

## SOCIAL MEDIA ETHICS IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA: IBN MISKAWAIH'S AND MOHAMMED ARKOUN'S THOUGHT ON DIGITAL LITERACY

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine ethical challenges posed by social media practices in the post – truth era through an integrative analysis of Ibn Miskawaih's virtue ethics and Mohammed Arkoun's critical Islamic thought. The post – truth condition—marked by the primacy of emotions, personal beliefs, and algorithmic mediation over objective facts—has significantly undermined the authority of truth in digital communication. Phenomena such as ideological echo chambers, disinformation, and uncritical content circulation necessitate a robust ethical framework that extends beyond technical digital literacy. Employing qualitative library research with a philosophical approach, this study conducts conceptual and comparative analyses of Ibn Miskawaih's *Tahdzīb al-Akhlāq* and Arkoun's key writings, supported by contemporary literature on post – truth discourse and digital ethics. The findings reveal that Ibn Miskawaih's emphasis on moral equilibrium, justice, truthfulness, self – discipline, and wisdom provides a virtue – based foundation for ethical digital behavior. Complementarily, Arkoun's advocacy of critical reason, epistemic openness, pluralism, and resistance to ideological closure offers essential tools for confronting misinformation and extremism in digital spaces. This study argues that synthesizing these two intellectual traditions yields an ethical model that reinforces critical digital literacy, fosters responsible social media engagement, and contributes to the cultivation of a morally grounded public sphere in the post – truth era.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis tantangan etika penggunaan media sosial di era pascakebenaran melalui integrasi etika kebajikan Ibn Miskawaih dan pemikiran Islam kritis Mohammed Arkoun. Kondisi pascakebenaran—yang ditandai oleh dominasi emosi, keyakinan personal, dan mediasi algoritmik atas fakta objektif—telah melemahkan otoritas kebenaran dalam ruang digital. Fenomena seperti ruang gema ideologis, disinformasi, dan sirkulasi informasi yang tidak diverifikasi menuntut kerangka etika yang melampaui literasi digital teknis semata. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan metode analisis filosofis, konseptual, dan komparatif terhadap karya *Tahdzīb al-Akhlāq* Ibn Miskawaih dan tulisan-tulisan utama Mohammed Arkoun, serta didukung oleh literatur kontemporer tentang pascakebenaran dan etika digital. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa penekanan Ibn Miskawaih pada keseimbangan moral, keadilan, kejujuran, muhasabah diri, dan kebijaksanaan menyediakan landasan etika berbasis kebajikan bagi perilaku digital. Sementara itu, gagasan Arkoun tentang nalar kritis, keterbukaan epistemik, pluralisme, dan resistensi terhadap penutupan ideologis menawarkan strategi etis untuk menghadapi disinformasi dan ekstremisme daring. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sintesis kedua perspektif tersebut menghasilkan model etika yang memperkuat literasi digital kritis, mendorong tanggung jawab jawab bermedia sosial, dan berkontribusi pada pembentukan ruang publik digital yang berlandaskan nilai moral di era pascakebenaran.

## INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, phenomena such as the spread of news without reading the full content, the virality of misleading video clips, and trust in information that only suits the emotions or beliefs of a group show how social media encourages the emergence of a post-truth context. In this situation, objective truth is often displaced by opinions, emotions, and narratives that are considered to "suit the feelings" of users. Ethics is a discipline that examines principles of good and bad (Bagir, 2002), plays an important role in understanding and responding to these issues. Unlike morals, which relate to the actual practices of human actions, ethics offers a reflective framework that assesses actions based on rational considerations and human values. Therefore, ethical issues in social media are not merely technical problems, but concern how humans use digital freedom with moral awareness (Azra, 1999).

