

## **Altruism: Comparative Study of Matthieu Ricard and Islamic Ethics of Ibn Miskawaih**

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**Abstract:** This article examines Matthieu Ricard's concept of altruism and Ibn Miskawaih's Islamic ethics. The main issue discussed is how these two different philosophical traditions view altruism and whether the integration of the two can provide a more comprehensive understanding of universal moral values. The main research question is how the spiritual compassion emphasized by Ricard and the rational virtues proposed by Ibn Miskawaih can be synthesized into a whole framework of altruism. The method used is a comparative philosophical approach with the data analysis techniques applied in this study are interpretive descriptive analysis, analyzing primary suber and literature related to the discussion being studied and the ethical principles of the two thinkers to find similarities and differences. The findings of the study suggest that Ricard highlights enlightenment and universal happiness through compassion, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes happiness and rational virtue as the basis of moral behavior. This article introduces the concept of transcendental altruism, a synthesis that combines compassion with rational virtue, offering a holistic approach to the ethics of altruism that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. This perspective enriches the theoretical discourse on altruism while also providing practical implications for fostering moral universality in diverse societies. This study contributes to contemporary ethics by showing how cross-cultural philosophical dialogue can deepen our understanding of altruism as a fundamental value of humanity.

**Keywords:** Altruism, Ethics, Matthieu Ricard, Ibn Miskawaih

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini mengkaji konsep altruisme Matthieu Ricard dan etika Islam Ibn Miskawaih. Masalah utama yang dibahas adalah bagaimana kedua tradisi filosofis yang berbeda ini memandang altruisme dan apakah integrasi keduanya dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif tentang nilai moral universal. Pertanyaan penelitian utama adalah Bagaimana kasih sayang spiritual yang ditekankan Ricard dan kebijakan rasional yang diajukan Ibn Miskawaih dapat disintesiskan ke dalam kerangka altruisme yang utuh. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan filosofis komparatif dengan Teknik analisis data yang diterapkan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis deskriptif interpretatif menganalisis suber primer maupun literatur yang berhubungan

dengan pembahasan yang dikaji dan prinsip-prinsip etika dari kedua pemikir untuk menemukan persamaan dan perbedaan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ricard menyoroti pencerahan dan kebahagiaan universal melalui belas kasih, sementara Ibn Miskawaih menekankan kebahagiaan dan kebijakan rasional sebagai dasar perilaku moral. Artikel ini memperkenalkan konsep altruisme transendental, sebuah sintesis yang menggabungkan belas kasih dengan kebijakan rasional, menawarkan pendekatan holistik terhadap etika altruisme yang melampaui batas budaya dan agama. Perspektif ini memperkaya diskursus teoritis tentang altruisme sekaligus memberikan implikasi praktis untuk memupuk universalitas moral di masyarakat yang beragam. Studi ini berkontribusi pada etika kontemporer dengan menunjukkan bagaimana dialog filosofis lintas budaya dapat memperdalam pemahaman kita tentang altruisme sebagai nilai dasar kemanusiaan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Altruisme, Etika, Matthieu Ricard, Ibn Miskawaih*

## **Introduction**

In the development of contemporary civilization marked by the acceleration of technology and the globalization of values, the world is experiencing an increasingly prominent moral paradox. Social phenomena such as violence between students, increasing crime rates, and corrupt practices involving power elites cannot be understood solely as juridical problems or social pathologies, but as a reflection of ethical disorientation that is rooted in the structure of modern life. This crisis shows that material progress does not necessarily go hand in hand with the growth of human morality and spirituality. From a philosophical perspective, this condition reflects a degradation of awareness of the meaning of living together as a moral community, where human relationships are no longer built on the basis of empathy, social responsibility, and sincere concern. As a result, the noble values that should be socially binding begin to be eliminated by individual interests and the logic of mere profit. As social beings, humans are not created to live in isolation, but in a complex network of relationships and mutual needs. The diversity of ethnicities, cultures, customs, and languages is a divine will that contains social wisdom, so that humans can get to know each other, interact, and form social cohesion based on human values.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, social science plays an important role because it seeks to understand in depth the dynamics of human relationships, both in the scope of individuals, groups, institutions, and the broader social system. Social science not only relies on empirical data, but is also required to examine reflectively and critically the philosophical roots of complex social problems. Therefore, as moral crises become more real in contemporary life, social science and philosophical approaches that touch on the ethical

