



Human Responsibilities in Ayatollah Meşbāh-Yazdī and Søren Kierkegaard Ethical Thought: A Comparative Study¹

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Islamic and Christian ethical thought to understand the similarities and differences between the ethical thoughts of Ayatollah Meşbāh-Yazdī and Søren Kierkegaard, in order to shed light on the similarities between Muslims and Christians and promote dialogue between them. The research, also, investigates human responsibilities in Ayatollah Meşbāh-Yazdī and Søren Kierkegaard's ethical frameworks, by using the descriptive-analytical and documentary methods. The research involved a comprehensive search of electronic databases, relevant books, and internet sources, with all documents being thoroughly and systematically reviewed. The results indicated that both ethical perspectives assert that being ethical entails fulfilling responsibilities towards God, oneself, and others. Ayatollah Meşbāh-Yazdī argues that these responsibilities are fulfilled by practicing and embodying virtues, thus establishing an ethical way of life. Humans are not solely responsible for their own actions and intentions, but also for the purpose of their existence. Inner equilibrium is crucial, as it influences the ability to remain steadfast in fulfilling responsibilities across all aspects of life. According to Kierkegaard, believers' dependence on the institutionalized church hinders their individual relationship with God, preventing them from taking personal responsibility. Human responsibility is inextricably linked to reflective choice, and with reflective, free choice comes anxiety. Experiencing anxiety reflects one's spirituality and relational connection to others.

Keywords

Ayatollah Meşbāh-Yazdī, Søren Kierkegaard, Human responsibilities, Christian ethics, Islamic ethics.

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Introduction

Muslims living in the West are more frequently becoming victims of the rise of Islamophobia. The root cause of these increasing problems among Muslims in the West seems to stem from ignorance, and the aim of this research is therefore to create awareness. The objective is to understand the similarities and differences between the ethical thoughts of Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī and Søren Kierkegaard in order to shed light on the similarities between Muslims and Christians. As Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī and Søren Kierkegaard represent different ethical perspectives, a study of their similarities and differences will provide a better understanding of the common ground between Islam and Christianity.

This research will be part of the tradition of comparative studies and research, but it stands out due to the unique objects of analysis. It is the first time that the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard is being compared with Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī. This comparison will not only introduce the thoughts of Søren Kierkegaard, but also familiarize readers with the ethical and theological concepts of the Iranian scholar Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī. It will provide a unique insight into the perspectives of an Islamic scholar and introduce reason, philosophy, and ethics as key components of Islamic theology and tradition, particularly for non-Muslim Danish readers. To achieve this purpose, I will utilize two methods: the comparative method and the descriptive-analytic method.

The central texts under examination are *بر درگاه دوست* (In the Presence of the Beloved) by Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī, which represents his ethical thoughts based on the original text *دعاء مكارم الأخلاق* (The Supplication of Noble Traits) by Imām ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (d. 712). To represent Christian ethical thought, I will analyze the text *Frygt og Bæven* (Fear and Trembling) by Søren Kierkegaard (d. 1855) with references to *Enten-Eller* (Either-Or), *Kjerlighedens gjerninger* (The works of Love). The chosen texts are originally in Farsi, based on the prayer, which is originally in Arabic and the last-mentioned texts are originally in Danish.

Human Responsibilities in Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī’s View Point

Human responsibility is a fundamental aspect of the Islamic ethical system. It is expected that individuals take responsibility for their actions and make an effort to transform their qualities. Some qualities are more enduring

