

## Meanings of Foundational Virtue in Islamic Mystical Ethics: A Case Study of Honesty

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### **Abstract**

In mystical ethics, some virtues have a foundational role in relation to other virtues; that is, other virtues are in some ways dependent on, conditional to, or rooted in them. This is a gradational concept, and therefore one can speak of foundational and more foundational among foundational virtues in mysticism. Honesty is the most foundational virtue in mystical ethics, and other virtues are in some way dependent on it. Studying mystical ethics sources, we find six types or six meanings of foundational, all of which apply to honesty: origin, prerequisite, overlapping, companion, companion of perfection, and standard. This article explains and describes these six meanings and their application to honesty in mystical sources.

**Keywords:** mystical ethics, foundational virtue, honesty.

### **1. The Concept of Foundational and Its Meanings**

In mystical ethics sources, some virtues are considered *foundational*. A foundational virtue in these sources can be defined as follows:

A foundational virtue is a virtue or positive ethical attribute/action on which other positive virtuous attributes/actions are somehow dependent or conditional or from which they originate.

This concept is gradational in two aspects: (1) the number of virtues dependent on one foundation and (2) the degree of the dependence of virtues on a foundation. Thus, in mystical ethics, foundational and more foundational find meaning. According to this definition and by studying mystical texts, we find that honesty is the most foundational moral virtue—that is, foundational even in relation to the other foundational virtues. In mystical sources, all moral virtues and levels of man’s spiritual elevation are somehow dependent on honesty, and it is with honesty and truthfulness that other virtues and stations are acquired. Even reaching the peak of spiritual stations and attaining the most complete inner knowledge, which can be called “the essence of honesty,” is possible through honesty: “Honesty is the axis of all stations, and attaining the highest level of spiritual stations is not possible except through honesty” (Razi 1425 AH, 143). We know that the highest level of spiritual stations according to mystics is the level in which all moral virtues are gathered in the existence of a person. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also regards honesty as the origin of all mystical stations (Ibn Qayyim 1425 AH, 495). Similarly, in mystical texts, the following hadith is quoted: “Honesty leads to *birr* (goodness)” (see, e.g., Ansari n.d., 3:254). The word “*birr*” in Arabic refers to any type of goodness or virtue, and thus the hadith shows the superiority of honesty over all other goodness and positive moral attributes. Muhasibi explains the hadith as follows: “Honesty is the root of *all* goodness” (Muhasibi 1986, 255).

The words and views of mystics regarding the definition of foundational virtue are various, but one can glean six main meanings from their works: origin, prerequisite, overlapping, companion, companion of perfection, and standard. For each of these meanings, we will first explain and analyze the definition, and then we will follow that up with its application to honesty in mystical works.

We shall abbreviate a foundational moral attribute/action as “B” (basis) and moral agent as “A,” and we will call a moral attribute/action that somehow originates from a foundational moral attribute/action an affected moral attribute/action. Similarly, we will show a moral attribute’s/action’s being foundational for one or more affected moral attributes/actions with “B (f).” We will also use the following abbreviations for the six meanings of foundational: 1. GB (origin), 2. QB (prerequisite), 3. OB (overlapping), 4. CB (companion), 5. PB (companion of perfection), 6. SB (standard).

Similarly, “Ax” will indicate the attribution of a moral agent to a moral attribute/action like X.

## **2. A Look at the Concept of Honesty in Islamic Mysticism**

It must be noted that honesty has a more profound meaning in mysticism than in ordinary usages. In one definition, honesty is defined as “the conformation of the meaning to the claim“ ([Imam al-Sadiq?] 1400 AH, 35). The meaning is something that is in the domain of one’s intention and resolution, and the claim is something that appears outwardly. Along the same lines, honesty is also defined as “the accordance of the exterior with the interior” (see, e.g., Kharkushi 1427 AH, 170) and “the conformation of the hidden to the apparent” (Kashani n.d., 344). Thus, honesty is not merely the outward action of speaking truthfully; the essence of honesty is abstaining from deception, which is the discord between one’s different existential domains—the domain of theory and action, the domain of intention and action, the domain of speech and cognizance, the domain of desire and effort, and so forth. A tradition from the holy Prophet (s), reported in mystical sources, states: “Put aside that which is a cause of deceit in you, because honesty is confidence [i.e., inner confidence which is a

requisite for the harmony of the soul] and dishonesty is deceit [i.e., duality in the existential domains]” (Bayhaqi 1438 AH, 5:53).