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<sup>1</sup> Siti Fatimah, Altruisme dalam Perspektif Islam, *Jurnal Mafatih : Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, Volume 1 Nomor 2 November 2021, 29–42, (2021). 44

and spiritual dimensions of human beings become very important, especially in reviving values such as altruism, solidarity, and moral responsibility across civilizations.<sup>2</sup>

Living in a society means living with many people who need each other, with diverse backgrounds of needs, thoughts, and personalities. Everyone certainly wants their needs to be met and hopes that their way of thinking is in harmony with others. However, it is not uncommon for differences of views or needs to be met that cannot be fully met.<sup>3</sup> Classical anthropologists such as Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits describe acculturation as a phenomenon that occurs as a result of direct and prolonged contact between two different cultures, leading to cultural transformation on one or both sides.<sup>4</sup> Social transformation refers to the process of changing social characteristics or identities within a certain period. In other words, social transformation contains three important domains, the distinction of social events as the actualization of social transformation, social characteristics or identities as an approach to observing social transformation, and social transformation itself as a radical and historical event.<sup>5</sup>

Globalization has had a wide influence on various aspects of life. These influences can be both positive and negative. The positive impact of globalization includes encouraging work morale, fostering a high work ethic, and forming an independent attitude. Technological developments also spur competition to achieve a better quality of life. However, on the other hand, globalization also has a negative impact. One of them is the easy entry of Western culture into Indonesia, which is then widely followed by the public. This can lead to the fading of ethics, morals, cultural values, norms of decency, and even the abandonment of religious values.<sup>6</sup>

Based on the phenomenon that can be seen in DetikNews news, an elementary school child experiences bullying. Police arrested two junior high school students suspected of bullying elementary school students in Pancoran Mas, Depok. This case emerged after a video recording showing a number of girls bullying other girls went viral on social media. In the video, it appears that the victim was beaten to the ground, and the victim was even hit to the ground by the perpetrator. The victim, who was wearing a pink suit, was seen to be able to only collapse on the ground.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, as reported by DetikNews, Harvey Moeis was entangled in a case of alleged corruption in the tin commodity trading system in the Mining Business Permit (IUP) area of PT Timah Tbk in

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<sup>2</sup> Fitri Sania and Ris Rusli, 'Cakrawala Social Science : Philosophical Perspectives on Social Complexity', 16.1 (2025), 123–42.

<sup>3</sup> Akilah Mahmud, Akhlak Dan Ego (Dalam Individu, Masyarakat Dan Kebangsaan)." *UIN Alauddin*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2021

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Ibnu Aminim, Galuh Maria, and Suhermanto Ja'far, "Theology and Culture : Walisongo 's Strategy of Islamic Enculturation in Java," *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Islam* 16, no. 1 (2025): 73–98, 85

<sup>5</sup> Richo B Mahendra, Shofiyullah Muzammil, and Ahmad Nurcholish, 'Reinventing The Role of Social Prophetic and Mass Consciousness Concept in Ali Syariati 's Liberation Theology', 16.1 (2025), 143–62, 150

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Sialana, Pembentukan Moralitas Siswa." *Institutio: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2020,

<sup>7</sup> Devi Puspitasari, Pemkot Beri Pendampingan ke Siswi SD Korban Bully Pelajar SMP di Depok, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7378819/pemkot-beri-pendampingan-ke-siswi-sd-korban-bully-pelajar-smp-di-depok>, Diakses pada tanggal 8 Juni 2024, Pukul 20. 25 Wib

the period 2015 to 2022. The case involving the husband of actress Sandra Dewi is estimated to cause state losses of up to Rp271 trillion. To date, there have been 16 people named as suspects in the case. In addition to Harvey, the Attorney General's Office also recently named Helena Lim, a businesswoman known as crazy rich from Pantai Indah Kapuk (PIK), as a suspect.<sup>8</sup> Humans undergo changes that make them less sensitive to life and their relationships with others.<sup>9</sup>