Social media is a digital (online) platform that allows users to communicate and socialize with each other online, whether in the form of written content, photos, or videos, and facilitates social activities for each user (Laughey, 2007). Social media is an online medium that has a huge impact on the social relationships of modern society, with users being able to easily participate, share, and create content, including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, virtual worlds, and also covering several fields, such as education, economics, socio-culture, politics, and even religion, which have all felt the impact of social media. As such, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X facilitate communication, information exchange, and the formation of public opinion (Tuty Mutiah dkk, 2019). Social media has become a primary need today. However, it cannot be denied that social media can also have a negative impact on its users, such as changing a person's behavior, causing them to become unsociable, unhappy, and hateful towards others, rarely communicating with their surroundings, and even causing negative responses on social media, such as hate speech, divisive rhetoric, bullying, kidnapping, issues of ethnicity, religion, and race, propaganda, fake news (hoaxes), and blasphemy against certain religions, ethnicities, races, and so on. This phenomenon has intensified in the post-truth era, when facts are often overshadowed by emotional opinions (Sugiarto, n.d.).

Looking back at the current era of communication, freedom on social media is not unlimited freedom. On the other hand, it is necessary to pay attention to values, norms, and rules of humanity, just as when interacting in the real world (Belsey, Andrew, 2002). Ethics is not just written words, but also good intentions expressed through patience and empathy in communication. Especially if the use of social media is not accompanied by a strong sense of self-awareness, a lack of ethics, and is only intended for entertainment, it can trigger problems such as the spread of false information, fraud, and the dissemination of inappropriate content. The free nature of social media requires extra caution and thoroughness in observing content, while the integrity of information needs to be taken seriously so that it is not easily accepted at face value. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen ethics in facing this era of communication technology development.

So far, various studies have discussed digital ethics and the impact of social media, but studies that specifically integrate Ibn Miskawaih's classical virtue ethics and Mohammed Arkoun's critical thinking as an analytical framework to address social media ethics issues in the post-truth era are still very limited. This is the gap that this study aims to fill. Based on these conditions, this study proposes the following research question:

How relevant are the ethical thoughts of Ibn Miskawaih and Mohammed Arkoun in responding to social media ethics issues in the post-truth era? Methodologically, this

study uses a philosophical approach through inductive methods, critical analysis, and a holistic approach to the works of both figures, as well as supporting literature on digital ethics and post-truth. The objectives of this study are to describe the ethical concepts of Ibn Miskawaih and Mohammed Arkoun, analyze ethical issues in the use of social media in the post-truth era, and formulate the relevance and contribution of the two figures' thoughts to contemporary digital ethics. Thus, this study is expected to bridge classical and modern Islamic ethical thinking with new moral challenges in the digital space, as well as contribute to the development of a more humanistic and rational social media ethics.

## ETHICS, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND POST-TRUTH

Ethics comes from the Greek word *Ethos*. It means a place to live, a pasture, an enclosure, common practices, behavior (morals), feelings, ways of thinking, and customs. According to K. Bertens, ethics also includes morals and character, so that ethics can be understood as the science that studies the principles of good and bad as well as the norms that guide human behavior in interacting with others, where in social practice ethics functions as a system that regulates actions to be in harmony with human values, creating mutual respect, manners, and social order, and does not conflict with human rights (Muhamad Mufid, 2012). Thus, ethics becomes a reflective foundation for humans to evaluate their own actions (Akifah & Adami, n.d.), distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and guiding individuals to behave responsibly, fairly, and wisely in social life, so that ethical principles are not merely abstract theories, but also the basis for the formation of human character and morality that is in harmony with the norms, customs, and values that apply in society.

Social media is an internet-based platform that allows individuals and groups to interact, share content, and access information quickly and widely. Its existence affects various aspects of life, ranging from education, economy, socio-culture, politics, to religion (Cahyono, 2016). On the positive side, social media facilitates collaboration, public participation, and access to information without time and place limitations. However, its ethical impact is also significant, especially in relation to the spread of inaccurate information, manipulation of opinion, and privacy violations. The phenomenon of post-truth, where truth is often displaced by narratives that are more emotionally appealing, is a clear example of how social media can influence public perception (Miladi, 2016). Therefore, a critical understanding of social media use is important so that people can reap its benefits while minimizing ethical and social risks.