Mystics have further explored the nature of honesty by asking the following question: can a more foundational virtue be found that explains the virtuousness of honesty? The response they have given is the balance of the inner and the outer; the inner refers to man’s existence in all its domains, and the outer refers to the universe in the absolute sense of the word. That which is in man’s inner domain is rooted in existence; man’s existence is essentially a level or domain of existence, and thus, in a more holistic view, the harmony of man’s faculties and domains must be explained by the harmony of the domains of existence. That which is ultimately essential and the origin of all values is existence itself; it is existence that manifests itself as harmonious in its various levels and domains, and not as contradictory and disharmonious. Man’s existence, which is a part of existence, becomes valuable and virtuous when it becomes in harmony with existence. Therefore, man’s existential domains must also conform to, and be aligned with, the whole of existence in order to be valuable and virtuous (see, e.g., Bakri 1421 AH, 179, 181; Ansari 1417 AH, 74; Razi 1422 AH, 154; Tilmisani 1371 Sh, 1:245; Qasani 1385 Sh, 379-80).

### **3. The Meanings of Foundational in the Case of Honesty**

#### **3.1. Origin**

Foundational is used in the sense of origin when one or multiple moral actions/characteristics (A) are derived from one or multiple other moral actions/characteristics (M) such that M is an external and sufficient cause for A. Therefore, one can consider the attribution of the moral agent (S) to it to result in his/her attribution to another action/characteristic or other actions/characteristics. Thus, this meaning of foundational can be defined as follows:

I. M is foundational for F in the sense of origin (GB) if and only if the attribution of A to M ( $A_m$ ) sufficiently results in the attribution of A to F ( $A_f$ ).

The word “attribution” refers to the moral agent (A) having a moral action/characteristic. “Sufficiently” refers to the fact that in order to attain F, the moral agent does not need to have any ethical action/characteristic except M. “Results in” refers to external causality; a cause can have two types of causation: (1) it can contribute to the formation of the nature or essence of its effect, in which case it is either its material or formal cause, or (2) it causes the existence of its effect in the external world. The phrase “results in” refers to the second type of causation. Thus, the abovementioned definition can be symbolized in the following way:

$$[M = GB(f)] \longleftrightarrow (A_m \rightarrow A_f)$$

One example that can be mentioned here is the relation between love and sacrifice. When one who loves another person can have a desired object but at the same time realizes that the object is also desirable to his beloved, he prefers his beloved to himself and gives that desired object to his beloved. This is sacrifice. In other words, the attribution of a moral agent to love, in a sufficient amount, results in his attribution to sacrifice. Therefore, it can be said that love is foundational in relation to sacrifice.

In mystical sources, honesty is referred to as the foundation and other qualities/actions as derivations (see, e.g., Muhasibi 1428 AH, 76). Muhasibi states that honesty is the foundation of all other good (Muhasibi 1986, 255; Razi 1425 AH, 143). Also, a tradition from the holy Prophet (s) is quoted in mystical sources, according to which honesty guides (*yahdi*) towards good. The word “*yahdi*” refers to

guidance and denotes the complete support of honesty for the acquisition of all good qualities/actions (*birr*). In other words, honesty manifests itself in the form of other moral actions/qualities in a person's existence in suitable conditions, without the need for any other good quality or virtue. Muhasibi explains this point as follows:

You must strive to develop honesty in yourself and distance yourself from dishonesty; your main occupation should be the creation of the foundation of honesty and the destruction of the foundation of dishonesty in your existence, because the foundation itself reaches the branches and fruits [i.e., other virtues]. As long as a person occupies himself with the fruits and branches instead of the foundation, his occupation will never end; he must correct the action from the foundation. (Muhasibi 1428 AH, 76)

The fact that Muhasibi emphasizes that one must attend to the foundation and that the foundation reaches the derivations shows that, in his view, honesty is a sufficient cause for the attainment of all other virtues. 'Izzuddin Mahmud Kashani (d. 735 AH) also considers honesty the basis of all good actions/qualities and states that honesty is a foundation that all favorable morals and states are derived from (Kashani n.d., 344):

