's predominant position. This thesis holds that each of the four schools examined will have something to offer Muslims in a non-Muslim reality once its metaethics are clearly and relevantly mapped out.

Islamic metaethics within the scope of this thesis enhances constructive engagement with British values.

Western enlightened modernity and Islamic moral traditions share a universal moral quest centred on values that aim to enhance the human experience. While the former is divorced from revelation and upholds a secular sense of epistemic moral agency, the latter is rooted in a religion with a universal Divine scripture, not grounded in race or ethnicity, and upholds epistemic moral agency, albeit to varying degrees.

The power of the common quest and the common ground between Islamic and enlightened modernity metaethical narratives lies in the universal essence of humanity and the power of human moral reasoning as it pursues universal moral values and laws that guide and inspire humanity and unite nations rather than tribalize them. The diagram below highlights a common theme uniting the moral traditions of Islam and enlightened modernity: epistemic moral agency. The diagram below conceptualises the various degrees of human moral agency within the scope of this thesis.

Figure 8: Symbolic Representation in Relation to Epistemic Moral Agency



A symbolic theoretical representation based on predominant positions and does not count for every scholar or member of the school including Modernity.

Chapter X

Recommendations

'I was only sent (by God to humanity) to complete the noblest of morals.' (Prophet Muhammad, The Accurate Chain, Al-Albany, 2025)

Chapter Aims

This chapter presents general recommendations for Muslim communities and their institutions, as well as for law and policy makers in the United Kingdom. These range from recommendations regarding the list of British values and its compilation to educational projects and the establishment of boards in relation to British values.

X.1 Fundamental British Values: Missing Values

Justice is the starkest example of a value whose absence from the national list of British values is detrimental. This list, which should guide state policies, laws, and strategies, must include justice to reinforce and affirm one of the most fundamental values on that list: the rule of law. Policies and laws are not inherently just, and history testifies to laws that were unjust and were later reformed to fulfil the duty of any civilised state towards justice. Justice is social, environmental, economic, etc. The presence of this value instils confidence in the list and serves as a reminder of a higher terminal value central to the legitimacy of any state and its laws.

This brings our attention to broader questions that hover over the list of British values. While these values do reflect Britain's modern history and aspirations, the successful launch of value statements and lists depends on involving those who are asked to observe them in their formation, including identifying and defining the values to secure commitment to agreed-upon definitions that are neither vague nor inconsistent. The same value could mean different things to different communities and individuals. The process of identifying and defining British values needs to be revisited to further democratise it by incorporating more contributions to the list of British values from all British communities.

X.2 The Board for Fundamental British Values (FBVB):

The thesis recommends forming a board dedicated to identifying ways to secure broader commitment to British values by involving young British people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds in updating and defining them, alongside existing experts in the field.

Values often cascade from above in a top-down approach, but a more democratic and secure approach would balance top-down and bottom-up methods to guide the process of identifying and defining values. The greater the involvement of those required to observe these values, the stronger the commitment to them will be. Greater involvement will close many of the legal loopholes that could be used to undermine these values. Involvement means creating true stakeholders.

X.3 Islamic Metaethics: An Objective Educational Project with British Values in Mind

Funding is required to support all Muslim religious and educational institutions that develop programmes to promote Islamic metaethics, with British values considered, in a non-polemical manner that reveals the diversity of these Islamic metaethics. Awareness of Islamic metaethics could lead to a deeper understanding of how they affect Muslims' decisions, moral judgements, and worldviews, as well as how Islamic metaethics may be shaping Islamic disciplines and how they operate.

Through this awareness, Muslims could be more encouraged to explore what is suitable for them in their non-Muslim reality. This would equip Muslims with more tools to engage with their religious and educational institutions while remaining aware of how Islamic

metaethics are affecting these institutions. Also, Muslims will become more aware of how to constructively engage with British values and contribute to the discourse on them.

X.4 The Muslim Board for Fundamental British Values (MBFBV):

This Muslim board for FBVs would focus on engaging with British values to support Islamic institutions in upholding them. Also, in the event of the formation of a British board for FBV, this Muslim board (MBFBV) would participate in identifying and defining values, just as other British bodies and institutions ought to. This would allow Muslims to become true stakeholders in updating and streamlining the list of fundamental British Values (FBV).

The same should apply to Christians, Jews, Hindus, etc. Establishing such boards and securing their involvement would constitute a long-term strategic project that supports national security and community cohesion. The Muslim board should aim to bypass sectarian divides within the house of Islam, if possible. The universality of Islamic metaethics points to this possibility.

X.5 The Dissociation between Prevent and FBV:

Debates about British values must respect the British values of freedom of speech and thought. Endorsing or rejecting British values parallels endorsing or rejecting beliefs, since values reflect foundational conscious and subconscious beliefs and principles. Values need to be presented and promoted in a way that allows them to shape the value systems of individuals and communities. For values to withstand trials and misinformation, reflection and reasoning must be fundamental to their introduction in a school setting, for example. The involvement

and association of Prevent with British values may cast doubt on the purposes of the list of British values while insinuating state coercion, targeting and interference: 'When identity is challenged, few have enough insight or strength to resist. What might have become a productive conversation turns into interactions of roles and of facades. Even the expression of affection can turn into a competitive affair.' (Barnlund, 2008, p.14)

