PROPOSAL

Title: Islamic Virtue Ethics Series

Editor: Ismail Royer

Translators: Mawlana Kamil Uddin, Faraz Khan, Khalid Williams, Carl Sharif El-Tobgui

Supervising Scholar: Shaykh Muhammad Amin Kholwadia

Publisher: Turath Publishing

Project Description:

Summary

This project aims to revive knowledge of and interest in the rich virtue ethics tradition in Islam. We will accomplish this by making accessible early texts that formed the foundation of virtue ethics in Islam.

Within the Islamic tradition, scholars from the classical Islamic period formed the basis for virtue ethics in Islam through writings in Arabic. We propose to translate four seminal but overlooked texts on virtue ethics from the classical Islamic period from Arabic to English. Our editions will make these works, produced between the 11th and 13th centuries CE, available to a wider audience, both scholarly and non-academic. These texts engage with prominent philosophical ideas of the time, and form concepts that are reflected in later Christian and Jewish writings–indeed, all of the authors we aim to translate passed away before Thomas Aquinas, the Christian scholar most associated with virtue ethics, was born.

The final product will be a series of four translated books, with an Arabic critical edition as well as a side-by-side English translation. The translation will be academic, closely reflective of the original text, and elaborated upon with accessible commentary to encourage practical application of the values discussed.

The four books to be translated are:

- **Al-Raghib al-Isfahani.** *Adh-Dhariy'a ila Makarim ash-Shari'a*
- **Al-Raghib al-Isfahani.** *Risalah fi Adab Mukhalat an-Nas*
- **Abul Hasan Ali al-Mawardi.** *Tashil an-Nadhar wa-Ta'jil adh-Dhafar fi Akhlaq al-Malik*
- **Fakhruddin Ar-Razi.** *Kitab al-Nafs war-Ruh wa Sharh Quwahuma*

The aim of this series is to spark a revival of interest in the field of Islamic virtue ethics at a time when virtue ethics as a field–Christian, Jewish, and Aristotelian–is undergoing a revival.

This series is a component of RFI's Virtues Project, which the editor of this series, Ismail Royer, conceived and leads. To date, the Virtues Project has involved over thirty high-level scholars of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In 2021, RFI held a symposium on virtue ethics in the three faiths in partnership with the University of Chicago Divinity School. This symposium laid the theoretical and spiritual foundation for the Virtues Project. In addition to the symposium, the project includes an academic volume compiling papers produced by the participating scholars, an online course for undergraduate students featuring video, audio, and written contributions from these scholars, and a webinar series. Future components of this project include curricula for seventh-grade students at Islamic, Christian, and Jewish schools, and an illustrated children's storybook of folk tales.

Intended Audience

There are two intended uses and audiences for this series: devotional and academic. First, we intend for these works to be used as their original authors intended: by teachers and students of Islam as a means of helping individuals draw closer to God through purification of the soul, and as a guide to pleasing God in their interactions with fellow human beings.

Second, we intend for these works to be a resource for Muslim and non-Muslim academics in understanding the valuable and underappreciated contributions of classical Islamic scholars to the field of virtue ethics, most of which predate the work of far more well-known medieval Christian and Jewish authors. These works will be invaluable to scholars in the fields of ethics, philosophy, political science, and sociology, as well as academic religious studies.

Editor

The editor of this series of translations of classical Islamic works is **Ismail Royer**. Royer, who converted to Islam in 1992, has studied Islamic religious sciences with recognized scholars and worked in the field of nonprofit advocacy for Islam and Muslims for nearly thirty years. Since 2018 he has been director of the Islam and Religious Freedm section at the Religious Freedom Institute, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit research and advocacy organization. His writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *First Things*, *Journal of Religion and Society*, *Public Discourse*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Al Jumuah*, *Muslim Matters*, *The Catholic Thing*, *Religion Unplugged*, and *RealClearReligion*.