When a soul possesses the perfection of honesty such that his internal and external dimensions are in accordance to one another and the title "honest" can be applied to him, good morals will branch out from him, the foundation of vices will be wrested from him, honesty of speech will materialize in him, dishonesty, slander, and vilification will leave him, justice will appear [in him], arguments will flee, loyalty will stand in place of breaking promises, harmony will sit in place of hypocrisy, deceit and treachery will change to purity and trust, freedom will be established, and difficulty will leave. (Kashani n.d., 345)

He states that other virtues, like sincerity, are branches of honesty (Kashani n.d., 345). This foundational meaning of honesty can also be

found in the words of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: “The place of honesty is such that all stages and levels of the wayfarers [of spirituality] are derived from it” (Ibn Qayyim 1425 AH, 495). The stages and levels of wayfarers in mysticism include all moral virtues, and thus their being derived from honesty means that all moral virtues are derived from honesty.

To explain further, honesty manifests itself in the form of speaking truthfully and desiring, seeking, and following the truth, and, as a result, drives one to choose and do good; for example, an honest person who falls in a state of selfishness finds, by virtue of his honesty, the unfavorableness of selfishness and its inconsistency with the whole of existence and thus abstains from it. In the case of oppression, an honest person sees the intention of oppression or the oppression itself to be in opposition to the whole of existence and thus inconsistent with his own existence, and accordingly abstains from it. On the other hand, an honest person upholds justice, because he finds it consistent with the flow of existence in its different degrees.

Therefore, honesty can be considered the foundation of all other moral qualities/actions. This does not mean that every honest moral agent has all moral virtues or acts always virtuously simply by virtue of honesty, because the effects of honesty in each moral agent is dependent on the degree of his honesty. As Muhasibi states, the stronger the honesty of a person, the more the good actions done by him (Muhasibi 1986, 255; c.f., Razi 1425 AH, 143). Therefore, although honesty is foundational with regard to the other virtues, the presence of prerequisites and the absence of external obstacles are needed. Muhasibi and Razi both believe that the more intact the mind and the softer the heart, the more the effect of honesty on a person’s existence (Muhasibi 1986, 255; Razi 1425 AH, 143).

### 3.2. Prerequisite

When one or more moral actions/qualities (F) depend on a moral action/quality (M) in such a way that M is a necessary condition for F, M can be considered foundational for F. Therefore, foundational in this sense is a necessary cause and not a sufficient cause of a moral action/quality, and the attribution of the moral agent (A) to a moral action/quality is a necessary condition for his attribution to other actions/qualities. In this sense, foundational can be defined as follows:

II. M is foundational for F in the sense of prerequisite (QB) if and only if the attribution of A to M (Am) is a necessary condition for the attribution of A to F (Af).

“Necessary condition” in this definition means that for the acquisition of F, the existence of M is necessary; however, for the attainment of F, one or multiple moral actions/qualities apart from M are also necessary.

$$[M = QB(f)] \longleftrightarrow (\sim Am \longrightarrow \sim Af)$$

Among moral actions/qualities, this meaning of foundational has many examples. For instance, Kh<sup>w</sup>aja ‘Abdullah Ansari considers modesty to stem from considering someone great and depending on his love (Ansari 1417 AH, 73), because the quality or action of modesty in a moral agent develops when the moral agent has respect for someone, finds spiritual perfection in him, loves him, and considers him close to himself. In this case, in the presence of that person, the moral agent refrains from many actions which he does in ordinary situations. With this supposition, it is clear that being modest has two conditions: (1) the attribution of the moral agent to the quality/action of respecting a person, (2) and the attribution of the moral agent to love and affection for that person. Without either of these two elements, modesty will not be achieved, and thus each of



these two actions/qualities can be considered foundational in the sense of prerequisite for modesty.