In general, personality reflects a person's attitude and behavior, and this attitude and character have an important role in shaping the direction of an individual's life. The influence of globalization also has an impact on moral values in society. One of the consequences is a decline in morality that can be seen from careless behavior, such as not respecting and disrespecting others.<sup>10</sup> If the spirit of helping continues to decline and is left unchecked, altruism will disappear from daily life. This can result in a selfish and individualistic attitude in society.<sup>11</sup>

Altruism is when a person acts with good intentions to improve the well-being of others, where the action has a positive impact or increases profits for them.<sup>12</sup> By looking at the above phenomenon, it can provide new insights into the values of humanity, solidarity, and morality in people's lives. So that bad, cruel, and self-interested behavior does not spread among the public. Altruism has become an important topic of attention in the study of philosophy, psychology, sociology, and religion. However, in the context of Islamic ethical thought, the relationship between the concept of altruism and Islamic ethics is still poorly understood and comprehensively studied.

One often states that to be truly altruistic, an action must contain sacrifice for oneself. But we must remember that what seems like a sacrifice for someone else, may be felt as a deep satisfaction for the person who performs the act. For example, a person who abandons a promising career in favor of a humanitarian cause may be considered a sacrifice by friends and relatives who value a brilliant career above all else. But for the person who devotes himself to eliminating suffering efficiently, it is his. This is the concept of Altruism, from Matthieu Ricard, an interesting Buddhist to research, which can create the concept of double happiness.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Tim, detikNews. Fakta-Fakta Korupsi Timah Rp 271 Triliun Yang Jerat Suami Sandra Dewi. <https://www.detik.com/bali/berita/d-7267504/fakta-fakta-korupsi-timah-rp-271-triliun-yang-jerat-suami-sandra-dewi>. (akses 8 Juni 2024)

<sup>9</sup> Agustinus W Dan Dewantara, 2017, *Filsafat Moral Pergumulan Etis Keseharian Hidup Manusia*, (Yogyakarta: Pt Kansinus).45

<sup>10</sup> Nasy'a'a Nadyah Aisyah, Nur Fitriatin, Krisis Moral dan Etika di Kalangan Generasi Muda Indonesia dalam Perspektif Profesi Guru, *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Indonesia*, Volume 5, nomor 1, 2025.330

<sup>11</sup> Rizky, A. Z. A., Rini, A. P., & Pratitis, Korelasi empati dan perilaku altruisme pada mahasiswa. *Sukma : Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 2(01), 20–31, (2021),

<sup>12</sup> Yahdiyanis Ratih Dewi & Siti Ina Savira, Hubungan Antara Self Monitoring Dengan Altruisme Pada Anggota Komunitas Save Street Child Surabaya, *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan Altruisme*, Volume 04 Nomor 1, (2007), 1–6. 22

<sup>13</sup> Mathieu Ricard & Albert Schweitzer, Chapter 8 : Altruism and Happiness, *Happiness: Transforming The Development Landscape*, 156–168, 2017. 160-161

In the treasures of Islamic thought, figures who specifically study morality or ethical philosophy include Abu Bakr Muhammad Zakaria al-Razi (250 AH/864 AD – 313 AH/925 AD) through his famous work *al-Thibb al-Ruhani*, and Abu Ali Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Miskawaih who is known through his book *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathhir al-A'raq*. Although both discussed ethical topics in depth, Ibn Miskawaih was considered more representative in the development of ethical philosophy in the Islamic philosophical tradition. Although Ibn Miskawaih's ethical thought was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, especially from Plato, Aristotle, and Galen as well as elements of Persian civilization, he succeeded in creating a harmonious synthesis between philosophy and Islamic values.<sup>14</sup>