than others and are deeply ingrained within our character. These qualities, as well as intentions and actions, are inherent to each person. According to Islamic ethics, God is the creator of the universe and has assigned a purpose and function to each creation. Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī's ethical thoughts emphasize the importance of fulfilling responsibilities towards God, oneself, and others. One is not only accountable for their own actions and the consequences of their intentions, words, and activities, but also for the purpose of their existence. These three responsibilities are interconnected and cannot be fully met without addressing the others. Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī suggests that a balanced inner state is necessary to worship and fulfill responsibilities. Just as food nourishes the body, a balanced mental state is required to fulfill these responsibilities. Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī argues that if one is preoccupied with feelings of animosity, grudges, jealousy, suspicion, doubt, pessimism, or misunderstanding, their ability to fulfill responsibilities and maintain genuine relationships with others will be compromised (Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p. 201). Furthermore, if this state of affairs brings about indignation, anxiety, and bitterness for him, these feelings may decrease his heart's presence in worship (ibid.). The states and qualities are related to the inner state of a human, but they will also have an effect on the relationship between people and the way they treat each other. When Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī uses the word "Worship," he refers to both the spiritual and religious worship performed by believers, as well as the worship that lies in the responsibilities to God, oneself, and others. This means that one's inner state will affect their ability to stay true to the purpose of creation in all aspects of their responsibilities. The text introduces us to different terms such as "Animosity," "Hatred," "Love," "Insolence," "Envy," and "Affection." Not only are we presented with these terms, but we are also told about their relation to each other. Similarly, we are introduced to the relationship between human emotions and God's interference, which we will discuss in a later section. In this part, we learn that animosity is related to hatred, and it can be changed with love. Likewise, envy and insolence can be changed with affection. We are informed about which emotions and character traits are considered good and bad, providing the reader with a tool to change their own state and the states of others, thus altering the relationships between people. Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī poses a question related to responsibilities towards others, particularly if, as stated in the text, they are filled with hatred, insolence,

animosity, and envy. He asks, "What should we do then? Shall we seek revenge and treat them in the same manner?" (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p. 203).

To answer that, he cited a Quranic verse from Sūrat Fuṣṣilat:

“And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend”. (Quran; 41:34)

As stated in the verse and concluded by Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, one is required to repel bad actions with good actions, thereby erasing the evil. This tells us about the relationship between good and bad. It not only implies that good is better, as commonly understood, but also emphasizes those good actions can erase bad ones. Furthermore, it highlights humans' ethical responsibility towards each other, which is to treat one another with kindness even when they are treated poorly. This is exemplified in the next section, which explains that dishonesty should be met with good counsel, separation with gentle devotion, and slander with excellent mention. Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī also stated, "Give thanks for good and shut my eyes to evil." Through these examples, we learn that humans are obligated to respond to bad actions with good ones. Bad actions, such as dishonesty, separation, and slander, are contrasted with good actions, such as good counsel, gentle devotion, and excellent mention. It teaches us that we should strive to do well and be doers of good deeds. Even when faced with bad or evil actions directed towards oneself, it is not justified to respond with evil. Instead, bad actions must be countered with good. This aligns with the Quranic verse, which states that good actions have the power to erase bad ones. It also demonstrates trust in God by asking for Him to change the negative traits and emotions within others. To Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, a person's social status and honor are of great importance. He argues that by acquiring a good social standing, one can fulfill their religious obligations more effectively (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p.206). By treating others well and fulfilling our responsibilities towards them, we can establish a good social standing. Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī believes that a good social standing serves as a means to better perform religious obligations. In conclusion, he asserts that living an ethical life ultimately leads to improvement in worship and a closer relationship with God, which is the key to happiness. Throughout the text, we are repeatedly

introduced to the connection between the purpose of living ethically and our responsibilities as humans, which will be further explained in the upcoming section.

Before delving into the topic, it is important to examine the relationship between one's responsibilities towards oneself and towards God. Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī suggests that there are intellectual and psychological barriers that deter individuals from considering their obligations towards God. These obstacles arise from worldly distractions, which can mislead people into believing that temporary pleasures are their ultimate purpose, thereby diverting them from their true goal of creation. This raises the question of why the goal of creation in the ethical system of Islam is intertwined with human responsibility. One aspect of this goal is the cultivation of noble virtues, while another aspect involves the necessary improvement of one's inner state. Meşbāḥ-Yazdī emphasizes that meeting the basic needs of individuals is a religious duty, and fulfilling obligations for the sake of God is considered worship, which contributes to one's journey towards perfection (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p.191). Therefore, humans bear the responsibility of fulfilling their purpose of creation. One of these responsibilities is to develop moral qualities in order to attain nearness to God, as Islam encourages the cultivation of noble traits. In addition to this, as Islam is not an ascetic religion, individuals also have social responsibilities that should be carried out through the display of noble virtues. The focus of the sentence is on the ability to remain focused and continuously remember the sole reason and purpose behind one's existence. This concept provides insight into the understanding of the world and creation in the Islamic ethical system. Moreover, the introduction of worldly distractions serves to highlight that the purpose of human life goes beyond indulging in these distractions: "Free me from need, expand Thy provision towards me, and tempt me not with ingratitude" (Chittick, 2008, p. 67).

Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī describes the "Need" as the requirement for basic necessities such as food, clothing, a house, financial stability, and a social network. These needs are essential for both the physical and mental health of individuals, enabling them to work towards their goals. However, excessive indulgence in these needs can lead individuals to forget their ultimate objectives. By being free from need, one can gain control over these needs. While humans require food for survival, uncontrolled

consumption can be detrimental and divert one's focus from their goals. The sentence emphasizes the importance of having control over needs and not letting them control one. Nevertheless, food, clothing, social security, and physical well-being are crucial for the ability to achieve the ultimate goal. Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī argues that an excessive desire for wealth can lead to pride, which may hinder the pursuit of one's goals (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p. 194). He explained this with a sentence found in the original text: "Exalt me and afflict me not with pride" (Chittick, 2008, p. 67).

Supported and explained by the narration of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "God revealed to me that we should be humble so that nobody shows pride over anybody else, and no one intimidates another." (al-Mundhiri, 1988, p.558)

However, the dark side of well-being is pride, despite the purpose of riches and possessions being to strengthen the path towards the final goal. Humans' success is attributed to God, as a mercy and good will towards them. It serves as a means to guide humans towards their goal and to introduce them to the final pleasures. God uses different methods of motivation to encourage humans to fulfill their purpose and strive towards their creation's goal. Some humans are motivated by the fear of punishment, some by the desire for rewards, and others by the understanding of the happiness in achieving closeness to God. Humans have responsibilities towards God, themselves, and others, all of which are part of the same ultimate accountability. These responsibilities cannot be separated; therefore, one cannot fulfill their responsibility towards God without also fulfilling it towards oneself and others. As God bestows blessings upon humans to motivate them, some may become arrogant and filled with pride. Self-admiration is described as considering one's good deeds great and plentiful, and believing oneself worthy of reward for doing them (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p. 194).

While success is often seen as a means for divine motivation, individuals may mistakenly attribute their success to their own greatness. This can lead to arrogance and a disregard for the purpose and responsibilities associated with achieving goals. Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī suggests that even the possibility of humbleness is a grace from God, as individuals often become arrogant over insignificant things (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, 2010, p.196). Humbleness involves recognizing and accepting one's actions and state,

attributing success to the mercy of God rather than oneself. It requires understanding the true value of one's actions, regardless of external praise. Claiming to be humble and behaving humbly in front of others is not only vain but also hypocritical. Human beings have a responsibility to change their inner state and fully comprehend the significance of their own actions. It is their duty to alter the intentions behind actions that contribute to arrogance, hypocrisy, and pride. These negative traits hinder individuals from reaching their goals, despite engaging in acts of worship and fulfilling their responsibilities to others. This highlights why intention plays such a crucial role in actions and the pursuit of virtuous qualities.

As mentioned previously, ethics is created by God to guide humans towards their ultimate goal by making them responsible for their relationship with God, themselves, and others. Regarding humans' responsibilities towards God, they must carry out and obey God's wisdom and will, as God is the perfect designer of purpose, goal, and ethical systems. One of the responsibilities towards oneself is to be independent from needs and desires. Need refers to the human need for nutrition, love, safety, sleep, and overall well-being, both physically and psychologically. When striving to be independent from needs, it doesn't mean that humans should attempt to rid themselves of necessary needs. Instead, being independent from needs means understanding and utilizing those needs for one's benefit, without allowing them to control the mind, intentions, and actions. A noble trait is taking control of these needs and using them in alignment with the final goal and purpose. By doing so, one will eat, sleep, seek emotional support, and ensure safety with the sole purpose of reaching the final goal, rather than treating those needs as end goals themselves. As mentioned earlier, Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī argues that humans are inherently social beings and must engage socially to fulfill their ultimate purpose and goal of creation. Spreading good behavior is one of the most crucial aspects of interacting with others. Not only should one act with the best behavior, but they should also encourage others to do the same through their own manners. One way to exhibit good behavior is by responding to bad behavior with kindness. For instance, if someone is faced with dishonesty, they should respond with good advice, and if someone slanders them, they should counteract it with excellent words. One should be understood and forgive others, just as they hope for God to treat them in the same way.