The term post-truth comes from English, which etymologically consists of post meaning "after" or "post," as in the term post-mortem, which refers to a study after an event, and truth meaning truth, which is the correct condition or quality. Thus, post-truth can be translated as "post-truth" (Manser, 1996). The post-truth era is so called because in this period, the use of reason, facts, and observation as the basis for objectivity seems to have less influence in shaping public opinion, thought, and behavior. If left unchecked, the post-truth phenomenon can become a serious threat, as false or manipulative information can be accepted as truth (Sugiarto, n.d.). This situation allows for the emergence of systematic conflicts and the spread of errors that are believed by the public, even to the point of scapegoating individuals for incorrect information (Syuhada, 2018).

With the high potential for disinformation on social media, where much of the information is irrelevant and fragmented, this creates the illusion for users that they have

extensive expertise in various fields and have the right to express their opinions, even though this is far from the actual facts. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the emergence of citizen journalism, which makes public opinion easily exposed and has the potential to trigger social conflict. The public no longer plays a passive role, but also acts as producers of information who directly shape public opinion. In analysis, this situation shows that social media expands the role of individuals in the production and dissemination of information, but without adequate verification mechanisms, this increases the risk of disinformation and polarization of opinion. This phenomenon also emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and the application of ethical principles, so that every user can be responsible in disseminating information, separating facts and opinions, and minimizing negative impacts on society at large.

## THE ETHICS OF IBN MISKAWAYH AND MOHAMMED ARKOUN

Ibn Miskawaih, known as the father of classical Islamic ethics, began his intellectual journey by exploring aspects of the human psyche. He believed that knowledge of the soul was superior to other disciplines. According to him, one cannot understand any science without knowledge of the soul. Therefore, Ibn Miskawaih strongly emphasized the importance of developing ethics in every soul in order to shape good behavior (Nizar, 2016). Ibn Miskawaih himself was a great scholar of history. He was also known as a polite poet and a moralist with extraordinary simplicity in releasing the tensions within human beings. This gave rise to virtues that would encourage the soul and regulate irrationality, thereby establishing the basis of ethical values in human personality. In the introduction to the book *Tahdzib al-Akhlak* written by Ibn Miskawaih, he mentions that this applies to the majority and the minority.

Ibn Miskawaih explains that ethics is a state of mind that gives rise to actions without prior thought or reflection (Zugby, 1995). Ibn Miskawaih explains that the essence of ethics is goodness (*al-khair*), happiness (*al-sa'adah*), and virtue (*al-fadilah*). Goodness is a state in which we reach the highest limit and perfection of existence. There are two types of goodness, namely: General goodness refers to goodness that applies to all of humanity, referring to standards of goodness that are accepted by all people. Meanwhile, specific goodness refers to goodness that is directed personally to someone. This last type of goodness is called happiness. Therefore, it can be said that a person's experience of happiness is unique and varied (Mahmud, 2020).

Ibn Miskawaih argued that the basis of human character and nature stems from his theory of The Golden Mean, *al Wasath*, and *Nadzar Aushat*, which is the middle path. From this theory, Ibn Miskawaih believes that in exploring the middle path, one must have a balanced and moderate attitude. Maintaining purity (*al-iffah*) in the middle position is finding a balance between refraining from indulging in lust (*al syarah*) and avoiding reluctance (*khumud*) towards desire. In the middle of courage, there is *syaja'ah* (bravery), which avoids cowardice (*al-jubm*) and caution against reckless actions (*al-tahawwur*). Meanwhile, in the power of thought, the middle ground is *al-hikmah* (wisdom), where one avoids stupidity (*al-balah*) and ignorance (*al-safih*). However, the classical Islamic reasoning provided by Ibn Miskawaih has undergone a dialectical tendency, especially in the field of understanding social media ethics in the contemporary era today (Abdullah, 2020).

In response to contemporary attitudes, a figure emerged who continued the classical Islamic thinking of Ibn Miskawaih into the contemporary Islamic world, namely

Mohammed Arkoun. Mohammed Arkoun was born on February 28, 1928 (Supena and Fauzi, 2002). His parents were local leaders. Unlike his peers, Arkoun was skilled in several languages, including Arabic, which he had learned as a child. He completed his primary education in his hometown before continuing on to secondary school in the port city of Oran, a city in western Algeria, far from Kabylia (Baedhowi, 2017). He completed his primary education in his hometown before continuing on to secondary school in the port city of Oran, a city in western Algeria that is remote from Kabylia. Mohammed Arkoun's primary and secondary education in his hometown was completed, and he then continued his education at several universities, including the University of Algiers, Algeria, from 1950 to 1954 (studying Arabic Language and Literature). He became a teacher at a secondary school in Strasbourg, then was appointed to teach at the Faculty of Literature at the University from 1956 to 1959 (Burhanuddin, 2016).