In the case of honesty, abstaining from selfishness (i.e., not desiring personal profit in performing of an action), for instance, depends on honesty in its intermediary meaning (i.e., consistency between the stages and faculties of a person); therefore, if a person does not consider personal gain in his action, but his action is not honest—that is, he is not free from the desire for personal gain, but externally he performs an altruistic action—he cannot be considered unselfish. Therefore, in order for unselfishness to be realized, honesty is required. Abu l-Qasim Bakri (d. 380 AH) writes, “Thankfulness is the quality of the most special among the special and is not realized except with honesty; it is with honesty that the mystics attain for themselves admission to spiritual stages and elevation in spiritual levels” (Bakri 1421 AH, 179). This means that honesty, in mystical ethics, is a necessary condition for the realization of all moral and mystical virtues. Elsewhere, he writes, “Only the people of honesty are the ones that will attain happiness through recognition and action” (Bakri 1421 AH, 165). This means that without honesty, even though other virtues may have been attained, happiness will not be achieved, and therefore honesty is necessary for the attainment of happiness. Kharkushi, another prominent mystic, writes:

There is no spiritual state of the seekers, those who have reached the stage of separation [from all except God], those who have reached the stage of trust [in God], those who have reached the level of satisfaction, those who have reached the stage of love, those who have reached the stage of familiarity [with God] and diffusion, theologians, and the believers in the one God, or ... those whose state is described in relation to God from the high and the low except that in that state they themselves need honesty (Kharkushi 1427 AH, 169-70).

This statement shows that honesty is a necessary condition for the development of every moral and mystical virtue. It must be noted that moral virtues in mysticism are a necessary prelude to mystical virtues or a part of them. After this statement, he describes honesty as the harmony between the internal and external aspects of man (Kharkushi 1427 AH, 169-70), which shows that he has the abovementioned meaning of foundational in mind. Moreover, Kh<sup>w</sup>aja ‘Abdullah Ansari (d. 481 AH) quotes Abu ‘Abbas Daynuri (d. 340 AH) as saying, “No one will reach the level of the chosen ones except through honesty, and any period of time or condition that is empty of honesty is empty and void” (Ansari 1362 Sh, 228). ”The chosen ones” (*akhyar*) are the possessors of the highest spiritual degrees, and “period of time or condition” refers to valuable mystical states in which a mystic reaches an intuition or a spiritual state. The emptiness of the state when there is no honesty means that honesty is a necessary condition for the attainment of all worthy moral and mystical qualities/actions. Ghazali (d. 505 AH) also mentions that “all spiritual levels and states are realized through honesty, and even sincerity, despite its greatness, needs honesty, but honesty is not dependent on anything” (Ghazali 1416 AH, 153). This statement shows that, in Ghazali’s view, honesty is the basis for all moral and spiritual actions/qualities as a necessary condition. Following these figures, Najmuddin Razi (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century AH) writes: ”Honesty is the pivot of all ethics and spiritual stages, and it is impossible to reach the highest level of morality and spiritual stages except on the basis of honesty,” and, “After the stage of faith, the mystics reach the stage of certainty and are placed in a place of expression ... and they cannot pass from the previous levels to these mentioned levels and reach the final stages except through honesty (Razi 1425 AH, 143). This statement points to some Qur’anic verses in which those who are in the highest levels in the hereafter are said to be “in

good [literally, honest] standing with their Lord” (Quran 10:2) or “in the abode of truthfulness with an omnipotent King” (Quran 54:55). Abu Hafis Suhrawardi Razi (d. 623 AH) also points to these verses and states that honest standing is a necessary condition for travelling the spiritual stages and levels (Razi al-Asadi 1386 Sh, 90). Elsewhere, he considers the acceptance of every good action to be dependent on the honesty of that action (Suhrawardi 2006, 2:351). Abu ‘Abdillah Nafzi (d. 792) also quotes Ibrahim Khawas as saying, “God’s creatures become separated from Him ... through performing insincere actions and the lack of honesty in those actions. God refuses to accept actions without honesty” (Nafzi 1428 AH, 1:243).

Mystics generally have inferred from the Qur’an, the traditions of the Infallibles, and their own spiritual intuitions that for any moral virtue and spiritual stage, honesty is a fundamental and necessary condition. In other words, it is foundational in the sense of prerequisite in relation to all other virtues and stages. To explain further, honesty refers to the harmony between the interior and the exterior. On the other hand, in mystical ethics, every moral act/quality is considered a worthy moral act/quality only when it is rooted in the interior: acting justly, for instance, is not enough to attain the positive quality of justice; rather, justice must stem from desiring justice. In fact, most of what is referred to as social ethics is consequential to internal and personal ethics.