Survival values (Inglehart, 2018) are types of values that conflict with higher British values and thrive in contexts of existential fear and identity threats. The aim is to create a context that triggers higher values (Inglehart, 2018) that resonate with British values: 'The degree to which fear is aroused is usually proportional to the extent to which core values are placed in question…more commonly, the threatened person is unable to identify the reason for his anxiety. Ordinarily threat arise from the source, the content, or the manner of communicating.' (Barnlund, 2008, p.10)

X. 6 Areas for Further Research

This thesis has provided the initial theoretical groundwork for the metaethics of the four major theological schools of Islam, in relation to two criteria required for constructive engagement with British values: epistemic moral agency and the existence of objective moral truths which are discernible independently of revelation. It has also linked these positions to potential applications to specific British Values. However, this thesis has also opened avenues for further research, particularly fieldwork that could encompass focus group discussions across a spectrum of the Muslim community, ethnographic studies, and questionnaires. Potential fields of future research include:

1. Field studies are required to prove or disprove the theoretical conceptualisation of the Muslim moral mind.
2. The impact of Islamic metaethics on jurisprudence and the development of an independent school for Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim context
3. Field studies to assess the level of awareness among young Muslims of Islamic metaethics and their impact on various Islamic disciplines
4. Field studies to engage directly with scholars and Sharia councils to gauge their reactions to the findings of this thesis

Appendix 1

Academic Review of the Definitions of Values and their Impacts on Societies

1.1 Introduction

It is important to understand what moral values are, because only then will we be able to understand the terms used in this study. Not all values are higher moral values. British values, such as tolerance, liberty, justice, and equality, could be presented as moral values that transcend differences. These values have already inspired laws and act as a moral lighthouse pointing to the nation's higher aspirations. We commence by sharing the researcher's own short public piece on values: 'Values are the markers of societies: they capture the past, the present, and the future. Values are invisible borders, and along these borders, the loftiest and the vilest of battles take place. Values are a core part of our identity. They are the silent force that many times drive us to bypass our primal instincts. They are the man running into a burning house to save a child that is not his. They are the humble woman giving out the last few dates in her house to help a poor mother feed her hungry child (true story).

Our higher values are the only force that challenges our lower, survival needs. Higher values are our higher needs, which we are willing to defend, even at the cost of our basic needs. Our higher values are the altar on which we happily crucify ourselves to be consistent with the truest version of ourselves. Nurturing values is the responsibility of the family, the state, the media, and society, which water the seeds of our existence. We will always reap what we sow.

Our words, actions, behaviours, and decisions are windows into our value system. Our values are our silent sailor. We may not even be aware of them, as they guide our ships in calm seas. The silent sailor usually becomes very visible during storms. In turbulent seas, our true hierarchy of values reveals itself. (Elshorkobaly, 2024)

It is also important to share the definitions and opinions of notable experts in the field that support and inform this research. The aim of the following is to provide an academically reliable inventory of opinions that guard the researcher and the reader against confusion.

1.2 Academic Review of the Definition of Values:

Parks & Guay (2009) define values as: '…learned beliefs that serve as guiding principles about how individuals ought to behave.' (Parks & Gauy, 2009, p.676).

While values are acquired, they become embedded in the fabric of the individual and the community over time and can solidify to the point that people may not even be aware they are operating in the background. Traditions can become a value. Religion can become a value. Family can become a value. Freedom of thought and speech can become a value. Secularism can become a value. The question is: what if the opposites of all of these become values? The Individual can become a value. Authoritarianism can become a value at the individual or collective level.

However, British values such as tolerance, liberty, justice, and equality are moral values of the terminal type (higher and end-of-state values) according to Rokeach (1979), which shape and influence British local laws and acts, as well as British international commitments in the arena of human rights and international law. These values hold the British establishment and the diverse communities of Britain to account.

Parks & Guay (2009) also state that when values are cognitively active, individuals make choices consistent with them: '…we feel positive emotions when acting consistently with our values and negative emotions otherwise.' (Parks & Guay, 2009, p.677).

This is why value-based conflicts can turn violent, as Huntington said. Values are higher beliefs that are core to our identity, individually and collectively, and along their lines, battles are fought to protect our sacred temples. Values are core to our identity and culture, and they hold some of the deepest answers to our existential questions. Justice is an example of a moral value, and so is liberty. Such values hold individual and collective meanings, and under their banner, wars were waged and lives were sacrificed.

These are not false sentiments. Every individual and every community can testify to moments when their higher values drove them to make the greatest sacrifices. One way to test values is to observe oneself during trials and conflicts, for only then does the true hierarchy of values reveal itself. Decisions, actual behaviours, and conflicts reveal whether a claim about values is true and whether that value falls within the hierarchy of primary values: 'Values are used to justify individual acts of violence, collective protests over perceived injustice, and wars between nations.' (Maio, 2017, p. 3)

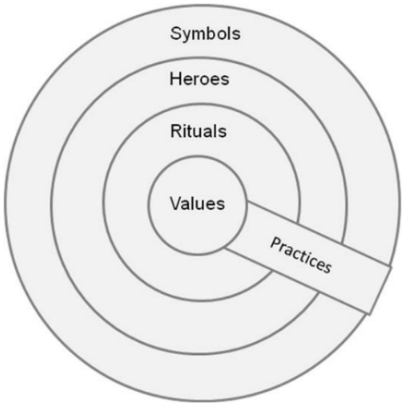
Values are what we hold dear as individuals and as societies: 'In sum, human values are conceptualised as consisting of a relatively small number of core ideas or cognitions present in every society about desirable end-states of existence and desirable modes of behaviour. If the words symbolising such a small number of core ideas were eliminated from any given language, individuals growing up in such a society would have no cross-situational standards by which to live…' (Rokeach, 1979, p. 49)

According to Milton Rokeach (1979): ‘Values serve as criteria for selection.’ (Rokeach, 1979, p.16), and they are enduring beliefs. Rokeach (1979) highlighted the powerful role of values by calling them complex pre-codes for behavioural choices which influence how we observe and perceive situations, and how we react to them. He stated that values are central to our self-concepts and that if we were to draw a diagram revealing the relation between values, beliefs and attitudes, values would be in the middle of this diagram.

