

CHAPTER IV

THE COMPARISON OF RELIGIOUS ETHIC CONCEPT BETWEEN IBN MISKAWAIH AND IMMANUEL KANT

A. Religious ethic concept according to Ibn Miskawaih and Immanuel Kant

In the history of the journey of ethic study in Islamic world, Ibn Miskawaih was famous as the father of Islamic ethic. There were many literatures mentioned that he was the first Islamic scientist who discussed about ethic in Islamic study, in spite of many underestimates toward his thought. Some of them considered that his thought was not original because there were too many adoptions of Greek philosophers. Some other said that he was creating the thoughts due to material purpose among the leaders of Buwaihy dynasty. However, letting off of those prejudices, Ibn Miskawaih still becomes the most popular father of Islamic ethic and his thoughts are still being studied until nowadays.

Meanwhile, in western community, Immanuel Kant was a figure of philosopher around 18th century in which his thought still influenced until today. He got on changing the paradigm of thinking about ethic. Before Kant's era, ethic was focused only on the object (thing), but after his coming, ethic was focused on the subject (the doer; human) or known as *Copernican rotation*. Here is human getting his honor as the noblest creature in this universe, because human has mind (reason) as the control tool for living in this world.

If it is looked at once, both of the two figures surely have no relationship at all, because they lived in the different era, even in different faith (religion). However, they actually have similar dimension in thinking about ethical foundation that is based on religious values. Ibn Miskawaih, although adopted many of Greek philosophers, but he stayed on putting Islamic shari'a, namely al-Qur'an and hadits, as basic thinking, even he used the model of *tasawuf* thinking in arranging ethic theory. His ethic theory is famous with practical theory because of being practical ethic demand.

Since child, Immanuel Kant grew around religious family that later being tendency along of his life. Although his ethic formulation is actually rational, but

he still puts metaphysical foundation in arranging his ethic theory. The three postulates (free will, immortality of soul and God's existence) are the three main point of metaphysic that should be accepted by human's mind. Some assume that Kant's ethic theory as a rigorism ethic because of its hard and stiff characteristic, whereas here is the special thing of his ethic in which ethic comes from autonomy right of the doer as the creature whose mind and fully responsibility toward everything he do. Ethic is human's responsibility toward God, only God that may give reward toward all of human's deeds.

Character (*akhlaq*) according to Ibn Miskawaih is a condition of soul causing the soul action without firstly thinking and considering comprehensively. There are two kinds of character; *the first* is natural character which departs from nature and *the second* is a character created through habit and exercises, initially by considering and thinking before practice¹.

There are many opinions about character of human self. Some explain that character belongs to non-rational soul, but some say it belongs to rational soul. Another opinion said that whoever has natural character, he will never lose the character. On the other hand, some opinions say that human cannot be separated from natural character. Meanwhile, the other says that character is not something natural and can be changeable rapidly or slowly by the discipline and good advices. This definition is stated by Ibn Miskawaih.

From those opinions Ibn Miskawaih makes a syllogism that each character may be changeable. Everything changeable is not natural, so there is no natural character. Both premises are true, and the conclusion is also true because no one can change natural thing².

In addition, every people have different level in receiving character, whether good or bad, stingy, tender, stubborn, envy, and perceptive or imperceptive. If those characters are ignored, not to be disciplined and revised, so the condition

¹ *Ibid, Tahdzibul Akhlak*, p. 25.

² *Ibid, Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak*, p.58

will never change. He is satisfied what he considered suitable according to his natural desire, whether angry, happy, wicked, greedy, or other lower characters³.

Religion has position to form human character especially straightening the character of young generation, leading them to do good habit, preparing them for being wise, striving for goodness, reaching happiness by thinking and accurate reasoning. However, parents also have obligation to educate their children to obey those religious teachings by giving advises or if it is necessary they may hit them if the children may not obey them, or by giving enjoyable promises, even threaten them with punishment until they make those as habit and finally to reach the hoped purpose, namely being of good character⁴. The suitable way on arranging moral arrangement is by finding the faculties⁵ inside human selves appeared formerly, starting to renew it, being continued to the next faculties, and furthermore in line with natural arrangement.

If Ibn Miskawaih used the term of character (*akhlak*), Immanuel Kant tended to use moral on his theory. He explained the distinction between human's action in which someone who do something based on their awareness and someone who do it based on specific intention is named morality and legality. For example the student does not come late to school because of afraid of punishment. It means that the student comes earlier to school is caused by specific reason, namely to avoid punishment, while, if the student comes earlier to school because of obligation is actually based on his moral awareness. It includes in good moral because it is truly good not because of specific reason beyond the action.

