A number of pioneer studies published in the twentieth century, especially from the second half onwards, approached Islamic ethics as a subject of academic and critical inquiry. These studies were developed by prominent names in the field of Islamic Studies such as Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Drāz (d. 1958), George Hourani (d. 1984), Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), Daud Rahbar (d. 2013) and Majid Fakhry (Drāz 1951; Rahbar 1960; Rahman 1983, 103–121; Rahman 1984, 170–185; Hourani 1985; Fakhry 1991; Draz 1998; Draz 2008).

Over the last decade or so, the academic discipline of Islamic Studies has been witnessing an “ethical turn” (Katz 2015, 3–4). Among other factors, this tangible turn has become a reality thanks to seminal contributions made by various academics including Hussein Agrama (Agrama 2010, 2–17; Agrama 2012), Khaled Abou El Fadl (Abou El Fadl 1999, 144–157; Abou El Fadl 2001; Abou El Fadl 2003, 103–128), Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī (Jābirī 2001), Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān 2000; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān 2006; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān 2007), Talal Asad (Asad, 2003, 205–256), Tariq Ramadan (Ramadan 2009; Ramadan 2018), Wael Hallaq (Hallaq 2009, 239–279; Hallaq 2013), and others. Despite some individual differences on specific issues, the key contributors to this field agree on the urgent need to (re-)approach the Islamic tradition and its overall system (Sharia) as an indivisible whole and with ethics as its central core.

Not far from Islamic Studies, the academic discipline of anthropology has had a parallel “ethical turn”, giving considerable impetus for fields like the ethnography of moralities and the anthropology of ethics (Fassin 2014, 429–435). Some of the anthropologists working on Muslims such as Saba Mahmood (Mahmood 2005) and Charles Hirschkind (Hirschkind 2006) contributed to, and benefited from, this ethical turn in anthropology.

This “ethical turn” experienced by both disciplines will significantly contribute to carving new spaces for ethics in the study of Islam both as a Scripture-based tradition (“Text”) and as a living reality (“Context”). Studies on Islamic ethics that move back and forth between the “Text” and “Context” and those of an interdisciplinary character in general seem to have great academic potential. One can simply think of the plethora of ethical challenges posed by modern sciences and technologies that await rigorous ethical examination and analysis from a rich ethical tradition like Islam.
In order to meet this pressing demand, researchers in various fields need to work together and produce innovative research that tackles these new challenges. Some large-scale projects are already working on, or developing plans for, developing databases and encyclopedias meant to facilitate the work of the researchers in the emerging field of Islamic ethics. Some academic institutions are working on plans to prepare a new generation of academics trained in this promising field. In Qatar, a new specialization “Islamic Thought and Applied Ethics” took off this academic year (2016–2017). The Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics (CILE) submitted the proposal for this new specialization about one year ago and it is now integrated within the umbrella M.A. program of Islamic Studies, College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

Against this background, it was timely and crucial to establish an academic podium that can accommodate the prospective research output in Islamic Ethics, expected to be one of the most promising and fastest-growing fields within the discipline of Islamic Studies. At this juncture, CILE proposed the idea of the *Journal of Islamic Ethics* (*JIE*) and Brill, with its long-standing experience in Islamic Studies, welcomed the proposal. The main focus of the *JIE* will be the ethical approaches embedded in Islamic philosophy, theology, mysticism and jurisprudence as well as Islamic civilization in general—and their intersection with applied fields like Arts, Bioethics, Economics, Education, Environment, Gender, Media, Methodology, Migration & Human Rights, Politics and Psychology. The *JIE* is open to academic researchers working in different disciplines who have a keen interest in making seminal contributions to the fields listed above. The Journal is open for all voices, regardless of their specific positions or backgrounds, as long as the submitted contributions fit within the scope of the journal and successfully undergo the peer-review process. The journal welcomes submissions for both individual articles and thematic issues/sections dedicated to addressing distinct ethical issues.