The selection of Matthieu Ricard and Ibn Miskawaih as objects of comparative study in the study of altruism is based on deep philosophical and epistemological considerations. Both represent two ethical traditions that are historically, culturally, and methodologically different, but have common ground within the framework of universal human values. Matthieu Ricard is a philosopher and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism who is widely known in the contemporary world for his ideas on altruism as the basis for shared happiness. His views, which are sourced from spiritual experience, modern science, and secular humanism, make the concept of altruism that he proposes relevant in the pluralistic global ethical discourse. On the other hand, Ibn Miskawaih is an important figure in the classical Islamic philosophical tradition who represents a rationalistic approach to ethics, by synthesizing Greek thought and Islamic values within the framework of the formation of noble morals (*al-akhlaq al-karimah*). Through his work *Tahdzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathhir al-A'rāq*, Ibn Miskawaih offers an ethical system rooted in the development of the soul and the control of passions for the creation of social harmony.

Thus, the selection of Ricard and Ibn Miskawaih is significant because they not only offer ethical perspectives from two different backgrounds, modern Buddhism and rationalist Islam, but also make important contributions to a cross-cultural understanding of the value of altruism. The comparison between the two is expected to broaden the ethical horizon in answering contemporary moral challenges that are global, as well as encourage the integration of spiritual and rational values in the formation of more caring, empathetic, and civilized individual and societal characters.

## **Method**

This research uses a qualitative method with a library *research* approach, where data is obtained from various written sources such as books, journals, and relevant documents. This research does not involve data collection in the field, but focuses on the review and analysis of the available literature. In general, this method is a scientific process that is carried out systematically, starting from determining topics, collecting

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmad Yunus, Samsul Ma'arif & Hafiz Muhammad Amin, *Filsafat Etika Ibn Miskawaih*, *Jurnal Komunikasi Antar Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam*, Vol. XXI No. 2 (2022), 2022

information, to analyzing data, with the aim of gaining a deep understanding of a certain topic, phenomenon, or problem.<sup>15</sup>

The data analysis technique applied in this study is interpretive descriptive analysis, which is by interpreting data based on the context of the study and presenting the results in a systematic and structured manner. In addition, this study also uses a comparative method, which serves to compare two objects of thought to identify certain types, characteristics, or categories of a concept, and then place it within a broader framework of thought.<sup>16</sup> The analysis in this study was carried out descriptively-interpretively and comparatively, through four main stages. First, conceptual exploration to identify individual characters, such as altruism, ethics, and moral responsibility. Second, contextual interpretation, i.e. interpreting these concepts within the philosophical and sociocultural framework of Ricard's thought in modern Tibetan Buddhism and Ibn Miskawaih in rationalist Islamic philosophy. Third, philosophical comparison, by comparing the structure of concepts, moral orientations, epistemic sources, and social implications of both. Fourth, synthesis and critical evaluation, in order to formulate an integrative understanding of the ethical contributions of the two figures to contemporary moral discourse. This approach not only describes thinking, but also interprets the concept of altruism as a cross-civilizational moral value that is relevant to the current global ethical crisis. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the philosophy of ethics and offer practical relevance for the development of morality in contemporary society.

The data in this study is sourced from relevant primary and secondary literature. Primary sources include the original works of each character, such as the book *Altruism: The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World* by Matthieu Ricard translated by Charlotte Mandell and Sam Gordon into English and *Tahdzīb al-Akhlaq* by Ibn Miskawaih translated by Helmi Hidayat into Indonesian. In addition, secondary sources such as journal articles, academic books, and previous research are also used to support the understanding of the context of the two figures' thoughts.

## **Result**

### **1. Biographers Matthieu Ricard**

Matthieu Ricard Born in France in 1946, Matthieu Ricard was a Buddhist monk. He is an international bestselling author and a prominent speaker on the world stage, having been famous at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the NGH forum at the United Nations, and at TED, where his lectures on happiness have been watched by more than seven million people.<sup>17</sup> Matthieu Ricard's mother, Yahne Le Toumelin, was an

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<sup>15</sup> Raco, Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Jenis, Karakteristik dan Keunggulanya, (Grasindo: Jakarta, 2010).2

<sup>16</sup> Supiana, Metodologi Studi Islam, (PT Remaja Rosdakarya: Bandung, 2017).99