Supervising Scholar

Shaykh Muhammad Amin Kholwadia is the founder of Darul Qasim, an institute of traditional Islamic higher learning headquartered in the Glendale Heights suburb of Chicago that is accredited as a college by the State of Illinois. Shaykh Amin is an active advocate of the classical Sunni tradition of Islamic scholarship and a passionate promoter of traditional Islamic sciences and methodologies of teaching and learning. He is regarded internationally as an expert theologian and an authority in the fields of Islamic philosophy and theosophy. Founder and director of Darul Qasim, an institute of higher Islamic learning in Glendale Heights, Illinois. This institute is one of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. Darul Qasim houses many scholars in various Islamic disciplines from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Darul Qasim offers advanced programs in Islamic Studies; Arabic; Quranic Exegesis; Islamic Law and Theology and Hadith Studies. Shaykh Amin is a leader in the American Muslim community and is known for his expertise in Islamic Law, theology, and Sufism. He also conducts seminars in Islamic bioethics and has several articles published in the field. His notable publications include: *The Status of Taqleed* and *Islamic Finance: What It Is and What It Could Be* (co-author).

Translators

Mawlana Kamil Uddin was born and raised in the Chicagoland area. He completed the memorization of the Quran while in high school and subsequently enrolled into the Alim Program at the Institute of Islamic Education. At the Institute, Mawlana Kamil completed a formal Alimiyyah Degree. After graduating in 2011, he began educating students in the Alim Program at that very institute for four years.

He has a special interest in tafsir and ʿulum al-Qurʾān and has regularly been teaching courses in the Department of Quranic Exegesis and the Department of Quranic Studies & Recitation at Darul Qasim since 2014. Additionally, Mawlana Kamil completed a BA in Organizational

Leadership from Benedictine University and a MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) from Dominican University.

Shaykh Faraz Khan is a scholar of Ashʿari and Maturidi philosophical theology with field specialties in Hanafi Jurisprudence, Prophetic Biography, Hadith, and Logic. At Zaytuna College, he has taught Kalam Theology, Creedal Theology, Prophetic Biography, Readings in Muslim Spirituality, and Logic in the Islamic Tradition. Shaykh Faraz also serves as the coordinator of the Honors Program at Zaytuna College, in which he has taught additional seminars on classical Islamic texts. His research interests center on the engagement of philosophical theology and ethics with the contemporary age.

After completing undergraduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin, he moved to Amman, Jordan, in 2004 and read classical texts with distinguished scholars in Ashʿari and Maturidi scholastic theology, Hanafi jurisprudence, prophetic narration, logic, and other religious sciences, receiving scholarly authorization (ijazah) after seven years of full-time study.

Shaykh Faraz's most recent book, *An Introduction to Islamic Theology: Imam Nūr al-Dīn al-Sābūnī's Al-Bidāyah fī usūl al-dīn*, was published under the Zaytuna College Curriculum Series in 2020. In the work, he translates and annotates a manual on Maturidi theology authored by Imam Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī (d. 580/1184), a prominent Muslim theologian from Bukhara, which provides a foundation upon which modern Muslim discourse can be built. The text explains the central tenets of the Islamic creed and refutes erroneous positions of alternative theologies.

Khalid Williams was born in the UK in 1983. He graduated from Leeds University in 2006 with a BA in Arabic Studies, and moved to Morocco to teach and further his studies in the traditional Islamic disciplines. He began working in translation in 2009, with an emphasis on Islamic Studies and Sufism. He is also the author of *The Qur'an and the Prophet in the Writings of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Alawi* (Islamic Texts Society, 2014).