We should note here, as we did in the case of the previous meaning of foundational, that the role of honesty in the development of its affected qualities/actions depends on the degree of the honesty of each moral agent; if his honesty is weak, many of the expected effects will not appear in him. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in this meaning of foundational for honesty, apart from the necessity of many conditions

and non-ethical matters, the realization of certain moral virtues is also necessary for the development of the expected moral qualities/actions, because honesty's being foundational in this sense means that it is only a necessary condition that needs to be added to other moral qualities/actions in order for the affected moral qualities/actions to develop.

### **3.3. Overlapping**

Foundational in the sense of overlapping signifies the concurrence of the realization of one or multiple moral actions/qualities (F) with the realization of another moral action/characteristic (M) in a manner that the realization of M can replace the realization of F, and, in case of the non-realization of F, a moral defect does not take place. Thus, a foundational action/quality, in this sense, suffices the moral agent and removes the need to strive for the realization of one or multiple other moral actions/characteristics that might have significance in that situation, though analysis shows that another moral action/quality has been achieved and thus the attribution of the moral agent (A) to that can be considered equal and accompanied with his attribution to a moral action/quality or moral actions/qualities. Thus, foundational in the sense of overlapping can be defined as follows:

M is foundational for F in the sense of overlapping (OB) if and only if the attribution of A to M (Am) is equivalent to the attribution of A to F (Af).

“Equivalent” in this definition means that with the attribution of A to M and with the supposition of the non-attribution of A to F, A will have no moral defect, and his attribution to M morally is the same as his attribution to F. We will show equivalency with the symbol “=” and symbolize the definition in the following way:

$$[M = OB(f)] \longleftrightarrow (A_m \equiv A_f)$$

Sometimes this relation between two moral actions/qualities is explained by saying that if the moral agent is attributed to one of the two, it is not necessary for him to be concerned about the other. For example, if a person possesses the virtue of sacrifice, he will not need the virtue of justice in his personal relations. Justice in personal relations is a virtue that is derived from respecting the rights of other people and rendering to them their due rights, and if a moral agent is a sacrificing person, not only he gives other people their due rights but he gives them more. In this example, the moral agent can be advised to have the virtue of sacrifice and not be concerned with attaining the virtue of justice.

Regarding honesty, mystics believe that a person who is completely honest has indeed the worth and essence of all good moral actions/qualities. Honesty, in its most profound level, is known to be the harmony of man and existence. Now imagine a situation where the moral agent is not aware of, and thus has not attained, any virtues except honesty. If such a person is placed in different situations that are instances of the manifestation of different virtues, and if it is supposed that the attribution of the moral agent to honesty is such that he enjoys all the internal and external fruits of honesty, he has the worth that stems from all other virtues. For example, imagine that this person is placed in a situation where he has to choose whether to respect or insult another person. Respect is to consider a person to be great (reverence) and to take into account the position of that person in one's speech and behavior, and insulting is to regard a person as low (contempt) and to treat him accordingly in action and speech. Now, the virtue of honesty requires the moral agent to act and speak honestly, and this honesty in speech and action require him to be in harmony with the reality or truth (both are the same in the mystical tradition). Therefore, facing another

person in that situation, he will act according to that which the reality or truth requires, which is respecting the other person considering his moral and spiritual value. Thus, the virtue of honesty in this situation leads him to respecting the other person, and it is not necessary for the moral agent to be aware of or to have the virtue of respecting others.