The predictive power of our value systems was highlighted by Rokeach (1979). The prominent theorist stated that the order of values within our value systems can predict our behaviours and decisions. From political affiliations to littering and recycling, our values influence our decisions and choices: ‘A value system is an organized set of preferential standards that are used in making selections of objects and actions, resolving conflicts, invoking social sanctions, and coping with needs or claims for social and psychological defences of choices made or proposed. Values are components in the guidance of anticipatory and goal-directed behaviour; but they are also backward-looking in their frequent service to justify or explain past conduct.’ (Rokeach, 1979, p.20)

Rokeach’s prominent theory (1979) on values is founded on several significant studies and findings. Rokeach classified values into terminal values (end-state values) and instrumental values (tools to achieve terminal values or things other than themselves).

In his seminal work, ‘Culture’s Consequences’, Hofstede presents the onion diagram, which illustrates the role of values in shaping cultures and societies: ‘A diagram suggests how national culture patterns are rooted in value systems of major groups of the population and how they are stabilized over long periods in history.’ (Hofstede, 2001, p. 1)



Inglehart delves further into the art of shaping and changing values. While values, at both the individual and collective levels, are among the most stubborn forces, individual, societal, and national values can change over time: 'Changing values can change societies. A culture is a set of norms and skills that are conducive to survival in a given environment, constituting a survival strategy for a society.' (Inglehart, 2018, p.17)

1.3 What Values are "Not":

It is important in this study and for any future research built on its findings to ensure that values are not confused with other traits within individuals or societies. Such confusion could be quite detrimental to the application of metaethics in relation to values.

Values are not personality traits. Personality traits are '…tendencies to act, think, and feel in a consistent way across time and place' (Maio, 2017, p.59).

Values are not habits. Maio (2017) cites the definition of habits provided by Verplanken and Aarts in 1999: 'learned sequences of acts that have become automatic responses to specific cues and are functional in obtaining certain goals or end states.' (Maio, 2017, p.68)

Values are not attitudes. Rokeach said: “Attitudes, on the other hand, do focus on specific objects and specific situations…indeed, one of the functions of attitudes, being object-specific, is to allow expression of more global underlying values.” (Rokeach, 1979, p.72)

Many times, our attitudes stem from our preconceived notions and biases. The more oblivious we are to what lies beneath our attitudes, the more we sustain them rather than challenge them. Like habits, attitudes are meant to make our lives and choices easier. We do not have to ponder and reflect. We do not have to put in deep effort into our decision-making process or question them.

Our values shape our attitudes and reactions. If we come to appreciate or miss something to the point that it becomes a value we cherish, occupying a high rank among our values, our attitude towards this thing will be positive, and so will our behaviour.

Attitudes are strongly shaped by values, and a change in one value can lead to changes in multiple attitudes at once (Maio, 2017). If equality drops from a person’s top values, one can imagine how many of their attitudes and behaviours will change. Positive and negative attitudes are the radar that charts a person’s value system. Whatever reinforces our values will stimulate positive attitudes, and whatever negates them will stir negative attitudes.

People may find it easy to challenge their attitudes but more difficult to change the roots of those attitudes, which are their values: ‘Indeed, research has found that strong emotional tensions arise when people believe that their differences of opinion on a topic arise because of differences in values, rather than differences in personal interests.’ (Miao, 2017, p.81)

Values are the driving force behind ideologies. Ideologies are: '…regulated as systems of attitudes and values that are organized around an abstract theme.' (Maio, 2017, p.75). Ideologies are usually political, religious, or both. A particular set of values may drive you towards liberalism, while another set of values could motivate you to join conservative parties.

We can safely say that the link between values and ideologies is strong. According to Maio (2017), ideology is the product of values and attitudes, and we have already established a link between values and attitudes. If one's ideology is to change, their values need to change first, and so do their attitudes. This is an important dimension that could be factored into any programme that aims to challenge radicalised manifestations of political and religious ideologies.

This study defines moral values as higher moral ideals and values, for example, the values that the UK has compiled in an official list: individual liberty, rule of law, democracy (as a value), respect and tolerance. While material things could well fall into a person's hierarchy of values, such as money, these are deemed material and non-moral values, which means that, while it is important, money is not a moral value, and it is not a terminal value from an Islamic, or even a moral human-centric, perspective. The official list of British values also contains higher moral values that are both terminal and instrumental.

1.4 Values: Sowing and Anchoring

'Moral Virtue, like the arts, is acquired by repetition of the corresponding acts' (Aristotle, Book II, p.23). Aristotle summarised what some modern theorists have reached in the area of

human values: ‘Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; but by nature we are adapted to receive them and are made perfect by habit.’ (Aristotle, Book II, Gurithe translation, p.145).

Aristotle believed that we are naturally disposed to receive moral teachings and values, but that they are perfected through habit. The research adopts the view that moral values are discernible and acquirable. The critical period hypothesis emphasises the role of time in acquiring certain skills and abilities, particularly the ability to learn and speak a first language. Research shows that once a person reaches a certain age, it becomes very difficult to learn to speak normally if they have missed the critical period for language acquisition. This theory extends to the world of human values, theories, and hypotheses.