In the contemporary context, Mohammed Arkoun developed the classical Islamic ethical thinking of Ibn Miskawaih by integrating modern ethical philosophy and humanism. Arkoun emphasized the centrality of humanity that respects the dignity, worth, and potential of each individual, as well as the importance of moral orientation for the common good. He also criticizes the tendency of classical Islamic reasoning to be overly dialectical and unresponsive to the challenges of the modern era, including the phenomenon of rapid and manipulative information in the digital age (Arkoun, n.d. – b).

When linked to the phenomenon of post – truth, the thinking of these two figures has clear relevance. Ibn Miskawaih's principles of *al-wasath* and *al-hikmah* emphasize balance, rational consideration, and moderation, which are urgently needed to filter information on social media so as not to fall prey to disinformation. Meanwhile, Mohammed Arkoun's humanism in his dissertation *L'Humanisme Arabe au Ive/Xe Siecle: Miskawayh Philosophe et Historien* emphasizes individual responsibility and critical awareness, which form the ethical basis for social media users in dealing with information that manipulates public opinion (Arkoun, n.d. – a). Systematically, the similarity between the two lies in the purpose of ethics as a guide for human behavior towards goodness and wisdom, while the difference is Arkoun's focus on the contemporary context and humanism that adapts ethical reasoning to modern social dynamics, including the phenomenon of post – truth. Thus, the thoughts of these two figures complement each other: Ibn Miskawaih provides a basic moral framework, while Arkoun offers critical adaptations for ethical challenges in the modern information age.

## THE RELEVANCE OF THE ETHICAL THOUGHT OF IBN MISKAWAIH AND MOHAMMED ARKOUN TO POST-TRUTH IN SOCIAL MEDIA

The inability to apply filters or criteria between what is good and bad is the starting point of problems in the use of social media. Ethics in social media are reflected in polite social interactions and relationships. In addition, ethics also reflect a polite personality. In the context of communication, the messages conveyed can have a positive or negative impact. Social relationships on social media will be more positive if users understand and implement good relationship techniques and ethics.

Although Ibn Miskawaih was a classical thinker, his views on ethics were deeply rooted in the Islamic philosophical tradition and related to the formation of human character and behavior. However, because he lived in a different historical period, we cannot say that his views specifically involved "contemporary people." Islamic ethical thought emphasizes moderation, balance, and middle ground in various aspects of life. Although Ibn Miskawaih himself did not specifically develop the concept of *al-wasath*,

there are four general principles of *al-wasath* presented by Ibn Miskawaih that can be used as a basis for social media in the post-truth era. In summary, first, wisdom (*al-hikmah*) is the ability of the rational soul to pursue knowledge (Nizar, 2016), understanding everything that exists, including humanitarian and spiritual issues. Second, self-respect (*al-iffah*) is the soul's control over worldly desires, so that it does not fall into mere lust. Third, courage (*al-assyaja'ah*) is the emotional soul's ability to submit to wise reason, enabling a person to do good deeds and be patient in the face of challenges. Fourth, justice (*al-adalah*) is the result of a balance between the various forces of the soul and obedience to reason, which distinguishes between good and evil. This is often referred to as the middle path.

Although the concept of *al-wasath* is not always perfect, especially when it comes to primary characteristics (the middle ground), such as honesty, which is not always in the middle between lying and other despicable traits, Ibn Miskawaih states that the middle ground represents the first image of the praiseworthy character that humans should possess (Nizar, 2013). Thus, virtue, according to Ibn Miskawaih, is closely related to justice and generosity. In the context of social media, virtue may be related to using these platforms to voice justice, provide support to those in need, and promote positive values. Avoiding harmful behavior and being fair in online interactions are also part of the concept of virtue.