Abu Mansur Awzjandi (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century A.H.) quotes Abu l-Qasem Hakim Samarqandi (d. 342) as saying, “If one who is occupied with honesty does not reach virtues, he is excused” (Hirawi 1383 Sh, 94). This means that if one pursues honesty, gaining other qualities is not necessary for him, because honesty entails the worth of the other virtues. Kharkushi reports that Abu Muslim Rahib Sufi (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> century AH), who studied mysticism in both Islam and Christianity and read the sacred scriptures of the two religions, believed that there was nothing more valuable for a person than honesty and nothing more unworthy than dishonesty (Kharkushi 1427 AH, 166). This statement shows that, according to Abu Muslim, honesty encompasses all moral values. Kharkushi also states that honest people will ride the vehicle of honesty, and that vehicle will take them to the threshold of the stage of *wilayah* (guardianship), which is the final stage of spirituality (Kharkushi 1427 AH, 168). He writes, “Abu l-Qasim Khatla (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> century AH) said that the jurists and scholars have reached the consensus that if three characteristics are realized in a person, he will achieve salvation: pure Islam in face of deviation and innovation, honesty for the sake of God, and goodness of one’s sustenance” (Kharkushi 1427 AH, 165). It is clear that it is impossible to reach the final spiritual stages and salvation except by possessing all moral values. Therefore, considering honesty sufficient for salvation means that honesty brings with it all other virtues for an honest person. In the latter statement of Kharkushi, from the three pillars of salvation, only the middle pillar (i.e., honesty) is ethical and the others are not related to ethics; the first pillar is related

to beliefs, and the last pillar seems to refer to the lawfulness of one's occupation and sustenance. Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Sulami (d. 412) states that an honest person is never reproached in any situation and is immune to mistakes in all states (Sulami 1369 Sh, 1:491). Therefore, according to some Muslim mystics, honesty is considered foundational in the sense of overlapping in relation to all other virtues and moral actions/qualities.

### 3.4. Companion

Foundational in the sense of companion is the effect of another moral quality/action (M) in the nature and essence of one or more moral actions/qualities (F) in a manner that without M and with the lack of one of the formative parts of the essence of F, the essence of F is not formed or is incomplete, though apart from M other parts are also required in the formation of the essence of F. Thus, the absence of a foundational action/quality in this sense in a moral situation places the action/quality of a moral agent in a state of non-virtue or negative worth. Therefore, the attribution of the moral agent (A) to an action/quality can be conditional on his attribution to the foundational action/quality. Considering these points, foundational in the sense of companion can be defined as follows:

III. M is foundational for F in the sense of companion (CB) if and only if with the attribution of A to M (Am), M effects the attribution of A to F (Af) as a formative part.

“A formative part” in this definition means a component without which the essence of another moral action/quality will not be formed or its virtuousness or positive worth will become void. The symbol  $\subset$  will be used to show a whole's encompassing its constituent part.

$$[M = CB(f)] \longleftrightarrow [(F \subset M) \wedge (\sim Am \longrightarrow \sim Af)]$$

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said, "Honesty is like a shining light in its world, similar to the sun from whose reality everything takes light, without any reduction befalling its reality ([Imam al-Sadiq?] 1400 AH, 34). This means that all virtues take their worth from honesty, and without it they do not have any value. The hadith indicates that every moral virtue needs a share of honesty, which is the source of its worth or virtuousness. Mystical sources also confirm this view. Harith Muhasibi, for instance, uses the following expressions: "That which has been referred to as humility regarding honesty..." (Muhasibi 1420 AH, 371), "The signs of honesty in repentance" (Muhasibi 1986, 344), "The signs of the honesty of the thankful ones" (Muhasibi 1986, 352); "Honesty in repentance and its signs" (Muhasibi 1428 AH, 65), and "Honesty of certainty" (Muhasibi 1428 AH, p 76). Abu Sa'id Kharraz also uses the following titles in his *Book of Honesty*: "The Chapter on Honesty in Sincerity" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 8), "The Chapter on Honesty in Patience" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 10), "The Chapter on Honesty in Self-Recognition" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 14), "The Chapter on Honesty in Abstaining from Sinning" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 19), "The Chapter on Honesty in Asceticism" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 28), "The Chapter on Honesty in Trusting God" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 35), "The Chapter on Honesty in Fearing God" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 42), "The Chapter on Honesty in Modesty towards God" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 44), "The Chapter on Honesty in Love" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 47), "The Chapter on Honesty in Satisfaction with God" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 53), "The Chapter on Honesty in Desiring God" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 56), and "The Chapter on Honesty in Familiarity with God" (Kharraz 1421 AH, 59). Among other expressions used in mystical sources that confirm this point are the following: "The Chapter on Honesty in Love" (Qushayri 1422 AH, 175), "honesty in worship" (Ghazali n.d., 4:107), "honesty in modesty," "honesty in fear," "honesty of the favorable opinion," and "honesty of love" (Muhasibi 1986, 256).