Moral values are grounded in universal inherent truth, but they are subject to distortion, especially in environments that do not foster their recognition or corrupt their universal meaning. Research points to a critical period when values are woven into the fabric of a person, only to solidify by adulthood.

Values are among the most resilient constructs, difficult to change, but it is certainly possible if carefully planned. People find it difficult to challenge their values and would rather cater to them, and this is why missing the critical period to plant the right values is certainly not wise: ‘Blind faith in moral principles may appear preferable to agonizing over whether it is right to apply them. If this is the case, we do not open our values to deeper analyses.’ (Maio, 2017, p.103).

Values are acquired through knowledge and by observing behaviours and experiences in one's environment. Cultivating values is a process that employs reflection, rituals, and sustained practices. Rationalising and exploring moral values, while shedding light on the inherent truths that make them universal and relevant to all people, regardless of cultural differences, is what gives the genre of human rights and British values any meaning.

In so many ways, the power of a religion is linked to how strong its practices and rituals are, as they act as a binding force, carving habits and moral values. It is through reflection, practices and rituals that new individual and societal values can take hold: 'However, the role of practice and ritual is important partly because of the potential for nonreligious acts and rituals to replace religious ones in secular society.' (Maio, 2017, p.8)

This shows that moral values, for religious people in diverse societies, that are not linked to their religious beliefs and moral traditions stand a chance if they are explored through their own religious lens. Common ground can only be built by examining moral values from angles beyond normative and practical ethics. Values pass from generation to generation unless a generation experiences a different context that redefines and reshapes them. However, the appeal and truth of higher moral values are universally inspiring and relevant to all nations and cultures.

According to Aristotle, intellectual virtue was the product of learning, but moral virtue was the product of habitual practice: 'From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature.' (Aristotle, Book II, 2005, p.23)

Among the noted findings is that the more authoritarian the values-communication process is, the less likely children are to adopt these values easily. This underlines the importance of parenting and teaching styles, as well as government policies and strategies: '…scientists found that there were stronger correlations between parent and child value profiles when the parents were low in authoritarianism than when the parents were high in authoritarianism.' (Maio, 2017, p.132)

Government cannot dictate values and impose them merely by the force of law. It can inspire people through active engagement in defining these values, thereby increasing a sense of ownership and the sustainability of these values beyond the courts of law. Maio (2017) offers an explanation: 'Moreover, the association between parents' and children's values was greater when the children thought that the parents were responsive to their needs.' (Maio, 2017, p.132) Authoritarianism eclipses the needs of those at the receiving end of the treatment. This usually leads to dissociation from the authoritarian body that emanates the values. The resistance may come silently or openly.

Such findings should be considered when approaching young people to sow the seeds of moral values within their minds and personalities. This may shed light on why some state integration policies in Europe may be producing the opposite effects.

In 1976, Edward Hall divided cultures according to their ways of communication in high and low context cultures. Cited in Hofstede (2001) is Edward Hall's classification: 'A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit,

transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite: i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the implicit code.' (Hofstede, 2001, p.30)

Successful communication strategies in relation to British values should be developed with this information in mind. It would be helpful and more effective if integration communication reflected the receiver rather than the sender.

1.5: Conclusion and Position of the thesis

This research promotes the idea of employing British values champions across all UK communities, who can effectively communicate British values using language relevant to these communities. This principle is reiterated in the Quran: 'We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people's language to make the message clear for them.' (Haleem Translation, 2015, p.158)

According to key theorists in the field, language is among the key elements of culture, and one can easily assume that language in the verse refers to more than just words. The British values discourse must be relevant, sincere, friendly, motivating, and endorsing.

How parents and teachers behave and carry themselves in the values-communication process, not only what values they uphold, have a powerful impact on an individual's value system. As cited by Parks & Guay (2009), Meglion and Ravin said that values develop primarily through social interactions with role models such as parents and teachers. Values are learned, and because of that there tend to be similarities in the patterns of values within cultures.

Ensuring that values are actively influencing our choices and actions is essential to human flourishing. We may say that it is indeed the essence of what the Greeks called eudaimonia which some may translate as happiness but more accurate understanding of the term points at human flourishing as the real meaning: '…eudaimonia should be instead translated as flourishing or fulfilment.' (Brown, 2009, p.10).

Internalised and externalised values-based conflicts are the antithesis of individual, community, and national flourishing, and both can be reduced through effective tailoring of the British values discourse.

The power of values over our decisions and behaviours is no longer a subject of debate. On the other hand, understanding where values originate plays a significant role in their application.

While higher values, such as benevolence, peace, freedom, and justice, usually have community, national, and international support and may have common appeal across cultures, their definitions and applications can differ to the point of cultural clashes that can metastasise into civil wars and even global wars, but more importantly, hostilities among communities in multicultural nations.

Studies and research show that: 'In sum, a lack of cognitive support for values makes them vulnerable to persuasive attack and thinking about arguments for and against a value can increase its ability to resist attack. By becoming less truistic, values function less as paper tigers and more as strong principles.' (Maio, 2017, p.110)

These findings could provide an answer to the perplexing question people of the same nation ask after every terrorist attack or other major crime, such as a school shooting: why did one of them commit it? The perpetrator grew up with the victims, went to the same schools as the victims, and shared similar values and experiences. These values were neither deeply rooted nor examined. Consequently, they did not withstand external attacks in various forms: virtual preachers, tests of power over others, existential threats, etc. Among the most powerful ways to sow or dethrone values is to drive people to reflect on them.

