

**Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics
2012 Annual Meeting Program**

**January 5-8, 2012
Grand Hyatt Hotel
Washington, D.C.**

Friday, Jan. 6 11:00 am-12:30 pm Concurrent Session I

The Use and Abuse of Creation: Animals and Sustainability in Islamic Ethics

Convenor: Elizabeth Barre, Marymount Manhattan College

Kecia Ali, Boston University

“Muslims and Meat-Eating: Vegetarianism, Ethics, and Identity”

A common Muslim argument against vegetarianism is that it usurps the legislative power of God by “forbidding what God made lawful.” Disarming that response requires a compelling articulation in Islamic ethico-legal terms of the permissibility and indeed desirability of abstaining from meat. Drawing from previous attempts to present such a case and Muslim scriptural and legal texts, I argue that Muslims in the United States should abstain from meat: meat-related suffering, both animal and human, and environmental damage make meat-eating *makruh* or reprehensible. Though an “Islamic” argument for vegetarianism, if convincing, may be strategically useful in reducing meat consumption, it fails, I believe, as a long-term model for Muslim ethical thought.

Irene Oh, George Washington University

“An Islamic Ethic of Eating for the 21st Century: Balancing Food Choice, Piety, and Sustainability”

Food plays an important role in Muslim traditions; however, unsustainable agricultural practices require that we deliberate upon what constitutes “ethical eating” in a religion that also instructs believers to care for the environment. Given the current environmental crisis and the dominant means of food production in North America, Islamic sources collectively suggest eating foods that minimize damage to the environment. This recommendation, while derived on religious grounds, is similar to those espoused by ethically minded secular food advocates. As such the ethics of eating serves as a fruitful subject matter for dialogue between secular and religious ethicists.

Robert Tappan, Towson University

“Islamic Bioethics and Animal Research: The Case of Iran”

Many Muslim nations are conducting advanced biomedical research, which certainly requires the use of animals. Iran is one of the leaders in such scientific investigation—not only in research involving the use of animals in initial stages—but also in fields that apply only to

animals (for now), such as cloning. One Iranian institute has already successfully cloned sheep and goats. This paper analyzes the rulings of several high-ranking Iranian scholars to ascertain what ethical guidelines have been established so far and how they have impacted the work of Iranian researchers through the formulation of professional codes or state laws governing the use of animals in research.

Friday, Jan. 6

2:00-3:30 pm

Concurrent Session II

Convenor: John Kelsay, Florida State University

Panelists: Lisa Cahill, Boston College (SCE)

Reuven Firestone, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (SJE)

Sohail Hashmi, Mount Holyoke College (SSME)

"Recent Trends in Thinking about War: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives"

Friday, Jan. 6

4:00-5:30 pm

Concurrent Session III

Convenor: Mohammad Khalil, Michigan State University

Rosemary Kellison, Florida State University

"Tradition, Authority, and Immanent Critique in Comparative Studies of Muslim Ethics of War"

Though James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay have often collaborated on the Islamic ethics of war, there are important differences between their approaches. Both approach the study of Muslim ethics of war using the method of immanent critique: They compare arguments given to justify resort to and conduct in war with the norms of the speaker's cultural and/or religious tradition. In this way, they judge the tactics employed by contemporary militants who attempt to give Muslim justifications for the use of indiscriminate warfare as wrong, in the sense of being unjustified by the precedents offered by the Muslim tradition. Yet, Johnson and Kelsay use different notions of tradition and authority in their work.

Faraz Sheikh, Indiana University

"Authentic Selves and Spiritual States: Muslim Moral Subjectivity and Democratic Pluralism"

Modern Muslim scholars have often struggled to articulate conceptions of religious plurality robust enough to accommodate both a minimal agreement with tradition on the one hand and individual rational criticism on the other. The classical Sufi ideal of *hal* or "state" is germane for in-depth analysis and possibly contemporary retrieval. An entire vocabulary of "differentiated moral obligations" was developed by early Sufis such as Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 857) in response to the legal and political establishment of the early Abbasid period. A study of this discourse can help resolve the seemingly intractable debates about implementing shari`a in the modern world.

