

# Exploring The Roots Of Justice : The Contribution Of Islamic Theology And Philosophy To Global Ethical Discourse

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**Abstract.** *Amidst global challenges such as economic disparity, intercultural conflicts, and environmental crises, the dominant narrative of justice is often confined to the secular Western framework. In the face of these global challenges, Islamic Theology and Philosophy offer a unique theocentric perspective that not only complements but also critiques the limitations of current global ethical frameworks. From a theological standpoint, key concepts such as Al-Adl (Divine Justice), particularly within the Mutazilah and Ash'ariyah schools, are analyzed to illustrate how divine justice serves as a moral imperative for human action, establishing principles of universality, equality, and accountability. In Islamic understanding, justice extends beyond the distribution of resources; it encompasses cosmic balance (Mizan) and the proper placement of all things in their rightful context. Meanwhile, Islamic Philosophy, especially through the thought of Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina on the concept of Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah (the Virtuous Society), provides an operational framework for implementing justice within social and political structures. The concept of Maqasid Al-Shariah, or the objectives of Islamic law, is elaborated as an ethical-legal methodology aimed at protecting five essential interests: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. This framework offers a basis for a global ethics centered on the protection of universal human dignity (Karamah Insaniyyah). This study employs textual and comparative analysis to synthesize these concepts and place them in dialogue with modern theories of global justice, such as those of Rawls and Sen. It concludes that Islamic contributions are vital in injecting spiritual, communal, and transcendent dimensions of accountability into global ethics, making it more holistic and inclusive. This encourages a re-reading of Islamic sources not merely as a heritage of the past, but as an active resource for shaping a more just future.*

**Keywords:** *Justice, Islamic Theology, Islamic Philosophy, Global Ethics, Al-Shariah*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The prevailing discourse on global justice struggles to effectively address complex crises such as profound economic stratification and climate instability, often due to its

reliance on purely secular and contractarian frameworks. While influential, these frameworks occasionally falter in providing a compelling, universal moral imperative that transcends mere mutual agreement or rational self-interest (Rawls, 1971).

Islamic thought offers a distinctive theocentric perspective, where the concept of justice (*Al-Adl*) is not a human construct but a fundamental attribute of the Divine and a core purpose of revelation. This article posits that the contributions of Islamic Theology (*Kalam*), Philosophy (*Falsafah*), and Jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*) provide crucial, non-anthropocentric foundations that can both complement and rigorously critique current global ethical models. Specifically, this study analyzes *Al-Adl*, *Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah*, and *Maqasid Al-Shariah* to demonstrate their relevance as active resources for shaping a more just and accountable future.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a textual and comparative analysis. The textual analysis examines classical Arabic texts to define the essential concepts of Islamic justice. The comparative analysis places these concepts into dialogue with key global justice theories, notably the distributive justice model of John Rawls and the capability approach of Amartya Sen (Sen, 2009). This methodology aims to synthesize the spiritual and communal dimensions of Islamic thought with the procedural and welfare concerns of modern ethics.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. The Theological Imperative: *Al-Adl* and Human Accountability

The debate over *Al-Adl* (Divine Justice) defined the *Kalam* tradition, creating two distinct perspectives on human ethical action and divine relationship.

### 3.2. Mu'tazilah: Justice as a Rational Command

The Mu'tazilah school established *Al-Adl* as a cornerstone, asserting that God is *necessarily* just and that the ethical quality of actions (*husn* and *qubh*) is objectively knowable by reason (*Aql*). This means God must act in the best interest (*al-aslah*) of creation and must provide humans with genuine free will (*ikhtiyar*) to be held accountable (Hourani, 1971). The practical implication is a strong emphasis on **rational accountability** and the human imperative for moral universalism (Ess, 2018).

### 3.3. Ash'ariyah: Justice as Divine Voluntarism

The Ash'ariyah prioritized God's absolute power and transcendence, arguing that justice is defined *voluntarily* by God's will and revelation (*Shariah*). Goodness is what God commands; badness is what God forbids. This view introduces a powerful element of **transcendent accountability**, ensuring that the moral standard is immutable and not subject to human consensus or cultural shifts (Watt, 1985).

### 3.4. Justice as Cosmic Balance (*Mizan*)

Islamic justice is also a cosmic concept, *Mizan*. The Qur'an states that God established the *Mizan* so that creation does not transgress the balance (Qur'an 55:7-9).<sup>1</sup> Justice, in this sense, is the proper equilibrium and placement of things (*wada' al-shay' fi mahallih*). This understanding provides a robust theological foundation for **environmental ethics**, where disrupting the natural order is seen as an act of cosmic injustice (*zulm*) (Izutsu, 11).