Like humans who desire the justice of God, they themselves should strive to promote justice, spreading justice, acting justly, and remaining truthful in one's words and actions, even when it is difficult and challenging, are all obligations towards others. Others deserve to be treated with fairness, regardless of one's personal interests and emotions. They deserve to be treated justly and to be told the truth, even if it means acknowledging one's own imperfections. This treatment and behavior are not only deserved by others but also by oneself, as treating others with goodness and fairness ultimately benefits oneself. Engaging in bad behavior, speaking ill of others, harboring suspicions, lying, and holding grudges only diminishes one's own happiness and well-being. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explained this concept by saying, "He who treats people in a way that he never wrongs them, speaks truthfully to them, and fulfills his promises to them, is a person of great valorous qualities, his justice shines through" (Al-Qummi, 1944, p. 208); or "One who interacts with others as they would like to be treated is truly just" (al-Tarabulsi, 1990, p. 162). Sayyida Fatima al-Zahraa (AS) further elucidated that "God has made justice obligatory as a means to tranquility of the hearts" (al-Qummi, 'Ilal al-Shara'i, 1988, p. 248). Justice entails conducting oneself with fairness in all aspects of life, particularly in how one treats others. Regardless of our opinions or feelings towards others, it is our responsibility to protect their dignity by not exposing their faults. Human responsibility should not be altered based on self-interest.

They are permanent and remain the same in different situations, regardless of the level of difficulty or ease in that specific event. This permanence is rooted in deep love, affection, and devotion to others, which stems from one's responsibility towards God. By loving others, one should demonstrate generosity, friendliness, trustworthiness, and helpfulness. Imām Ja'far as-Šādiq (AS) stated, "A man's love for another is a part of his love for his religion" (al-Mufid, 1994, p. 226). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) further explained, "The most beloved of God's servants are those who are most beneficial to His servants" (al-Ḥarrāni, 1984, p. 49). This means that one cannot separate their love for God from their love for His creations. To be beloved and useful to God, one must also be beloved and useful to His creations. This is achieved through noble actions and the cultivation of noble traits, such as trustworthiness and helpfulness. Imām 'Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib (AS) described trustworthiness as the "Best form of

faith" (al-Tamimi, 1941, p. no. 2905). He further explained that one should not betray those who trust them, even if they are betrayed in return, and they should not disclose secrets, even if their own secrets are revealed (al-Majlisi, 1983 (a), p. 208). These noble traits also involve bestowing one's blessings upon others, even if they may not deserve it. All humans are constantly blessed in some way, even if they do not act accordingly. It is not uncommon for humans to be ungrateful towards the blessings bestowed upon them. Imām al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī (AS) said that "Bounties are often ignored as long as they exist, but their worth becomes apparent once they are gone." (al-Majlisi, Biḥār al-Anwār, 1983 (b), p. 115)

Despite this ingratitude, one must continue to bestow blessings upon others in order to perfect their noble traits, just as God continues to bestow blessings on humans despite their responses. This concept is mentioned in the Quran: "And He gave you from all you asked of Him, and if you should count the favor of God, you could not enumerate them" (34:14).

Ayatollah Meṣbāḥ-Yazdī concludes that only God knows the true essence of a human being. Humans are inherently good and have a divine purpose, which means they deserve blessings in certain aspects of their lives. When asking God for blessings, one should not deprive others of their own blessings, as everything serves a central role in the purpose of human life. It is important to treat others with kindness and refrain from expressing anger or hatred towards them. Part of our responsibility towards others is to exhibit good behavior and control our negative emotions, such as speaking ill of something or someone out of hate. Restraining anger and hate is considered one of the most difficult actions, but by doing so, we demonstrate true strength. This is a noble trait because anger and hate can lead to negative consequences and cloud our judgment. Many poor decisions, evil actions, and hurtful words stem from anger. The Quran also emphasizes this point: "Who spend during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and God loves the doers of good" (3:134).

Found in the Qur’ān, one must not only restrain anger, one must also pardon people. This is only not related to times of wellbeing and happiness, where joy and satisfaction can make one forgive the faults and harms of others, one must also forgive and restrain anger during hardship. It is furthermore stated in the Quran: "And when they are angry, they forgive" (42:37).