Kant's thought about religious ethic cannot be fully understood without comprehensively understanding to his postulate background about immortality and the God's existence. As it has been studied previously about Kant's conception that the highest goodness is the relationship between Excellency and happiness which can be formulated rationally finally brings him onto antinomy of practical-ratio. The first antinomy of practical-ratio threatens among the possibility of being the highest goodness.

³ *Ibid*, p. 59

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60

⁵ Faculty in arabic is called *al-Quwwah* that means power or can be human's potential.

Human's knowledge about the essence of human's moral, such as being found in the sense world brings the conclusion that the moral perfectness of pure willing cannot be gained, because gaining pure willing is a certain condition for gaining the highest goodness for every single rational creature. This conclusion also means that the highest goodness as the whole of world sense is something impossible. Moreover, human may hope the second postulate, namely soul immortality contains of confirmation that in the existence of certain super-sense (future life), any kind of criminality can be removed and pure willing may be gained.

Through the idea of the highest goodness as the object and final destination of practical-pure ratio, the moral law leads to the religion toward acknowledging all of God's obligation order. This God's order is not explained as the witnesses, yet as the essential law of every free will that comes from his own self.

Moreover, if someone wants to understand clearly about Kant's moral theory, it can be done through his imperative categories theory, because it is the main point of his moral thought. There are actually three points on it, *first* is universal law in which someone should evaluate his action is his maxim that can be applied universally and become universal action or not. For example someone intends to wear transparent cloth when going to school. Before doing it, he must ask to his own self. Is it suitable to be practiced by other people in academic location? What will happen if all students use transparent cloth in academic area? Absolutely, it is unsuitable, so the maxim cannot be a universal law because it can break moral arrangement in academic area. If the example is applied on *the second* point of imperative categories, namely human's purposes, the maxim can decrease human's prestige especially for woman. It may motivate irresponsible man on doing unexpected action. *The last* point is autonomy. This principle commands people doing action based on the law made by his own self. However, it must be underlined that the law he made is not created by his own interest without thinking about the effect for other people. It actually relates to universal law, but more explicit that an imperative category is not obeying the law mere outward but to obey universal law made by human himself.

The opinions of both figures about ethic are almost the same. According to Ibn Miskawaih, the highest purpose of goodness is if human's godliness deed. It means that everything did by human without any desire for getting advantage, retain, or other addition from other sides, but the deed is the purpose of the deed itself. Someone is doing the deed because of the essence of the deed and the essence is godliness reason itself⁶. It is similar with Immanuel Kant's opinion that he does not receive various motivations on human's deed, even mercy, pity, and many others. For example someone gives money to a beggar because of feeling mercy. The deed cannot be included in moral deed because he does it by reason beyond the deed. Kant clarifies that the seriousness of moral action can only appear if someone doing good deed under moral obligation itself, even it does not put enjoyment or satisfaction for the doer. Motivation like pity or mercy is good but it does not have moral value (but does not include in amoral)⁷.

So that, the position of ethic according to both figures are very close to religiosity. Ethic is something related to human's existence. It makes the distinction between human and other creatures. Human without ethic is like animal. In Islam, ethic is main purpose of prophetic messenger as it is mentioned in a hadits on the previous chapter. It proves that ethic is manifestation of God's existence in human being. Many religious teachings command to do good deed and to avoid bad deed (*Amr Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*) either relationship among humans (*Habl Min an-Nas*) or human relationship with God (*Habl Min Allah*). Ethic (*Akhlak*) teaching is very important for teaching children since youth, because it will be their guidance for future life. That is why Ibn Miskawaih prioritizing his ethic teaching for children and young generation.

In Islamic teaching, Kant's ethic is almost similar to the theory of *ikhlas* which commands people on doing something without any consideration and reason except for Allah (*Lillahi Ta'ala*) and this teaching is not only belongs to Islam but all religions basically have the same ethic views.

⁶ *Ibid, Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak*, p. 98

⁷ *Ibid, hukum moral*, p.47

Ethic is something related to human's spiritual besides seemed as physical action. It also relates to human's soul as part of spiritual side. Ibn Miskawaih sets out the soul on his ethic theory. According to him, to reach ethic level, every people have to know firstly about the soul including its faculty or capacity, attitude, purpose and completeness⁸. For him, soul is simple and cannot be sensed. Soul is not physic or part of physic, even not kind of physical condition. Soul is something more different than physic. It comes from the higher substance, nobler, and more prominent than physical thing in this world.

Human with the three faculties of soul (rational, temper, and animal) is like a man who riding a horse and handling a dog to hunt. If he can handle both of them they may live in a harmony. Ibn Miskawaih arranges the three faculties of soul in different chapter and arrangement. He combines Plato and Aristotle's arrangement⁹.