It is a lack of reflection that sometimes allows us to betray our values and to suffer inner turmoil we may not understand. In other words, values may shape our attitudes and behaviours until they are strongly challenged. Only then do those who sowed their values through reflection emerge with them intact, most of the time.

The cognitive dimension of values cannot be ignored. The rationalisation of moral values is crucial, as it determines how deeply they are held and how they manifest. This depends on a structured process of deliberate knowledge, infused into our system from an early age, if possible, through reflection, and then anchored by ritual habits and practices.

Reflection is key to anchoring moral values deeply. Stating them without clearly defining them, reflecting on them, and establishing practices and rituals to breathe life into them leaves these values vulnerable to erosion or collapse: ‘The attacking essays caused significant reductions in value importance among those individuals who had not been given one of two prior defences…this attack led to lower levels of value importance than among participants who previously were asked to generate arguments supporting the value.’ (Maio, 2017, p.109)

While methods and approaches may differ, the following evidence-based findings must be taken seriously into consideration when sowing values:

- The Age Factor
- Knowledge and Reflection: methodologies and resources
- Practices and Rituals: content, venues, and networks
- The environmental factor: culture, media, family, etc.
- Communication policies and strategies: state and community level

It is important to note that investing in the cultivation of moral human values should be considered a strategic investment in a nation's human capital, with each value holding the reins of potentially multiple attitudes and acting as a massive buffer zone against external and internal attacks aimed at demonisation, alienation, or discrimination.

Appendix 2

Ibn Hazem and the Zahiriyyah School

2.1 The Athari School and the Zahiriyyah School

While a literal interpretation is common to both schools, the metaethics of Ibn Hazem, the best representative of this school, are surprisingly closer to the Asharites than to any other school.

2.1.a Ibn Hazem (994-1064 CE)

The Zahirite jurist and Imam of the language was born in Cordoba, Andalusia. Ibn Hazem was a member of a refined, aristocratic family of high status. His father served as a minister in the court of Al-Mansour Ibn Abi Amer and his predecessor, Al-Mozafer.

Ibn Hazem was brought up in isolation from the hustle and bustle of the real world. His childhood and adolescence are reminiscent of fairy tales, in which the royal ward is locked up in a castle and looked after by an army of maids. Ibn Hazem had a unique experience and recognised that he was moulded by the finer sex: ‘This is something worthy of observation and pondering to understand its impact on the life of Ibn Hazem.’ (Al-Haghary, 1960, P.39)

He grew up in a palace of poetry, music, and intellectual refinement. From this corner of poetry and intellectual refinement, a master of the language emerged, founding his school on the word. That said, it was a conservative house with Persian roots, and most likely, a Spanish lady of the house (Ibn Hazem’s mother). By the standards of the times and given the context, this house was a tight ship of morality, with a great deal of monitoring and disciplining: ‘This luxurious environment was subject to religious edicts, ethical teachings, and chastity.’ (Al-Haghary, 1960, p.44)

Ibn Hazem stated that he had never allowed this atmosphere to compel him to commit the forbidden act of fornication: ‘Allah knows, and it is enough that He is the most Knowing, that I am innocent and uncorrupted…’ (Al-Haghary, 1960, p. 45). Yet the luxury Ibn Hazem enjoyed in his youth was replaced by turmoil, exile, and constant wandering in search of a safe place, etc.

Like many intellectuals of his age and region, Ibn Hazem was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, and in his famous book, ‘The Ring of the Dove’, he says: ‘Plato said that a king imprisoned him unjustly and he defended himself until he was acquitted…’ (Ibn Hazem, 1950, P.9)

In addition, Ibn Hazem studied the Old and the New testaments: ‘I read in the first book of Al-Torah (The Old Testament) that Prophet Jacob peace be upon him when he was a shepherd…’ (Ibn Hazem, 1950, P.9)

It is important to note Ibn Hazem’s engagement with the Old Testament and how this may have influenced his worldview: ‘This piece of information reveals that Ibn Hazem had a close relationship with the Israelite physician Ismail Ibn Younes. Their meetings were for intellectual discussions and debates. This was one of the factors that led Ibn Hazem to study the fundamentals of the Jewish religion and to navigate Israelite knowledge until he became a master of the trade and a reference point. This facilitated debates with Jewish theologians.’ (Al-Haghary, 1960, p. 88)

Ibn Hazem's worldview, personality, and experiences, characterised by turmoil in a world of conflicts and divisions, shaped his literalist and textualist juristic and theological positions, which rejected qiyas: 'Ibn Hazem was not a Zahri (literalist) in matters of jurisprudence and legislation only. His literalist position, which is founded on stable fundamentals, is traced back to his personal nature, disposition and mood.' (Al-Haghry, 1960, p. 126)

Ibn Hazem was troubled by the unregulated use of analogical reasoning (qiyas) to serve interests and desires rather than to seek the truth. Ibn Hazem said: 'All those who practise qiyas differ in their methodologies. In every case or matter, each group deploys a type of qiyas that opposes the other types of analogical reasoning. In addition, they all agree that not every qiyas is accurate and not every opinion is right.' (Al-Haghary, 1960, p. 121-122)

Ibn Hazm held several major positions: rejection of allegorical interpretations of the Quran, analogical reasoning (Qiyas), and causes (Illa). Ibn Hazm grounded his positions in the clear, obvious meaning of the Quran and the authentic Sunnah texts and recognised only three sources of legislation: the Quran, the authentic Sunnah, and the full and undisputed consensus of the companions. Ibn Hazm rejected adherence to a particular school of jurisprudence, deeming blind conformity an illegitimate practice, and laid down a process for the common man to obtain the truth on clear grounds linked to the three sources upheld above.

