This book undertakes to correlate practical ethical decisions in modern medical practice to principles and rules derived from Islamic juridical praxis and theological doctrines. This study links these rulings to the moral principles extracted from the normative religious texts and historically documented precedents. Western scholars of Islamic law have pointed out the importance of the historical approach in determining the rules and the juristic practices that were applied to the cases under consideration before the judicial opinions were issued within a specific social, economic, and political context. These decisions reflected aspects of intellectual as well as social history of the Muslim community engaged in making everyday life conform to the religious values. Ethical decisions are an important part of interpersonal relations in Islamic law. Practical guidance affecting all facets of individual and collective human life, have been provided under the general rules of “Public good” and “No harm, no harassment.” However, no judicial decision that claims to further public good is regarded authoritative without supporting documentation from the foundational sources, like the Qur’an and the Sunna (the exemplary tradition of the Prophet). Hence, Muslim jurists, in order to infer fresh rulings about matters that were not covered by the existing precedents in the Qur’an and the Sunna, undertook to develop rational stratagems to enable them to solve problems faced by the community. This intellectual activity led to the systematic formulation of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, which has assumed unprecedented importance in connection with the distinct field of medical ethics in the Islamic world that shares the modern medical technology with the West. The book argues that there are distinct Islamic principles that can serve as sources for Muslim biomedical ethics that can engage in dialogue with both secular and other religiously oriented bioethics in the context of universal medical practice and research.
This chapter shows how the new geography of the sources of law, and its consequences for spheres of authority, can take concrete shape in Muslim societies and communities, and particularly in the circles specializing in fiqh and ethics. This reform is deeply “radical” since it entails reconsidering the sources of the fundamentals of law and jurisprudence, rebalancing them, and necessarily shifting the center of gravity of authority in Islam. However, it springs from a no less fundamental desire to be faithful, and it would be wrong and contradictory to consider it as nothing but a way of projecting an a posteriori ethical apparatus on the scientific Universe with the declared or tacit intention of taking hold of it. The chapter also responds to criticisms for the book's author's so-called desire to “Islamize modernity” rather than “modernizing Islam”.

Radical Reform
Tariq Ramadan

This book tackles head-on the rulings of Islamic jurists that make Islam seem incompatible with modern, scientifically, and technologically advanced, democratic societies. The book argues that it is crucial to find theoretical and practical solutions that will enable Western Muslims to remain faithful to Islamic ethics while fully living within their societies and their time. It notes that Muslim scholars often refer to the notion of ijtihâd (critical and renewed reading of the foundational texts) as the only way for Muslims to take up these modern challenges. But, the book argues, in practice such readings have effectively reached the limits of their ability to serve the faithful in the West as well as the East. This book sets forward a radical new concept of ijtihâd, which puts context—including the knowledge derived from the hard and human sciences, cultures, and their geographic and historical contingencies—on an equal footing with the scriptures as a source of Islamic law. This global and comprehensive approach, it says, seems to be the only way
to go beyond the current limits and face up to the crisis in contemporary Islamic thought: Muslims need a contemporary global and applied ethics. After setting out this proposal, the book applies a new methodology to several practical case studies involving controversial issues in five areas: medical ethics, education, economics, marriage and divorce, culture, and creativity.

**Culture and the Arts**

Tariq Ramadan

in *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: January 2009
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the relationship between Islam and culture. It argues that the world's cultures and their particular artistic productions should be considered with an open, critical, and always inclusive outlook. All the artistic works—from music and architecture to cinema, literature, and drama—that express humankind's nobility and essence in its quest for meaning, questionings, emotions, sufferings, and its joys should be welcomed and integrated as our own.

**The Growing Complexity of the Real**

Tariq Ramadan

in *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: January 2009
Item type: chapter

This chapter explores the evolution of the sciences to understand better what this is going to entail as far as dealing with texts and establishing an Islamic ethics is concerned. It argues that we have reached limits that prevent contemporary Islamic thought from moving forward and thus in facing the challenges of our time as it should. It proposes new geography of the sources of law that entails shifting the center of gravity of religious and legal authority in contemporary Muslim societies and communities.
The reform presented in the course of this book must begin with reconciliation with the texts, their meaning, and their higher goals considered in history and in various human societies. There is a need to reconcile with an Islamic universality whose essence is pluralistic. Confirming its universality means engaging a twofold movement that consists in determined self-assertion allied to confident opening up to all civilizations and religions, but also to the different subjects of thought that were long considered dangerous precisely because of fears about dilution or transgressions against the text. This chapter discusses these in terms of areas such as philosophy, mysticism, and interfaith dialogue.

Islam and the Cultivation of Character
Elizabeth M. Bucar

This chapter presents an Islamic discussion of the cultivation of character. Ibn Miskawayh, a prominent tenth-century Islamic thinker, developed a practical theory of virtue ethics that draws selectively from Greek philosophy to make it consistent with an Islamic ethos and worldview. Three tenets of this theory are important for how character is cultivated in this view: the centrality of bodily practices, the possibility of habituating sexual appetites, and the social dimensions of virtue. This theory is then applied to the contemporary Islamic practice of veiling. Ibn Miskawayh proves helpful for explaining why veiling might be an ethical practice integral not only as the display for virtue but also for the cultivation of virtue. The chapter concludes by suggesting two important future directions for research related to virtue as gendered and the cross-cultural diversity of universal virtue.
For a diehard secularist, Amartya Sen may not appear to have much in common with Muhammad Iqbal, the poet and philosopher of the East who took great pride in his Muslim identity. This chapter argues that the two, although removed in time and space, actually had broad-ranging and overlapping intellectual interests in philosophy, economics, politics, and nationalism. The philosophy and economics that molded Iqbal's thinking in the first decade of the 20th century were obviously different from what Sen was exposed to half a century later. Yet there are some important parallels in their philosophical conceptions of human freedom and equality that merit identification and elucidation. In analyzing these, the chapter demonstrates that far from being a barrier, their divergent stands on religion create a fruitful tension that offers fresh insights into the relevance of their respective approaches to the problem of poverty and inequality in the contemporary world.