**The First Issue: Qur’an and Ethics**

The contents of this first issue fall within the core interests of the journal. It explores various aspects of the relationship between ethics and the fundamental Scripture of Islam, the Qur’an. The issue includes articles written in both Arabic and English, something which reflects the multilingual character of the journal. In order to broaden the pool of readers of the journal, extended abstracts of the articles included in this issue are also available in Arabic, English and French.
Most of the papers included here were presented in a seminar ‘Qurʾān and Ethics’ organized by CILE on 4–6 January 2015 in Doha, Qatar. After assessing the proceedings of the seminar, Dr. Mutaz al-Khatib, CILE Assistant Professor of Ethics and Methodology, the convener of the seminar and the guest-editor of this thematic issue, wrote himself a post-seminar article and invited Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl to write a contribution for this issue in order to fill certain gaps from the seminar.

This issue includes three articles written in English. In “Qurʾanic Ethics and Islamic Law,” Abou El Fadl tries to address the complexity of the relationship between ethics and Sharia by arguing for a specific understanding of Sharia. In “Meta-ethics: Quest for an Epistemological Basis of Morality in Classical Islamic Thought” al-Attar tries to problematize the meta-ethical foundation of the traditional theory of maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa (higher objectives of Sharia). Her critique of this theory is premised on her thesis that Qurʾanic ethics accepts objective moral values and thus allows for a moral epistemology based on human reason, not necessarily restricted by a fixed normative set of maqāṣid. In the third article, “What We Know About Maʿrūf,” Reinhart zooms in on the textual corpus of the Qurʾān by examining the ethical concept of maʿrūf. In his examination of this concept, the author highlights the roles of social conventions and moral intuitions which, besides the Qurʾān and Sunna, contribute to drawing the boundaries of such ethical concepts and how they can be interpreted and implemented within specific time-space contexts.

The issue includes another three articles written in Arabic. In “Āyāt al-akhlāq: suʾāl al-akhlāq ʿinda al-mufassirīn (Verses on Ethics: The Question of Ethics Among the Qurʾān Exegetes),” al-Khaṭīb gives an analytical review of the Qurʾanic verses usually referred to by the early exegetes as embodying the foundations of morality. The author distinguishes between the verses on juristic rulings (āyāt al-aḥkām), which have been exhaustively studied, and the verses on ethics (āyāt al-akhlāq), which still await more academic analyses. In “Maʃhūm al-birr wa al-manżūma al-akhlāqīyya al-qurʾāniyya: al-binya wa al-siyāq (The Concept of Righteousness and the Qurʾanic Ethical System: Structure and Context),” Helli examines one of the central ethical concepts of the Qurʾān, namely al-birr (righteousness) through a multidimensional approach combining between linguistics and historical and structural contexts. In the third article, “Al-dars al-akhlāqi fī al-Qurʾān: qirāʾa fī baʿd al-muqārabāt al-ḥadītha (The Ethical Lesson of the Qurʾān: Review of some Modern Approaches),” Rashwānī presents a critical review of the key contemporary studies that have tried to explore the ethical vision of the Qurʾān.

Besides the abovementioned six articles, this issue also includes three reviews of works with relevance to the broad field of Islamic Ethics and the discipline
of Islamic Studies in general. The first piece “Taha Abderrahmane’s Ethics for a Secular Age” reviews two works published in Arabic, namely Al-ʿamal al-dīnī wa tajdīd al-ʿaql (Religious Practice and the Renewal of Thought) and Rūḥ al-ḥadātha: al-madkhal ilā taʾsīs al-ḥadātha al-Islāmiyya, (The Spirit of Modernity: An Introduction to Founding an Islamic Modernity). Both works were written by the Moroccan philosopher Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, one of the contemporary distinguished scholars with seminal contributions to the field of Islamic Ethics. The other two reviews are for works written by well-known authors in Western academia, namely Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions by Christian Lange (University of Utrecht, the Netherlands) and Domestic Violence and The Islamic Tradition by Ayesha Chaudhry (University of British Columbia, USA). The reviews were written respectively by Michael Bevers (Indiana University, USA), Ghassan el Masri (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Germany) and Amr Osman (Qatar University).

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