One cannot only be motivated by self-interests or egocentric feelings. Meaning that one restrains anger when it is in one's own interests or only acting justice when it is related to oneself. If one notices another speak ill or bad about someone, might be a friend or a foe, nevertheless both in examples it is unjust. Despite it being unjust, to speak ill about others, knowing that may never cause separation between people. Which counteracts the responsibility towards others, and thereby towards God and oneself? Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī concludes that the most central of them all are the effort to employ oneself with what is most pleasing to God. Rather it is through responsibilities towards one or others, they are all a part of the obeying of God's perfect system.

Ethical traits and virtues are valued based on their ability to achieve the ultimate goal, which is happiness defined as salvation and closeness to God. In order for a trait or action to be valued, it must be performed willingly. Free will is a fundamental aspect of theological understanding, and ethics and theology are intertwined, making them inseparable. This also raises questions that will be explored later regarding the relationship between the one asking for moral traits and the one striving to attain them through free will. For now, we are introduced to the concept of free will through the definition of faith. Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī describes free will as "the most important characteristic of the human soul" (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī, Theological Instructions, 2009, p. 142). He further states that "the power to decide and choose is a characteristic of humans that we are most certain about" (ibid. 144), and adds that "God is aware not only of an individual's actions in a given situation but also of their relationship with the individual's will and free will" (ibid. 147). It is concluded that "the value of a voluntary act depends on the motivation and intention of the doer, as good deeds without good intentions have no effect on one's spiritual progress" (Meşbāḥ-Yazdī 2009, 395). Through Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī's statements, we learn that free will allows humans to make choices not only in their actions but also in their pursuit of moral traits and intentions.

Human Responsibilities in Kierkegaard's View Point

Human responsibility is a central concept in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Without the responsibility of making choices, humans would never be able to reach the ethical or religious level. One is not only responsible towards God and oneself, but also towards others. The responsibility towards God

can be found in understanding His power. It involves recognizing that while humans have the power to choose, God ultimately holds the ultimate power. Understanding this distinction is what sets apart the ethical and religious ways of life. The responsibility towards oneself lies in the act of choosing, as it is through making choices that one becomes ethical. Being ethical means taking ownership of one's choices and not allowing others to define who one is. By choosing oneself and truly knowing oneself, one can come to know God. It is important to note that being religious does not simply involve following Christian principles or dogmas out of tradition. Rather, it is the understanding of one's responsibilities and the act of making choices that truly makes one religious.

In his work "Either-Or," Kierkegaard asserted that one must either choose oneself or "receive oneself." (Kierkegaard, 1982 (b), p. 166)

He does not provide guidance on what to choose but emphasizes the "Reality of Choosing" (Kierkegaard, 1982 (b), p. 167). For Kierkegaard, the focus is not on the outcome of the choice one makes, but the fact that one actively makes a choice. If one fails to choose, others will make decisions on one's behalf. To Kierkegaard, being ethical entails making independent choices, rather than allowing external factors or uncertain circumstances to dictate choices. Surrendering one's choices to society, expectations, authorities, etc., would lead to a loss of self (Kierkegaard, 1982 (b), p. 155). This concept was also central to Kierkegaard's criticism of the Church. He saw that believers were often treated as wards or parts of a whole, rather than individuals with the potential for a personal relationship with God. Through the Church, they were unable to forge their own unique relationship with God; instead, it was determined for them. This, Kierkegaard argued, prevented people from taking personal responsibility for their faith. He felt that the Church should be apolitical and free, rather than a tool of politicians for shaping society. He criticized the Church for being politically influenced and straying from true Christianity. To him, people who identified as Christians only because of tradition had no genuine personal relationship with Christianity. According to Kierkegaard, becoming Christian solely as a result of tradition or others' choices is both unethical and irreligious; contradicting his assertion that one must make active choices to attain religiousness.