Mairaj Syed, Bard College

"The Development of the Disparate Power Relationships Position in the Jurisprudence on Coercion in Medieval Islamic Law"

Islamic jurisprudential theory has historically asserted that the legitimacy of an Islamic legal rule is measured by its fidelity to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet. Current historical scholarship has generally accepted this as a fact. However, this model cannot explain the emergence of a development in the jurisprudence on coerced acts in the eleventh and twelfth century. A few jurists asserted that the law should simply assume that a ruler, a slave-owning master, and a husband's mere command was implicitly backed by a coercive threat, thereby mitigating or cancelling the legal/moral responsibility of the actor.

Friday, Jan. 6

7:00-9:00 pm

SSME Dinner, venue: TBA (prior registration required)

"The Contributions of Abdulaziz Sachedina to the Study of Muslim Ethics"

Convenor: John Kelsay, Florida State University

David Little, Harvard Divinity School

"Religion and Human Rights"

Ahmed al-Rahim, University of Virginia

"Traditionalism and Modernism in Shi'i Islam"

Remarks by Abdulaziz Sachedina

Saturday, Jan. 7

2:00-3:30 pm

Concurrent Session IV

Convenor: Jamie Schillinger, St. Olaf College

Zahra Ayubi, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"Gender Ethics in Nasiruddin Tusi's *Akhlaq-e Nasiri*"

Some Muslim scholars have argued that engagement with the classical works of Islamic ethics (*akhlaq*) demonstrates that notions of justice and human rights are native to the Muslim scholarly tradition. In this paper, I use gender and feminist theory to investigate gender and gender relations in the genre of *akhlaq*. I analyze how gender is constructed in Nasiruddin Tusi's still widely read treatise, *Akhlaq-e Nasiri*. I ask if the archetypal ethical Muslim is imagined as a male and head of household, how do women fit into his prescribed moral compass.

Ali-Reza Bhojani, Durham University

"The Nature of Morality, Rationality and Independent Judgments of Reason in Shi'i *Usul al-fiqh*"

A distinctive feature of Shi'i *Usul al-fiqh* (legal theory) is its apparent space for independent judgments of rationality as a source of shari'a. However, independent judgments of rationality play little or no significant role in the actual inference of Shari'a precepts in mainstream contemporary Shi'i thought. This paper will offer a critical analysis of the radically contrasting conceptions of morality, and the implications for rationality as a source of shari'a, held by

Muhammad Rida Muzaffar and Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr. These views will be reconciled with those of Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzawari.

Saturday, Jan. 7 **4:00-5:30 pm** **Concurrent Session V**

Convenor: Elizabeth Bucar, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Kiarash Aramesh, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, and Arash Aramesh, Stanford Law School

“The Religious and Ethical Aspects of Vegetative State in Iran: The Lived Experience of a Muslim Country”

Brain death and persistent vegetative state (PVS) are highly controversial issues in Islamic ethics. Moral debates are rooted in the uncertainty about the exact definition of death. Emerging organ donation and transplant technology and the need of Muslim societies for such lifesaving medical innovations have pushed Muslim scholars to examine in depth the concept of brain death. We analyze in this paper the theoretical aspects of the issue in Shi`ite and Sunni schools of jurisprudence, and review the lived experience of Iranian clinicians, patients, and families who are involved in PVS cases.

Amana Raquib, University of Queensland

“The Higher Objectives of Islam and the Islamic Philosophy of Techno-Social Progress”

An Islamic framework for technology is an offshoot of three discourses: (1) the Islam and science discourse; (2) the philosophy of technology discourse; and (3) the Islamic discourse on the vision of a good, meaningful, and purposive life as discussed in the discourse on higher objectives of Islam (*maqasid al-shari`a*). What joins these three discourses is the question of meaning and purpose, or bringing about of the good and the appropriate means and method for doing so.

Sunday, Jan. 8 **11:00 am-12:30 pm** **Concurrent Session VII**

SSME Business Meeting