Understanding Ibn Hazem's methodology is key to understanding his worldview: 'The Characteristics of the Zahriyyah methodology of Ibn Hazm in the sciences of the religion:

1. The obligatory adherence to the Quranic text.
2. The obligatory adherence to authenticated and correct Sunnah.

3. Acknowledging the consensus of the companions (Prophet Muhammad's companions) and what they disputed over is to be referred to the Quran and Sunnah.
4. Non-comparative appreciation of the imams (heads) of jurisprudence schools.
5. Rejecting Taqlid (Conformity)…' (Mostafah, 2000, P.115)

On the other side, Sheikh Qaradawi does pinpoint where Al-Zahriyyah erred from his perspective:

'In our era, we saw and heard of those who adopted Ibn Hazm's stance and ignored the purposes of Sharia. They rejected linking rules to purposes and interests. They were eclipsed by the literal, partial meaning of the texts, preventing them from realising universal principles; hence, they fell into horrendous mistakes, like Ibn Hazm, who was certainly greater than them in knowledge. Their narrow understanding and grandiose delusions led them to attribute to the Sharia of Allah what it cannot tolerate.' (Qaradawi, 2008, p. 67)

Sheikh Qaradawi's criticism of the school of Al-Zahiriyyah sheds light on the problems with its Salafi sisters associated with the Athari school: 'Sometimes adhering to the literal meaning of the Sunnah does not allow for its meaning and purpose to be realised, and may lead to what opposes it even with adherence to the perceived… Whoever reads into what remains of the scholars of jurisprudence among the companions, for example, the righteous caliphs, Ibn Masoud, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Omar, Aisha, Moaaz, and Zayed Ibn Thabet, and reflects deeply on their jurisprudence, will find that they considered what is beyond the verdicts in terms of causes and benefits…' (Qaradawi, 2008, p. 73–79)

However, Ibn Hazem's mastery of the language Arabic is not difficult to contest and this may have allowed him to fortify the Zahiriyyah methodology: 'It is essential to take a text in the Quran and the reports on their necessary and obvious meanings. Whomsoever takes a text to be understood in a manner that is not necessitated in the Arabic language, in a befitting manner, he has fallen short in understanding the text and has false understanding…It is not lawful to use analogy (Qiyas) in the deen (religion) or in viewpoints, opinions (ra'i) because of the command of Allah the exalted has come to refer matters of dispute back to His book and his messenger (Muhammad) peace be upon him and this is well established. It is true that to refer to Qiyas or an illah (cause) or some reasoning or to an opinion (ra'i) is disputing with the command of Allah the exalted as He has connected the matter with Iman (faith)' (Ibn Hazm, 2017, L:302)

Ibn Hazem's literalism exists within some Athari chapters, but he was on the Asharite spectrum where this thesis is concerned: 'Ibn Hazm raises the question: what is the difference between the pig and the ram? No one, but God, declared the pig illicit, and the ram, licit.' (Montada, 2001, P.169) While this is pertinent to food, it did extend into the realm of moral values. 'As for the second topic, which is good and evil, Ibn Hazem addressed two matters: 1. Good and evil are not subject to human reason; for there is no evil except what God has deemed evil and there is good except what Allah has deemed good…' (Al-Hamd, 1986, P.438)

Chejne quotes Ibn Hazm in his exquisite book on the icon of the Zahirites: '…the truth is the truth even if all people do not like it and wrong (falsehood) is wrong even if all people like it…it follows that istihsan (Hanafi juristic preference) is passion (whimsical).' (Chejne, 1982, P.122)

Like the Asharites, the Imam of the Zahirites did not believe in the intrinsic nature of good and evil and rejected the use of human reason and causes, since: 'Indeed, Allah the exalted testifies that the text has not neglected anything and that the messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, expounded to the people all that was revealed upon them. Hence, if that is so, there is no need for anyone to resort to Qiyas (analogy) or unto Ra'i (opinion) or an illah (causation) or anything other than that.' (Ibn Hazm, Translation of Renascence Foundation, 2017, L:414)

Ibn Taymiyyah criticised the Asharites for the collapse of causation, but this might be extreme polemics that holds partial truth. Indeed, the Asharites seem to have cracked down on causation, but the roots of the higher purposes of Shariah as a cause of Islamic law surfaced within their realm.

Ibn Hazm is the antithesis of postmodernism, with its attempt to deconstruct language and introduce fluid meanings into its tribalistic world. Ibn Hazem's epistemology was rooted in the language of the Quran, which determined the meanings conveyed in the Quran more than even the opinions of the companions, unless those opinions were expressed in the form of a consensus.

Ibn Hazm's reply to the Euthyphro Dilemma aligns with the Asharites' reply. Good and evil possess no intrinsic or inherent reality. Human reason is not qualified to discern objective moral truths independent of scripture. Ibn Hazm's extreme literalism and rejection of epistemic moral agency must be contextualised within the events of Al-Andalus during his turbulent time.