Although Kierkegaard values an individual's relationship with God, his philosophy does not promote egocentrism or individualism. He believed

that responsibilities extend beyond a relationship with God and oneself to include others. In his work "Works of Love," Kierkegaard introduces the responsibility to love others as oneself, not in a romantic or desire-driven sense but as a duty and responsibility. He posits that loving and being loved is a fundamental need in humans (Kierkegaard, *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*, 1982 (a), p. 150). One must love others for their humanness, without any personal interests or desires. Additionally, the love for others must be boundless, extending to all (Kierkegaard, *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*, 1982 (a), pp.159-167). In essence, Kierkegaard argues that one must love others out of a sense of responsibility towards them. It is a duty-based platonic love that is impartial and encompasses everyone. He asserts that one must love a person for who they are, flaws and weaknesses included, and continue to love them despite any changes they may undergo, even if they turn away or betray one (Kierkegaard, *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*, 1982 (a), p. 169). According to Kierkegaard, loving others as oneself and loving others despite any personal interests are fundamental moral qualities. Therefore, Kierkegaard's ethical system upholds the values of responsibilities towards God, oneself, and others as central tenets.

Returning to the responsibility of choosing, one must confront the multiple outcomes and consequences associated with their choices. The freedom that comes with making free choices, unbounded by one's environment, leads to a sense of dreadful anxiety. The concept of "Angst," originally from German and Scandinavian languages, was introduced to the English language as Kierkegaard's works gained popularity worldwide. Kierkegaard understood Angst as the fear one experiences when faced with a choice. Absolute freedom of choice, according to Kierkegaard, causes Angst. To him, Angst is an example of a person's spirituality (Kierkegaard, "The Concept of Anxiety", 1982 (c), p. 136). In Kierkegaard's view, being human means being a synthesis of spirit, soul, and body, with Angst being a manifestation of one's spiritual side (Kierkegaard, "The Concept of Anxiety", 1982 (c), p. 145). Furthermore, Angst illustrates the differences between animals and humans where animals are driven by their instincts, and humans experience Angst when choosing. Angst does not occur when choices result from society's norms or desires as they are not reflective choices. However, reflective choices bring Angst as one must face the consequences of their actions. With reflective choices, one experiences the fear of choosing one thing and not choosing an alternative (Kierkegaard,

"The Concept of Anxiety", 1982 (c), pp.137-138). The choices humans make will lead to foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences, and it is the fear of the unknown and the responsibility that Kierkegaard considers as Angst.

Angst is by no means considered negative, as it is part of reflective choices and the responsibility one faces when acting according to Kierkegaard's ethical system. Having Angst is an expression of one's spirituality and relationship to oneself and others.

Angst is an expression of the reflective choice, thereby reflections and connection to one's spirit (Kierkegaard, "Begybet Angst", 1982 (c), p. 157). According to Kierkegaard, the human responsibility is undeniable related to the reflective choice, and with the reflective, free choice, angst occurs. Concluding is it safe to say that the human responsibility, the choice and the angst, is all key concepts of the ethical thoughts described by Kierkegaard.

Human Responsibilities: Similarities and Differences

Faith is not the only shared element between the two ethical thoughts, as human responsibility is also a crucial concept in both. From an Islamic perspective, the free will of humans is a fundamental component of ethics, as an action must originate from an intentional and voluntary act to be deemed ethical. Any aspect that humans have no control over, such as sleeping, eating, and feeling, cannot be ethical indicators. Nevertheless, individuals can regulate how they sleep, eat, and express their emotions, and it is the manner in which they express these traits that can be regarded as ethical, rather than the natural features themselves. Human beings possess natural character traits - known as Fitrih - including happiness, fear, and anger, which are all critical to them. For instance, people must feel happiness to strive to do better, be better, and do well to others. Fear helps individuals stay out of harm's way and distinguish between what is just and unjust, while anger helps them to react to various injustices. However, humans cannot be judged solely by the feelings they experience since they are considered a part of human nature and cannot be deemed ethical concepts. In contrast, how humans express and act upon their feelings is a product of their free will and can therefore be categorised as ethically sound or unsound. Islamic ethical thoughts operate on the premise that all individuals are responsible for their actions and the subsequent

consequences that follow (Shomali, 2014, p. 21).