Abu Nasr Siraj (d. 378 AH) points to this meaning of foundational in the case of honesty in the words of Harith Muhasibi: “Honesty accompanies all states” (Siraj al-Tusi 1914, 217). The word “states” in mysticism signifies all internal qualities that develop beside mystical stations, and therefore the expression “in all states” indicates all moral virtues. Thus, the meaning of the abovementioned sentence is that honesty accompanies each and every moral virtue and has a role in their formation. Sulami (d. 412) also considers honesty to be influential in every worthy state and act; he explains that every state and action that is devoid of honesty is unworthy and rejected (Sulami 1369 Sh, 1:491). The advantage of the explanation of Sulami over that of Siraj is the use of the words “actions” beside states, and the phrase “in every state and action,” which clearly indicates that honesty is a part in the nature of every worthy action and quality. Thus, Sulami considers honesty to be effective in the formation of the nature of all worthy moral actions/qualities and therefore considers every action/quality that is void of honesty to be unworthy. Kh<sup>w</sup>aja Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 674 AH) also mentions this point: “*Sidq*... in this case refers to honesty... in all states that occur for him” (Tusi 1373 Sh, 17).

This view of Muslim mystics can be explained by considering that, according to them, an action that does not take place based on the harmony between the internal and the external, on the one hand, and the harmony between man and reality, on the other hand, is not a virtue. Thus, the subsistence of every action/quality as a virtue or a worthy moral matter is from honesty. Also, in every positive moral quality/action, honesty has a feature, which makes honesty a particular essential quality.

### 3.5. Companion of Perfection

This meaning of foundational refers to the effect of a moral action/characteristic (M) on one or multiple moral actions/qualities (F) such that without M, F does not have its perfect form, though, apart from M, other components are also necessary in the formation of the perfect state of F. The lack of a foundational action/quality in this sense in a moral situation makes another action/quality of a moral agent imperfect or decreases its positive worth. Thus, foundational in the sense of companion of perfection can be defined as follows

M is foundational for F in the sense of companion of perfection if and only if, with the attribution of A to M ( $A_m$ ), M effects the attribution of A to F ( $A_f$ ) as a formative component of F in the state of perfection.

“Formative component” is a component without which the perfection of a moral action/quality is not formed or the virtuousness or the positive worth of the action/quality in the state of perfection disappears. We will show the quality F in the state of perfection as follows.

$$[M = IB(f)] \leftrightarrow [(OF \subset M) \wedge (\sim A_m \longrightarrow \sim A_of)]$$

### 3.6. Standard

When one or multiple moral actions/qualities (F) or their values are measured or discerned by another moral action/quality (M), M is foundational, in the sense of standard, for F. Therefore, foundational in this sense is not necessarily a sufficient cause or a condition for another moral action/quality. This meaning of foundational can be defined as follows:

M is foundational for F in the sense of standard (SB) if and only if the attribution of A to M ( $A_m$ ) is the standard for the measurement or discernment of the attribution of A to F ( $A_f$ ).

Without the foundational moral action/quality in this sense, measuring or discerning the other moral action/quality would not be possible:

$$[M = SB(f)] \longleftrightarrow [(M = M\{f\}) \wedge (\sim Am \longrightarrow Af)]$$

## Conclusions

1. Some virtues in mystical ethics are foundational; that is, other positive virtues and attributes/actions are somehow dependent on, conditional upon, or originate from them.

2. In mystical ethics, honesty refers to truthfulness and the harmony between the outer and the inner aspects of man, and, in a more profound sense, it refers to the harmony between man and reality.

3. Foundational in mystical sources has six types or meanings: origin, prerequisite, overlapping, companion, companion of perfection, and standard.

4. Each of the meanings or types of foundational can be applied to honesty; therefore, honesty can be considered the most foundational virtue in Islamic mystical ethics.

5. The most important moral characteristic of honesty in Islamic mysticism is that it is foundational in relation to all other virtues.

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