Appendix 3

Ibn Miskawayh

3.1 Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030 CE): The Philosopher the Maturidis never had

'(The Self) …it originates from an essence that is higher and nobler than physical matters… (The Self) has its own principles and deeds which do not depend on the five senses. These are high and noble principles, upon which (The Self) bases its accurate deductions…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, p. 5)

Ahmed Ibn Muhammad Ibn Yaqoub Al-Razi (Ibn Miskawayh) is a notable Muslim philosopher and ethicist of the Middle Ages, influenced by Hellenistic moral thought and philosophy, as were many of the Islamic philosophers of the time, who sought to ground their moral propositions in an Islamic perspective through an Aristotelian and/or Neoplatonic lens.

Ibn Miskawayh was a magus who converted to Islam. Some claim he may have been a member of the Shia sect, but a thorough reading of Miskawayh's own writings refutes this claim: '…In his fourth article, he labelled Ali with the title Imam…this means that he did use Shia terms which triggered the opinions that classed him as Shia…the book we present here which is 'The Refinement of Manners' destroys this claim since he deemed good manners as the ethnic cleanser and nothing else...' (Al-Jarrah, 2006, P.5) According to Al-Jarrah (2006), the book contradicts the concept that places members of the Prophet's household ahead of humanity on a purely genetic basis.

This research commences its analysis, demonstrating that the Aristotelian Ibn Miskawayh, who harboured great admiration for Aristotle and devoted his life to bridging the world of the Quran with Aristotle's word, was indeed sincere in his efforts and commitment to both worldviews. We present his personal code of ethics, not his will, as some mistakenly thought,

which contains a testament to his sincerity: 'This is what Ahmed Ibn Mohamed commits to while feeling safe, healthy, and well off; and in no physical or psychological need to make such a statement to flatter a single being or to attain a benefit to avoid harm from anyone. He (Ahmed) vows to struggle with himself (major jihad)…the milestones indicative of attaining wisdom for him (Ahmed) are: to gain insights into his beliefs so that he does not miss any of the good knowledge and disciplines that are within his capacity to attain, so that he reforms himself and he refines it to obtain the fruit of such a struggle which is justice. He is to work hard to commit to this code and strive to fulfil it, which has fifteen principles: 1. favouring the truth to falsehood in matters of belief; 2. favouring truthfulness of the word to lying; 3.favouring good deeds to evil ones…5.upholding the Sharia…6.maintaining appointments to fulfil their duties which includes, firstly, the ones He has with God (Prayers)…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 2006, P.7)

In his book 'Eudaimonia', Ibn Miskawayh, who clearly adhered to Quranic morality in a manner that was very accommodating of the Aristotelian moral traditions that shaped his theories and narratives, demonstrates an understanding of Aristotle's bid to become more earthly, which included acknowledging and accommodating pleasures to a reasonable and essential extent, and of eudaimonia as the highest goal, associated with higher pleasures, moral values, and meanings.

Like Aristotle, he did not abandon virtue ethics, since leading a virtuous life centred on the higher pleasures remained a core principle conducive to eudaimonia within the Aristotelian moral framework: '…things of common interest between man and beasts are not a source of eudaimonia to mankind because they are neither our purpose nor our perfection…food, drinks, and different life comforts…they are what we call pleasures and most people seek these things

out as a purpose but we shall demonstrate that this is not eudaimonia…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1928, p. 36)

Ibn Miskawayh believed that manners are acquirable, but he also recognised an intrinsic nature to good and evil: '…Eudaimonia exists for all and everyone can achieve it in accordance with their existential rank and their intuitive feelings about good and evil…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1928, p. 37)

Ibn Miskawayh clearly differentiated between terminal (higher or end-state) and instrumental (facilitatory) values, a distinction that is prominent in Milton Rokeach's works. He is adamant that eudaimonia (self-flourishing) is a terminal value: 'People have many different sources of satisfaction (instrumental values)…but the highest of all, which is eudaimonia (terminal), will be addressed after we demonstrate that none of these sources of satisfaction (instrumental values) is perfection or a purpose on its own (Terminal values)…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1928, p. 39)

Ibn Miskawayh, who shares his Persian roots with Avicenna and was a contemporary of his, shares the same deep and profound understanding of man's agency, the empowerment of his actions, and destiny: '…Matters of will which are attributed to man are divided into good and evil for the purpose of man's existence…then the good is what occurs to man willingly and out of his pursuit of the purposes of his existence and for which he was created, and evil is what obstructs him from the good…Therefore, it is an unquestionable duty to seek the good that perfects us, for which we were created, and to exert effort towards it, and to avoid evils which obstruct us and reduce our share of the good.' (Miskawayh, 1977, p. 8)

His notable book, 'The Refinement of Manners', which surprisingly receives inadequate attention in the United Kingdom and beyond, introduces very empowering concepts that place mankind in control of their moral existence and decisions, rather than making them passive agents in a puppet show, with their destinies awaiting them, with no free will or power of choice (determinism): 'Good and evil in relation to wilful deeds is a matter of choice between what is better and doing it or choosing what is lower and doing it…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, P.9)

Ibn Miskawayh believed that natural disposition colours human morality. While good and evil are ontological facts, people vary in their ability to acquire virtue, since man's moral choices are mostly the product of what he called 'the industry of shaping manners': '…if natural dispositions are not tamed by disciplining and straightening, every human will grow according to their natural disposition and will remain in the same state they had as a child…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, p. 21)