It is the responsibility of individuals that determines how their actions are evaluated in accordance with ethical standards. Ethical thoughts show that humans have distinct responsibilities towards God, themselves, and others. Humans are not isolated beings, but instead, they are interlinked and react to one another in small or large groups (ibid.). Therefore, actions must be executed in relation to others, since humans owe responsibilities towards one another. It is not only crucial to be good to others but also to God and oneself. In the Islamic ethical system, this implies that individuals should act in accordance with ethical principles. Similarly, Christian ethical thoughts adopt the same principles. Humans are responsible towards God by obeying His commands, responsible towards themselves by making their own choices, and responsible towards others by loving one another. Choosing oneself should not be interpreted as being self-centered or putting one's needs before others. Rather, individuals must choose God and the ethical lifestyle before society makes their choices for them. Failure to choose oneself is regarded as irresponsible because humans are indebted to making an ethical decision and living in accordance with God's word, rather than living a life governed by societal norms or base desires that can harm oneself or others. Choosing oneself equates to loving others and God, which is a fundamental concept in ethical thoughts. The Bible articulates that:

“My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God [...] God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known Him. Real love isn't our love for God, but His love for us. Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we must love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is truly in our hearts. God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God, and he will stay one with us. A real love for others will chase worries away [...] we love because God loved us first. But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see? The commandment that God has given us is: “Love God and love each other!”” (1 John 4:7-21).

This example highlights the crucial relationship between responsibilities towards God, oneself, and others. Although the individual relationship between humans and God holds significant importance in ethical thoughts,

ethical actions and principles are not self-centered but rather revolve around loving both God and others. The mentioned verse emphasises that one cannot love God without loving others or, in other words, fulfilling one's responsibilities towards oneself entails fulfilling one's responsibilities towards God. Moreover, one cannot fulfil their responsibilities towards God without fulfilling them towards others.

At this point, both ethical thoughts bear a striking resemblance. There are numerous scriptural sources in both ethics that emphasise the significance of love as a responsibility towards God and others, even towards oneself. For instance, in the 31st Qur'anic verse of chapter Ale 'Imrān, it is stated: "Say, if you should love God, then follow me, God will love you and forgive you your sins. And God is Forgiving and Merciful." Furthermore, there are traditions related to this theme, such as the narration ascribed to Imām Ja'far as-Şādiq (AS), who stated that "No sooner do two believers meet than the better of them is the one who loves his brother more" (al-Barqī, 1993, p. 411). Both ethical thoughts share the concept of responsibility towards others and demonstrate that showing love towards God and others will ultimately result in goodness, like love, returning to oneself.

In both thoughts, humans are related to one another and God, and responsibility to perform ethical actions is the glue binding them together. In this case, goodness is the love of God, oneself and others, and the fulfillment of responsibilities towards God, oneself and others, as they are inseparable. Both ethical thoughts argue that humans are committed to the responsibilities and ethical rulings. To commit oneself to virtues and an ethical life will cause true freedom. Freedom is not found in choosing egoistically, or acting in according to one's own interests. Freedom is found in freeing oneself from lowly desires and needs, being fully committed to virtues and upholding an ethical life.

Conclusion

In Ayatollah Meşbāh-Yazdī's ethical thoughts, he underscores the significance of faith, certainty, and the relationship between intentions and actions to form a complete ethical code. He further introduces ethics as a responsibility towards God, oneself, and others, believing that faith is the key determinant of ethics that can be rationally understood by human reason. Ultimately, the goal of human life, according to him, is to achieve

happiness by drawing closer to God. On the other hand, Søren Kierkegaard's ethical thoughts also emphasize that faith is a crucial aspect of being genuinely ethical. He exemplifies Abraham as an epitome of surrendering to God's will, which is considered part of an individual's responsibilities towards God that also encompass the love for oneself and others. Kierkegaard believes that ethics can only be determined through God's commands, even if they contradict human reasoning. In conclusion, the ultimate objective of human life, according to Kierkegaard, is attaining the highest level of submission to God's will.

There are several similarities between both ethical thoughts concerning the significance of God as the ultimate judge of ethical values and traits, with both concluding that acting in line with God's wishes is the highest level of morality. Additionally, both ethical thoughts relate a human's life and purpose to God, with the ultimate goal being to attain salvation, or closeness to God. Moreover, both ethical thoughts prescribe human responsibilities not only towards God and oneself but also towards others, emphasizing that fulfilling ethical responsibilities towards God, oneself, and others is essential for being ethical. Both ethical thoughts argue that the true nature of "goodness" lies in fulfilling God's wishes for humans.

However, the ethical thoughts differ in their understanding of religion, with Kierkegaard believing that the religious paradox and belief despite irrationality are the highest level of morality. Conversely, Ayatollah Meşbāḥ-Yazdī posits that faith is not inherently opposed to reason, as Islamic beliefs do not hold any paradoxes like those in Christianity.

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