Islamic Conceptions of Dignity
Mustafa Shah

An interesting selection of discussions germane to the concept of dignity is to be found in the medieval Islamic literary sources. Within the traditions of learning associated with law, theology, and the literature of classical ethicists, writers frequently broached topics in which notions of honor, equality, rank, station, self-esteem, respect, integrity, inalienable worth, and gravitas featured prominently in their treatments and syntheses. The percipient gauging of such topics in the literary sources confirms not only the elaborateness and depth of the attendant discussions, but also the significance attached to conceptions of dignity within expressions of classical Islamic thought. With a view to exploring the historical background of the various deliberations and developments
therein, this chapter reviews the broader contexts in which they were defined, situating their relevance within the vector of current Western academic discourses on dignity.

The Scale of Action: An Intellectual Portrait of al-Ghazālī on the Eve of His Departure from Baghdad

Kenneth Garden

in The First Islamic Reviver: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and his Revival of the Religious Sciences

Published in print: 2013 Published Online: April 2014
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199989621.003.0003
Item type: chapter

Al-Ghazali’s departure from Baghdad in 1095 has been understood as the result of a spiritual crisis that led him to a radical break with his past thinking and an embrace of Sufism. But his Scale of Action, a work written very shortly before this date, shows a supremely confident al-Ghazali, not a man plagued by doubt. It further shows al-Ghazali’s major concern being the quest for “felicity” (saʿāda) in the hereafter, a state above salvation alone and the ultimate objective of Islamic philosophers, whose method for attaining it al-Ghazali prefers in that book. Though the Revival of the Religious Sciences is a vastly larger book written after 1095, its fundamental objective remains the same.

Sufi Narratives of Intimacy

Sa'diyya Shaikh

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Publisher: University of North Carolina Press
DOI: 10.5149/9780807869864_shaikh
Item type: book

Thirteenth-century Sufi poet, mystic, and legal scholar Muhyi al-Din ibn al-ʿArabī gave deep and sustained attention to gender as integral to questions of human existence and moral personhood. Reading his works through a critical feminist lens, this book opens fertile spaces in which new and creative encounters with gender justice in Islam can take place. Grounding her work in Islamic epistemology, the author attends to the ways in which Sufi metaphysics and theology might allow for fundamental shifts in Islamic gender ethics and legal formulations, addressing wide-ranging contemporary challenges including questions of women’s rights in marriage and divorce, the politics of veiling, and women’s leadership of ritual prayer. She deconstructs traditional binaries between the spiritual and the political, private conceptions of spiritual
development and public notions of social justice, and the realms of inner refinement and those of communal virtue. Drawing on the treasured works of Sufism, the author raises a number of questions about the nature of selfhood, subjectivity, spirituality, and society to contribute to the prospects of Islamic feminism as well as feminist ethics more broadly.

Coercion and Responsibility in Islam
Mairaj U. Syed
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Item type: book

Coercion and Responsibility in Islam is an exploration of how classical Muslim theologians and jurists belonging to four different intellectual traditions reasoned about the issues coercion raises about responsibility for action. It looks at four problems: whether the absence of coercion or compulsion is a condition for moral agency, how the law ought to define what is coercive, coercion’s effect on the legal validity of speech acts (such as sales and divorces), and its effects on moral and legal responsibility in the cases of rape and murder. Through a comparative and diachronic examination of the reasoning underpinning the discussion of these issues, the book suggests a new model for the analysis of ethical reasoning characterized by two features: the existence of a fairly technical language of moral deliberation supported by intellectual traditions and a social tolerance for a plurality of such traditions that causes competition between them. The model seeks to explain how membership in an intellectual tradition, competition with scholars of other traditions, trans-cultural norms that structure a given moral problem, and contingent features such as the styles of reasoning that dominate a region best explain the content and historical development of argumentation on ethical issues. The book also compares Muslim discourses on coercion with the debates among modern Anglo-American theorists. The comparison yields several insights, the most significant of which is the finding of substantial similarity in the way medieval Muslim and modern Western intellectuals grappled with the case of coerced homicide.

Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics
Sophia Vasalou
Published in print: 2015 Published Online: November 2015
Among the topics that played a foundational role in classical Islamic debates about value, two stand out: What makes actions good, and how do human beings know it? In the Islamic milieu, different theologians offered sharply diverging answers to these questions, respectively a question about ethical ontology and ethical epistemology. Using these questions as a focus and drawing on a number of key texts, this book offers a reading of Ibn Taymiyya’s ethical thought that is analytically rigorous yet sensitive to its ambiguities. In doing so, it sheds fresh light on the status of reason in Ibn Taymiyya’s evaluative understanding and on the conception of human nature that animates it. At the same time, it seeks to locate Ibn Taymiyya’s thought within its intellectual context, situating it against the rich tapestry of discussions about ethical value taking place within theology, philosophy, and legal theory. Read against the competing approaches of Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite theologians, Ibn Taymiyya’s ethics betrays multiple debts to Ash‘arite thought, both in its consequentialist understanding of ethical value and in the conception of reason and human nature that it deploys on the epistemological level. More distinctive in Ibn Taymiyya’s approach is the theological vision that drives it, which finds expression in a specific understanding of God’s morality and the purposes of the divine Law. In exploring Ibn Taymiyya’s ethics, this book also seeks to reflect on the character of his writing as a whole and the hermeneutical challenges it poses.