Where are the aspects or principles that can be applied from Ibn Miskawaih's ethical thinking (*al-wasath*) in the context of social media in today's post-truth era, including: First, well-being in social life is very important (Ibnu Miskawaih, 1994). Ibn Miskawaih believed that prosperity and social progress lie in the value of well-being, which is firmly held as the key to living a social life. Thus, Ibn Miskawaih's thinking can be applied to overcome problems that occur on social media, such as strengthening social relationships as a way to build a more moral and ethical life. Second, balance, the ethical principle applied by Ibn Miskawaih can help encourage and strengthen moral values, especially in dealing with desires that are controlled by the mind in social life. Third, Truth Ibnu Miskawaih, *Tahdzib Al Akhlaq* (Beirut: American Univ. Press, 1966): 152.

Ibn Miskawaih emphasized the importance of truth as a value that must be upheld. In the context of social media, where fake news and invalid information can spread quickly, this principle can be interpreted as an obligation to verify the accuracy of information before sharing it. Fourth, Justice (*al-adalah*), Ibn Miskawaih's principle of justice can be interpreted as an obligation to treat all people and information fairly. In the context of social media, this means avoiding discrimination, responding wisely to different views, and not spreading harmful or damaging information. Fifth, Self-awareness (*Muhasabah*), the principle of *muhasabah* or self-introspection, can be applied in the context of social media by thinking about the impact of every online action. Sixth, Wisdom (*al-hikmah*), Ibn Miskawaih's concept of *hikmah* can be applied in using social media wisely. This includes maintaining a balance between different views, avoiding extremism, and seeking information from diverse sources to gain a more complete understanding.

This approach is philosophically relevant because, according to Ibn Miskawaih, ethics are not merely normative norms, but rather ways of thinking and acting that shape human character so that people are able to distinguish between right and wrong. By applying these ethical principles, individuals on social media can refrain from the impulse to immediately spread unverified information, critically assess news sources, and control their emotions so as not to get caught up in sensational narratives. For example, when

viral political news appears whose truth is unclear, a social media user who applies Ibn Miskawaih's ethics will check the truth of the source, think rationally before sharing, and respond wisely, so that the risk of spreading hoaxes and conflict can be minimized. Thus, Ibnu Miskawaih's ethics provide a conceptual tool for dealing with the post-truth phenomenon, not only normatively but also in the practice of daily digital interactions.

Meanwhile, in the ethical thinking of Mohammed Arkoun as a modern philosopher, based on his understanding of humanism, his thinking is more modern than the ethical thinking of Ibn Miskawaih. Many of his principles are relevant and can help individuals combat the challenges of disinformation and falsehoods on social media. Mohammed Arkoun's ethics are in line with those of Ibn Miskawaih. Through his approach that combines ethics, rationality, and criticism of tradition, Mohammed Arkoun seeks to create a new understanding of Islam that can coexist with the values of humanism and freedom of thought (Mohammed Arkoun, 1999).

His thinking aims to bring Islam into the context of modernity while maintaining ethical values that can benefit society at large. With his humanistic approach, Mohammed Arkoun seeks to create a deep insight into how social media ethics can be the foundation for meaningful relationships, building trust, and nurturing human values amid the complex dynamics of the post-truth era (Muchamad Agus Munir, 2014). Mohammed Arkoun's ethical thinking provides a foundation for responding to ethical challenges in the post-truth era, where society is faced with complex information and differing views. Through humanism, Mohammed Arkoun hopes that society can develop critical awareness, respect individual freedom, and strengthen the ethical foundations of online social interaction in the contemporary era Mohammed Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London: Saqi Books, 2001): 100.