Carl Sharif El-Tobgui is an Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Director of the Arabic Language Program at Brandeis University. He holds a B.S. in Arabic Language from Georgetown University and a Master's and Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from McGill University and currently serves as Associate Professor Arabic & Islamic Studies and Director of the Arabic Language Program at Brandeis. He previously taught for five years at Harvard University as Preceptor of Arabic, and has also taught at the Middlebury College Summer Arabic Language School. Prof. El-Tobgui's scholarly expertise lies in the field of Islamic thought, with a concentration on theology, law, and jurisprudence. He is particularly interested in questions concerning the relationship between reason and revelation in the Islamic tradition and has published on the manifestations of this tension in the fields of classical Islamic jurisprudence and

Qur'anic exegesis. His first monograph is an extensive study of Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) 10-volume magnum opus, "Refutation of Contradiction Between Reason and Revelation" (published Open Access by E.J. Brill, 2020). In addition to his expertise in Islamic thought, Prof. El-Tobgui has a deep love of language in general and of Classical Arabic in particular and has enjoyed for many years exploring the intricacies of Arabic grammar as well as classical literature and poetry with his students.

Works to Be Translated

These works were selected after extensive research and in close consultation with several Islamic scholars.

1. **Al-Raghib al-Isfahani. *Adh-Dhariy'a ila Makarim ash-Shari'a***

Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani (d. 1108 CE) was a Sunni Muslim scholar of Quranic exegesis and the Arabic language. He was born in Isfahan and died in 1108 CE. His work covered topics ranging from ethics to linguistics to Muslim philosophy. He authored at least two commentaries on the Quran, including his famous *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran*.

While Al-Isfahani is unfortunately relatively little-known today, in his time he was enormously influential and he left a considerable legacy. The extent of his influence is demonstrated by the fact that his contemporary, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, used as a primary source for his famous work on ethics *Mizan al-Amal* the very work we propose to translate: Al-Isfahani's *Adh-Dhari'ah ila Makarim ash-Shari'ah*, without attribution.[1] In turn, the 13th century Jewish scholar Abraham ibn Ḥasdai ben Samuel ha-Levi of Barcelona translated Al-Ghazali's *Mizan* into Hebrew for his influential work *Moznei Zedek*, replacing Qur'anic text with parallel passages from Biblical and Talmudic sources. Hence, *Adh-Dhari'ah* is an enormously influential work that deserves to be better known.

This work in the Arabic edition is about 58,000 words and 240 pages. We intend to include annotations and other scholarly commentary to aid the reader and increase the scholarly value of the volume. We expect that the English text of our edition will be about 300 pages. If the publisher agrees, this would be a bilingual edition with facing Arabic text, and hence the total number of pages would be about 550 pages. We expect to be able to deliver the final manuscript by October 2023.

2. **Al-Raghib al-Isfahani. *Risalah fi Adab Mukhalat an-Nas*** (On the Etiquette of Mixing with People)

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[1] See Jules Janssens. 2008. *Al-Ghazālī's Mīzān Al-ʿAmal: an Ethical Summa Based on Ibn Sīnā and Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī*. In *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

The other work that we propose to translate by Al-Isfahani, *Risalah fi Adab Mukhalat an-Nas*, is part of a collection of treatises by him re-discovered in the early 1990's in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul. An annotated Arabic edition of the collection was published in 2013 but it has never been translated into English. We have obtained a facsimile of the original manuscript from a researcher at the Süleymaniye Library which we will use to verify the accuracy of the published Arabic edition.

Risalah fi Adab Mukhalat an-Nas is a little-known but extremely important contribution to the subject of virtue as the core of political society. While friendship as the basis of political society is most often associated with Aristotle, it has received increasing attention in the contemporary period as secular liberalism has increasingly lost legitimacy.[2] The contribution of Islamic scholars from the classical period to the concept of friendship as the source of political society is not well known in either the Muslim or non-Muslim worlds, but academic attention to the subject is increasing. Several Arabic-language journal articles have recently been written on friendship in the social theory of Al-Ghazali and Miskawayh. The Shia perspective on friendship as a social theory has recently been the subject of English-language scholarship.[3] This translation of the work by Al-Isfahani, a Sunni, would be an important addition to this field.