Meanwhile, according to Immanuel Kant, soul is immortal. It related to the highest goodness achievement. The suitability between willing and moral law is the highest condition of the highest goodness. It is a holy thing that leads to the perfectness when there is no rational person in this world can reach it. It is only possible for presupposition of never ending long period existence in the same rational creature¹⁰. Therefore, in Kant's view human's soul is immortal and only by the soul human can complete the highest goodness which absolutely does not exist in this transitory world.

In this case, it is also found that the opinions of both figures are almost the same. According to them, body and soul are different part because soul is nobler than body. It is more pure and immortal than body which can be destroyed by the time.

According to them, human also gets higher appreciation. Ibn Miskawaih, as Muslim believes that human's substance is coming from Allah. To make the substance good or bad is based on human willing. Human is the most perfect

⁸ Muhammad Usman Najati, *ad-Dirasat an-Nafsaniyah Inda al Ulama al Muslimin*, translated by Gazi Saloom Pustaka Hidayah, Bandung, 2002, p. 87

⁹ *Ibid*, p.88

¹⁰ *Ibid*, *Kritik Atas Akal Budi Praktis*, p. 203-204

creature among others, so they must try to search and to get it. By doing effort to reach the perfectness and its peak, the noblest human is someone who can manifest his potential and hold it for long time.

As mentioned in the previous chapter that human has cognitive (theoretic) and critics potential. Both of them related each to others. By the first potential human gets knowledge and can reach godliness knowledge. It is the highest position. While, by the second potential human can form perfect character by balancing their social life. So, the good person is someone who can put in balance either spiritual or social life, not tend to one only.

Human can reach the perfectness if they can actualize their potential. They may be able to know various kinds of being universally (*kulli*) not only in particular (*juz'i*). Afterward, it is completed by ordered action so that they are proper to be called microcosm or agent of all creatures. In Islamic teaching, they are on the *ma'rifat* level¹¹, which may connect to God. Despite this level is really hard to be reached, human must have effort for reaching it.

Meanwhile, according to Immanuel Kant, human have intellectual as the highest capability of human or the highest knowledge power. It is different from the reason (mind). Intellectual does not arrange human's knowledge but it encloses knowledge that is gotten on the previous level, to run this command intellectual is leaded by soul's view, world's view, and God's view. It gives orientation to make possibility of intellectuality to arrange and to systematize phenomenon. Those three views oriented human's knowledge which firstly in partial to be united and universal. It is the highest process of human's knowledge¹².

Kant also has autonomy principle on his ethic formation. The principle gives high appreciation to human, because human is positioned as the purpose of their deeds, not as being the tool. This principle clarifies that willing and the doer

¹¹ As mentioned above that the type of Ibn Miskawaih's ethic is *tasawuf*, in which on tasawuf teaching there are three levels of human, namely *haqiqoh*, *thoriqoh* and the highest one is *ma'rifat* in which human feels the God's existence in his own self.

¹² *Ibid*, *Petualangan Intelektual*, p. 285

himself. He is someone who makes the law and never be contained by other sides like specific purpose, feeling, even authority beyond the self¹³.

Immanuel Kant has various concepts about the correlation between God and moral. *The first*, God is conscience. Moral awareness is begun by an absolute obligation. The obligation can only give burden for human by absolute individual. That individual is certainly not a human, because human is just a common being. So moral awareness in conscience assumes an individual in which the command must be obeyed by human universally. This individual must be Allah.

The second is God as being purpose of morality. For Kant, moral awareness obligates us trying to get the highest goodness “*summum bonum*”, but that condition is never be realized perfectly in this world because of its definite and many wickedness. Moreover, is it meant that moral action of human in this world will be useless? the answer is surely not, because Allah is the individual that guarantees to everyone who doing goodness based on moral obligation will get perfect happiness. On the other word, happiness is prepared by Allah for them. If the existence of Allah is rejected, moral will be meaningless¹⁴.

In addition, Ibn Miskawaih has different opinion from Immanuel Kant about the existence of God. If Kant rejects the God as the prime cause of everything in this world, Ibn Miskawaih argues that God (Allah) is the first mover. Everything in this world comes from God’s emanation. This opinion is contradictive with Immanuel Kant’s opinion who says that God is not the prime cause because on that case, God is positioned as the object experience that categorized causality in the reason level. God is not an object in the reason level with causality categories, but in the intellectual level, so the theory which said that God as the prime cause cannot be received. Soul, world, and Allah are intellectual views which help us to get universal orientation from sense experience which is definite and partial. Those views are not object of knowledge that can be detected, moreover to be

¹³ *Ibid*, p.293

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 295-296

proven, but they are the assumption or epistemologist axiom which are out of empirical experience range¹⁵.

B. Similarities and Differences

1) Religious Ethic Concept

The concept of religious ethic according to Ibn Miskawaih and Immanuel Kant are almost the same. They agree that ethical deed is something done without any purpose and motivation beyond the essence of the deed. So, it is only done because of the essence, namely the God, and as human we have to do something good.