Mohammed Arkoun offers humanistic ethical principles that are relevant for dealing with the post-truth phenomenon in the era of social media. First, critical thinking and the search for truth enable individuals to assess information analytically and skeptically, thereby avoiding the spread of hoaxes or disinformation. First, when faced with unverified viral news, someone who applies this principle will check the source, compare facts, and refrain from sharing the content. Second, the principles of pluralism, tolerance, and respect for culture and values encourage social media users to respect differences of opinion, thereby reducing conflicts arising from echo chambers that reinforce certain group biases. Third, balance and avoidance of extremism help individuals refrain from excessive emotional reactions to provocative or polarizing information, keeping online interactions rational. Fourth, inclusivity guides users to appreciate diversity of perspectives, while the principle of social justice emphasizes the responsibility not to spread content that harms certain groups. Fifth, individual responsibility, emphasizing awareness of the impact of every piece of information shared. Philosophically, these principles build an ethical character capable of assessing, filtering, and acting responsibly in the face of the digital information flow, so that Mohammed Arkoun's ethics are not only normative norms, but a practical framework for dealing with post-truth in the real context of social media.

Mohammed Arkoun presented this concept as his attempt to place everything in the middle ground so that it could be explained logically (Mohammed Arkoun, 1999). Muhammad Arkoun's humanistic ethics also reflect efforts to bridge the gap between Islamic tradition, human values, and the dynamics of the modern era. In facing the challenges of the post-truth era, where truth is often distorted or ignored, Mohammed Arkoun encourages a critical and humanistic approach.

In this context, the ethical thinking of Ibn Miskawaih and Mohammed Arkoun complement each other. Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes character building through moral education, intellectual development, and wisdom (*hikmah*), which enables individuals to refrain from the impulse to spread unverified information and to act rationally. For example, when faced with viral news whose truth is unclear, someone who applies Miskawaih's principles will check the source's credibility and refrain from immediately sharing it, thereby minimizing conflict and the spread of hoaxes. Meanwhile, Mohammed Arkoun adds a humanistic dimension that emphasizes critical thinking, pluralism, tolerance, balance, inclusivity, social justice, and individual responsibility (*taklif*). These principles are practically relevant in social media: critical thinking helps users assess the truthfulness of information, inclusivity encourages respect for different views, thereby reducing the echo chamber effect, and social justice and individual responsibility emphasize awareness of the impact of shared content on other groups. Philosophically, the integration of these two schools of thought builds a comprehensive ethical framework: Miskawaih emphasizes the formation of character and personal wisdom, while Arkoun emphasizes critical awareness, tolerance, and social responsibility. By combining the two, individuals in the social media era can assess information rationally, control their emotions, respect diversity, and act responsibly in sharing content, thereby minimizing the post-truth phenomenon at both the personal and digital community levels.

## CONCLUSION

The post-truth phenomenon in social media use is a structural and cultural ethical issue, not merely a consequence of digital technology development. The dominance of emotions, subjective beliefs, and social media algorithmic mechanisms have contributed to the weakening of objective truth authority and the rise of disinformation in the digital public sphere. This situation shows that the issue of social media ethics cannot be adequately addressed through regulatory or technical approaches alone, but requires an ethical framework that can shape moral awareness, rationality, and individual responsibility in producing and disseminating information.

Ibn Miskawaih's ethical thinking provides a strong normative and philosophical foundation for responding to these challenges through the concepts of virtue ethics and spiritual balance (*al-wasath*). Principles such as wisdom (*al-hikmah*), honesty, justice (*al-'adalah*), self-control (*al-iffah*), and self-reflection emphasize the importance of character building as a prerequisite for ethical behavior, including in the digital context. Ibn Miskawaih's ethics do not only function as abstract moral norms, but as a framework for personality development that encourages individuals to think rationally, restrain emotional impulses, and act proportionally in responding to information on social media, thereby minimizing the spread of hoaxes and conflicts based on disinformation.

Meanwhile, Mohammed Arkoun's thinking complements classical virtue ethics through a critical humanism approach that is relevant to the modern context. His emphasis on critical reasoning, pluralism, inclusivity, tolerance, social justice, and individual responsibility provides an adaptive social ethical perspective to the dynamics of the post-truth era. The integration of the thoughts of Ibn Miskawaih and Mohammed Arkoun produces a comprehensive framework for social media ethics, which not only emphasizes the formation of individual moral character, but also critical awareness and social responsibility in the digital public sphere. Thus, the synthesis of these two schools of thought contributes conceptually to strengthening digital literacy and developing a more rational, humanistic, and common good-oriented social media ethics.

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