The treatise in Arabic is 86 pages with extensive annotation, and is about 12,000 words not including the footnotes. We intend to include annotations and other scholarly commentary to aid the reader and increase the scholarly value of the volume. We estimate that our edition will be about 250 pages, including the side-by-side Arabic text.

We expect to be able to deliver the final manuscript by May 2023.

3. **Abul Hasan Ali al-Mawardi. *Tashil an-Nadhar wa-Ta'jil adh-Dhafar fi Akhlaq al-Malik*** (Facilitating Insight and Hastening Success in the Character of the King)[4]

Abu al-Hasan al-Mawardi (d. 1058 CE) was a Shafi'i jurist, judge, and diplomat. He is best known for writing *Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah*, considered "the most significant classical theoretical explanation of public law in relation to political theory."[5] "He lived and wrote during the period of political transition from Shi'i Buwayhids to Sunni Seljuks, which brought into question the type of leadership appropriate for Muslim communities."[6]

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[2] See, e.g., von Heyking, John. 2016. *The Form of Politics: Aristotle and Plato on Friendship*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
[3] See, e.g., Mahallati, Mohammad Jafar Amir. 2019. *Friendship in Islamic Ethics and World Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
[4] تسهيل النظر وتعجيل الظفر في أخلاق الملك
[5] Esposito, John L. 2003. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam.* Oxford Reference Online. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 197.
[6] Ibid.

Al-Mawardi was born in humble circumstances in Basra, Iraq. He rose to a position of influence at the Abbasid court through his writings on government.[7] The scholars of Sunni Islam have broadly accepted him as an authority on the relationship between sacred law and practical government administration, to the extent that many classical authors incorporated entire sections of his work into their own writings, often without attribution.[8] In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldoun describes al-Mawardi as "from the most knowledgeable of jurists," and states that he does not need to delve into the details of the sacred law since al-Mawardi has already fully explained them.[9]

Notwithstanding the well-deserved reputation of *Ahkam*, Mawardi's *Tashil an-Nadhar wa-Ta'jil adh-Dhafar fī Akhlaq al-Malik*, the work that we will translate, "is considered the most important book by Mawardi concerning the theory of the state."[10] He wrote the work following his mediation between warring rulers in Iraq,[11] thus drawing on his real-world experience in political practice and the role of ethics therein. In his introduction, al-Mawardi wrote: "I have summarized in this book the precepts of government that have been masterfully laid down by the ancients." But he adds that, unlike those previous works, this book "harmonizes the requirements of sacred law and the conventions of government, such that it is in accord with both religion and the world."

To achieve this aim, al-Mawardi divides *Tashil* into two parts: the second part concerns guidelines for administration, but the first focuses on the refinement of the ruler's character. For, he writes, "It is an obligation upon the one in authority that he concern himself with taking heed of his character and rectifying his disposition, for it is the instrument of his authority, and the foundation of his power."[12] The author proceeds to describe the nature of character, whether virtue is innate or acquired, and how one may cultivate virtue in one's heart and suppress vice.

Al-Mawardi's theory of governance, that a ruler's authority and legitimacy flows from his good character, is a refreshing contrast to the amoral, Machiavellian view of effective governance embraced by our modern age. We have much to learn from his book's application to political life, and more broadly, for how virtue is to be lived in the public square. This work has never been translated into English.

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[7] Library of Congress: *Rules for Governing*. https://www.wdl.org/en/item/17545/. Accessed July 2021.

[8] Mikhail, Hanna. 1995. *Politics and revelation: Mawardi and after*. Edinburgh: University Press, pp. 59-60.

[9] Ibn Khaldoun. 2016. *Al-Muqaddimah*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, p. 229.

[10] Mikhail, p. 65.

[11] Ibid, p. 67 and n. 319.