For Ibn Miskawayh, disciplined human reason drives man to seek virtue: '…he (man) seeks virtue in his rational self which has made him human…' (Miskawayh, 1977, p. 29). Like Avicenna, Ibn Miskawayh was very clear and absolute about the nature of moral vices and the distinction between good and evil. Ibn Miskawayh's moral and ethical philosophy centred on recognising that people vary in their ability to accommodate and uphold virtues, and that childhood is the phase when one can have a strong impact on human beings, reforming those who may be more resistant to virtues than others and enhancing and nurturing those who are more inclined to virtue: '…that people rank differently with regards to accommodating virtuous manners, and that they do not all hold the same rank; for some among are susceptible (to adopting virtue) and some are insusceptible; and some are docile and some are brute; and some of them are good and some of them are evil; and others occupy the middle point…if natural

disposition is ignored and is resentful of disciplining and straightening, every human being will grow according to their nature and they shall retain the state they had in their childhood for life…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, P.21)

Ibn Miskawayh was a firm believer in the importance of the formative years and their definitive role in the art of refining manners and cultivating morals. Ibn Miskawayh held a balanced view that accommodated the idea of human fitra, human reason, and an innate moral compass in the form of intuitive feelings that help man identify good and evil. He recognised natural inclinations and dispositions, which aligns with mounting evidence that a significant proportion of our personality traits is hereditary. The moralist stressed the need for discipline to reform the personality and to sharpen that moral compass, ensuring it does not decay due to mixing with wrong peers or being exposed to immoral literature, for example: 'These beneficial manners for children are also good for the adults, but it is of greater benefit to the juveniles because it makes them more inclined to love the virtues which accompanies them as they grow, which also makes it easier to avoid vices, which in turn makes it easy to follow what wisdom, Sharia and Sunnah (The Prophet's teachings) dictate…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, P.37)

Ibn Miskawayh was adamant that shaping the morality, values and manners of young people was a noble undertaking. He also recognised that reform in adulthood is possible but difficult: '…I mean that whoever is to be raised in a manner contrary to this way and method of disciplining is bound to fail, and no one should be bothered with reforming and straightening them since they have become in the ranks of an untameable warthog; and their rational self has become in the service of their appetitive and beastly selves…There is no way to tame those who were raised like that…unless they are aware of their evil way and they criticise it while having a strong will to forsake this path and repent. Hope can be entertained for such a person;

that they can forsake their current manners gradually and go back to the right path through repenting and being in the company of philosophers while consumed with philosophy.' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, p. 38)

Ibn Miskawayh's reply to the Euthyphro dilemma on whether there is an intrinsic reality to good and evil, which impacts this research in terms of defining whether moral values are objective moral truths, whether they are discernible via human reason and/or human fitrah, and how much of a role human reason plays in ethics, morality, and values, is very clear: Good and evil are intrinsically and inherently ontological facts: '…This is the faculty by which we distinguish between good and evil deeds…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1928, P.44)

Ibn Miskawayh believed that human intellect has the capacity to distinguish between good and evil, and that this capacity requires supportive, disciplining pathways to prevent its decay. He held that we possess an innate ability within us, grounded in human reason and moral human fitrah. He used the term 'Maftoroon', derived from fitrah, which this research defines as a divine code or a priori knowledge embedded within the fabric of our human reason and our self (Nafs). For Ibn Miskawayh, choosing good was related to the fact that it is intrinsically so: '…he (man) favours good deeds for being good in themselves…' (Ibn Miskawayh, 1928, P.45)

Ibn Miskawayh recognised the role of the environment and of intentional rearing and disciplining in enabling a person to realise their moral potential and to lead a virtuous life in which the rational self holds the reins and the human intellect pursues the good to achieve eudaimonia, which, for Ibn Miskawayh, leads to the ultimate good, namely God.

Ibn Miskawayh believed that values and the ability to distinguish between good and evil could also be enhanced, maintained, or restored through discipline. He distinguished between ‘‘the behavioural manifestation of personality traits’’ and ‘‘personality traits’’. The former could be adopted as second nature, but the latter may not change, since it has an enduring element: ‘Every manner (behaviours) could be changed but what cannot be changed is what is deemed as part of one’s human nature (personality traits such as being compassionate or miserly).’ (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, p. 20)

Ibn Miskawayh believed that without disciplining and clear paths for the refinement of character and manners, man stands a high chance of crippling his human reason and straying from his moral human fitrah, which will fail to guide him due to corruption from being in bad company, for example.

This is where he clearly endorses Sharia as the source of a moral code that ultimately aligns with our rational selves (human reason) in the pursuit of the highest good, which is God. The moralist balances the possession of an inner faculty by which we can distinguish between good and evil, which needs refining and disciplining, with the role of a divine moral code. Ibn Miskawayh seems to have placed greater emphasis on the role of man in morality, in terms of the ability to rely on inner faculties alongside moral upbringing, but did not cut ties with the Divine, as the Good, and His Sharia: ‘Sharia is what straightens juveniles and gets them in the habit of doing what is commendable. It prepares them to accept wisdom; seek virtues; and achieve eudaimonia through sound intellectual reasoning and accurate analogical reasoning (qiyas).’ (Ibn Miskawayh, 1977, P.21)

Ibn Miskawayh's rational morality, grounded in objective moral truths that possess intrinsic reality and in an innate ability to discern good and evil that either grows with us or dies, points to his dependence on the innate faculties of man to navigate morality in a world fraught with challenges to what is virtuous, but under the guidance of a Divine revelation that keeps man on the tracks towards eudaimonia (self-flourishing) in the hereafter, not only in this life.

Ibn Miskawayh would have found a home in the Maturidi school had he had the chance to become fully acquainted with it. His works do not point to a clear position on the intellect being on a par with the scriptures or being granted full and independent legislative authority, or else the Mutazilites would have been the school most worthy of him.

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