The type of Ibn Miskawaih's ethic is *tasawuf*, so there are some levels that must be done by human on reaching perfect position or called by the highest goodness. According to Ibn Miskawaih, the highest goodness is if human knows everything universally, either *juz'i* or *kulli*. If it has been reached, human should be called *microcosms*. In this case, human will be in line with the Lord, nothing veil is able to separate him with the God. This is the highest level and the last happiness. This level can be achieved by human when he still alive in this world.

Meanwhile, the highest goodness according to Kant that morality leads to the religion through understanding of the highest goodness. The explanation is that God as the most perfect and morally essence, so His willing and command are perfect morally, by reminding that the goal of moral is the highest goodness. However, the highest goodness is in God and only can be achieved by receiving God's being as a postulate. Therefore, if human wants to achieve this goal they have to be in accordance with God's willing and command.

In his work, *Die Religion innerhalb den Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, 1793, *summum bonum* (the highest goodness) is achieved not within the goodness and individual happiness, but within companion of *persona*¹⁶. Each of this brings

¹⁵*Ibid*, p. 285-287

¹⁶Ibn Miskawaih also views that the wise man is not people who ignores worldly matter for only here after, but they put in balance between both, because the highest goodness should be achieved is the point object, such as doing good deed for others and treaten them in a good treatment.

absolute value and dignity as the result itself, so that, for getting this highest goodness Kant needs a community that later he calls it as “moral community”. This community is different from political community. The law of this community also different from the law made by worldly governance, but it uses moral law which declaring themselves as virtuous person.

Human may not be able to make universal and applicable law to all people, especially if it is associated with people morality. So, there must be a different one who can figure out most of the heart in order to see the deepest part of the inner attitude of each person. He is the only one God as the moral leader of the world¹⁷.

Although to reach the highest happiness is surely difficult, even it cannot be realized perfectly in this transitory world, but every human must have effort for reaching it. This is the difference between Immanuel Kant and Ibn Miskawaih. According to Miskawaih, human can reach the highest goodness, namely level of *Ma'rifat* in this world through the lowest to the highest level. For him, the good person is someone who can put in balance either spiritual or social life.

2) Immortality of the Soul

Both figures have the same opinion that soul is immortal. It is pure, nobler and not part of body because body is temporary and can be destroyed by the time. By the soul human can feel perfect happiness. For Miskawaih, soul may know the essence of everything, the soul of knowledge does not come from sense but from other source. While, for Kant, because *summum bonum* cannot be realized perfectly in this transitory world, so it will be realized on here after and will be felt only by soul.

3) Human as the Noblest Creature

Both of them give the highest award to human as a creature whose mind and become the noblest creature in this world. According to Ibn Miskawaih, human is the most perfect creature, but if he is not able to maximize their substance, so he is not different from animals. Human's substance (reason) tends to God's willing

¹⁷A resume of Kant's thought about religion in his work “*Agama di Dalam Batas-Batas Budi Melulu*”, *Ibid. Hukum Moral*, p. 57-58

and the efforts are given to human which tend to their intention. The most perfect person is whoever puts in balance either physical or spiritual side.

According to Immanuel Kant, human must become the purpose of his own selves, and not only become the tool or media. But in fact, human as a rational creature and having intention, he has idea on creating law and consciously want and will to determine their action based on principles believed, therefore human is regarded as “person”, person is not only subjective purpose in which his existence as the consequence of actions and have value for us. However, person is the objective purpose that means the reality existed on his own self and absolute. For Kant, morality must be based and oriented on human because human as the center of morality.

4) The existence of God

According to Ibn Miskawaih, the existence of God is clear, concise and compendious. This is the argument about the first mover that is very popular at that time. In this case, he entirely follows Aristotle who states that the basic God’s attributes are; the one, immortal and non-material.

Meanwhile, Immanuel Kant rejects scholastic teaching which states that God as the prime cause, but Ibn Miskawaih argues that God is the first mover. Everything in this world comes from God’s emanation. This opinion is contradictive with the Immanuel Kant’s opinion who says that God is not the prime cause because at that case, God is positioned as the object experience that categorized causality in reason level, while, God is not an object in the reason level with causality categories, but in the intellectual level. So that, the theory says God as the prime cause cannot be received. Soul, world and God are intellectual views which help people on getting universal orientation from sense experience which is definite and partial. Those views are not object of knowledge that can be detected, moreover can be proven. However they are assumption or epistemologist axiom beyond empirical experience range.

5) Reward and punishment

According to Ibn Miskawaih, there should be reward and punishment for children whose valued character and so does for the wicked children, because it can be a motivation for them to improve their selves. Meanwhile, according to Immanuel Kant, there must be a fair Essence who rewarding all human actions in this world. The essence is the absolute one, not partial creature but it really fair whose endless authority, namely the God.