### 3.5. The Philosophical Blueprint: *Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah*

The theological concept of *Al-Adl* was systematized into a political and social framework by Islamic philosophers. **Al-Farabi** (d. 950 CE), often titled the "Second Teacher," in his *Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* (The Virtuous City), presented a society structured to achieve the highest human good: *sa'adah* (true happiness) (Al-Farabi, 1985).<sup>2</sup>

*Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah* functions as an organic whole, led by a wise ruler, where justice ensures every citizen performs their function optimally.<sup>3</sup> The state's political organization is thus ultimately subservient to an **ethical end**—the moral and intellectual perfection of its inhabitants. This philosophical integration of ethics and politics offers a corrective to purely managerial or power-centric models of governance (Mahdi, 1972).

### 3.6. The Ethical-Legal Methodology: *Maqasid Al-Shariah*

The most operational contribution of Islamic thought to global ethics lies in *Maqasid Al-Shariah* (Objectives of Islamic Law). Developed to ensure that legal rulings fulfill the ultimate purpose of the Divine Law, the *Maqasid* identifies the five essential interests (*al-daruriyyat al-khamsah*) that must be protected for human well-being and dignity (*Karamah Insaniyyah*):

Essential Interest	Focus of Protection	Application in Global Ethics
1. <i>Hifz al-Din</i> (Religion)	Freedom of faith and conscience (Kamali, 2000).	Protection of minority rights; interfaith dialogue.

2. <i>Hifz al-Nafs</i> (Life)	Health, safety, and subsistence (Al-Shatibi, 1997).	Global public health access; ending extreme poverty.
3. <i>Hifz al-'Aql</i> (Intellect)	Education, knowledge, and critical thinking (Auda, 2008).	Combating misinformation; ensuring educational access.
4. <i>Hifz al-Nasl</i> (Lineage)	Family, social continuity, and welfare (Hall, 2012).	Gender justice; protection of children and refugees.
5. <i>Hifz al-Mal</i> (Property)	Fair acquisition, wealth circulation, and prohibition of exploitation.	Critique of structural economic inequality and predatory lending (Khan, 1999).

This framework, which views the protection of the five *Maqasid* as the realization of *Maslaha* (public interest), provides a compelling, objective basis for **human rights** rooted in a divine obligation, not merely parliamentary law.

### 3.7. Dialogue with Modern Global Justice Theories

#### a. Rawls and the Transcendental Critique

John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* defines fairness through the "Original Position" and the "Veil of Ignorance."<sup>4</sup> This approach is fundamentally **procedural and constructive**. The Islamic perspective offers a critique by asserting that justice is **substantive** (defined by immutable truth) and **transcendental**. *Al-Adl* and the *Maqasid* assert that we do not need to assume ignorance to establish the basics of a just society; the five core human interests *are already known* and divinely commanded to be protected. This elevates the discussion from a rational contract to a **moral obligation** (Shabbir, 2001).

#### b. Sen and the Normative Synergy

Amartya Sen's capability approach, which prioritizes the real freedoms and opportunities (capabilities) people have to achieve well-being, finds a powerful structural complement in the *Maqasid Al-Shariah*. The five *Maqasid* essentially function as the **minimum necessary foundational capabilities** that a just society must secure (Auda, 2008). While Sen describes *what* is missing (a capability failure), the Islamic framework provides the **normative force** (the divine command of *Al-Adl*) that **requires** a state and community to

actively secure these capabilities, thereby reinforcing the ethical urgency of global intervention (Hall, 2012).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Islamic Theology and Philosophy offer critical and constructive contributions to global ethical discourse.<sup>5</sup> The concept of **Divine Justice** (*Al-Adl*) anchors morality in an immutable, transcendent source, offering spiritual accountability often absent in secular contracts. The political theory of *Al-Madinah Al-Fadilah* reminds us that statecraft is ultimately a tool for ethical perfection, not an end in itself.

Crucially, *Maqasid Al-Shariah* provides a structured, ethical-legal methodology for defending universal human dignity (*Karamah Insaniyyah*) through the protection of essential, non-negotiable interests. By re-engaging with these concepts, global ethics can embrace a more holistic vision of justice—one that is not only fair in procedure but also substantive in moral content, communal in application, and accountable to a standard beyond human whim. This makes Islamic thought a vital, active resource for shaping a truly just future.

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