[12] Al-Mawardi, Abul Hasan Ali ibn فَحق على ذِي الأمرة وَالسُّلْطَان أَن يهتم بمراعاة أخلاقه وَإصْلاح شيمه لِأَنَّهَا آلة سُلْطَانه وأس إمرته Muhammad. 1981. *Tashil an-Nadhar wa-Ta'jil adh-Dhafar fī Akhlaq al-Malik*. Beirut: Dar an-Nahdah al-'Arabiyah, p. 8.

This work is 136 pages long in Arabic and about 29,000 words. We estimate that our edition will be about 320 pages, including the side-by-side Arabic text. We expect to be able to deliver the final manuscript by August 2023.

4. **Fakhruddin Ar-Razi.** *Kitab al-Nafs war-Ruh wa Sharh Quwahuma* (The Book of the Soul and the Spirit and an Explanation of their Faculties)

Fakhruddin Ar-Razi (d. 1210 CE), often known by the sobriquet Sultan of the Theologians, was an influential Muslim polymath and one of the pioneers of inductive logic. He wrote over one hundred works in a variety of fields, such as medicine, chemistry, physics, astronomy, cosmology, literature, theology, ontology, philosophy, history and jurisprudence. One of Ar-Razi's outstanding achievements was his unique, 32-volume exegesis on the Quran, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*.

Kitab an-Nafs war-Ruh is Ar-Razi's "main book on practical ethics."[13] The work "discusses two types of moral 'therapy': (a) 'contemplative' therapy, which involves descriptions of human vices and reasons for why they ought to be replaced with virtues, as well as prescriptions of a contemplative, intellectual nature; and (b) practical therapy, consisting of practical prescriptions." It is "a book on the science of character, written in a demonstrative, apodictic method, rather than a rhetorical, persuasive style."[14]

Our edition of *Kitab an-Nafs war-Ruh* will be a valuable contribution to the field of Islamic virtue ethics because of Ar-Razi's systematic, theoretically rigorous treatment of the subject.[15] The work demonstrates a synthesis of Islamic theology, philosophy and ethics while emphasizing the practical cultivation of noble qualities of the soul. It is a powerful, invigorating work for both religious students and academics, and a fine example of the quality of medieval Islamic scholarship.

This work is about 200 pages in Arabic with about 43,000 words. We estimate that our edition will be about 450 pages, including the side-by-side Arabic text. We expect to be able to deliver the final manuscript by October 2023.

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[13] Shihadeh, Ayman. 2006. *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.
[14] Ibid.
[15] This work was translated into English over 50 years ago, but it is out of print, difficult to obtain, and the translation is of relatively poor quality while also employing obsolete, archaic language. It is therefore of little use for either religious or purely academic purposes. See Fakhr al-Din Muhammad ibn Umar al-Razi. 1969. *Imam Razi's 'Ilm al-akhlaq: English Translation of His Kitab al-Nafs war-Ruh wa Sharh Quwahuma.*Trans. Muhammad Saghir Hasan Ma'sumi. Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute.

Marketing

We will roll out the book series with four book launch events at key locations, including a major mosque, two academic institutions, and the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The events will be designed to maximize the impact of this project in different aspects of the culture: religious, academic, and political. The events will feature the translators of the works, the series editor, and the supervising scholar, as well as Christian and Jewish religious leaders and scholars of ethics who will discuss the significance of the publications of these volumes. We will also conduct a social media campaign to promote the works.

Budget

Item		Cost
Translation		
Risalah by Al-Isfahani	$1,000 + (12,000 x .18)	$3,160
Dhariya by Al-Isfahani	$3,500 + (58,000 x .18)	$13,940
Tashil by Al-Mawardi	$2,000 + (29,000 x .18)	$7,220
An-Nafs by Ar-Razi	$3,500 + (43,000 x .18)	$11,240
Editor		$20,000
Supervising scholar		$10,000
Marketing		
Social media campaign		$5,000
Launch events	$5,000 x 4	$20,000
Administrative costs	$90,560 x .15	$13,584
Total		**$104,144**