<sup>17</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 871

abstract painter and Tibetan Buddhist nun. In 1972, Ricard went to India and settled in the Himalayas to study with Tibetan masters, including Kangyur Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who later became his teacher until his death in 1991. Since then, Ricard has continued his teacher's spiritual vision and in 2000 founded **Karuna-Shechen**, a humanitarian organization that provides health, education, sustainable development, and cultural preservation services in the Himalayan region.<sup>18</sup>

Matthieu Ricard's thought was influenced by the fusion of Eastern Buddhist wisdom and Western science. From the Eastern tradition, he was inspired by the values of altruistic love, the potential for goodness, and self-development. Meanwhile, Western culture tends to emphasize individualism which often leads to selfishness. Ricard highlights this fundamental difference as the root of conflicting views on human nature. A number of Western philosophers such as Plautus, Hobbes, Nietzsche, and Freud view humans as selfish beings driven by selfish interests. On the contrary, Ricard believes that humans have an innate potential to do good. He observed that Western society glorifies wealth, power, and fame too much over wisdom, so it loses its direction in the search for true meaning and purpose in life.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Biography of Ibn Miskawaih

Ibn Miskawaih is one of the Muslim philosophers who has researched and elaborated on various issues of morality. His full name is Abu Ali al-Khazin Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub Ibn Miskawaih. He was born in the city of Ray, Iran, in 932 AD and died in Asfahan on 9 Shafar 412 H or 16 February 1030 AD.<sup>20</sup> Ibn Miskawaih comprehensively examines moral themes in his works such as *Tartib as-Sa'ada*, *Tahzib al-Akhlaq*, and *Jawidan Khirat*. These works reflect the development of Ibn Miskawaih's thought as an Islamic philosopher who delved deeply into ethics.<sup>21</sup>

Ibn Miskawaih lived during the reign of the Banu Abbas who was influenced by the Banu Buwaih, with the peak of glory in the era of 'Adhud Ad-Daulah (367-372 H). At that time, he was trusted as a treasurer and was known as a philosopher, physician, and scientist.<sup>22</sup> Ibn Miskawaih is known as an ethical philosopher who wrote about various fields of science such as medicine, language, history, and philosophy. His thoughts on ethics arose from his concern for the moral condition of society damaged by luxury and

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<sup>18</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 869

<sup>19</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015), l-iii

<sup>20</sup> Syarifuddin Elhayat, 2019, Filsafat Akhlak Perspektif Ibnu Miskawaih, *Jurnal Taushiah Fai Uisu*, Vol 9, No 2. 50

<sup>21</sup> Achmad Rafli Isnadi, Almi Novita, Implikasi Filsafat Etika Dalam Membangun Tata Krama Generasi Muda Melalui Pendidikan Karakter Prespektif Ibnu Miskawaih." *Kariman: Jurnal Pendidikan Keislaman*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2024. 83

<sup>22</sup> Khasan Bisri, *The Concept of Moral Education according to Ibn Miskawaih and its implications in Islamic education: Islamic Education Anthology series*, (Yogyakarta: Nusa media, 2021), pp. 4-6

deviant behavior. He was heavily inspired by Greek philosophy, especially Neo-Platonist teachings, but still based his ethical views on the values of the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. The Concept of Altruism Matthieu Ricard**

According to Matthieu Ricard, altruism reflects the elimination of selfish desires and living a life with the aim of devoting oneself to the welfare of others. Altruism in English *altruism*, from the Latin *alter* (other, other). This word was coined by Auguste Comte, a French philosopher. This term implies respect and concern for the interests of others, even for the sacrifice of personal interests.<sup>24</sup>

In Matthieu Ricard's frame of mind, there is a close and mutually reinforcing relationship between compassion, altruism, and happiness, which together form the foundation of universal ethics. Ricard views compassion as the psychological and spiritual foundation of altruistic action. Compassion is not just a passive emotion that feels the suffering of others, but an active urge to alleviate that suffering. From compassion, altruism is born as a form of real action aimed at the welfare of others selflessly. Ricard rejects the view that altruism demands painful sacrifices. Instead, he argues that altruistic actions actually produce deep happiness for the doer. In this case, happiness is not interpreted as momentary pleasure, but as happiness that arises from a sense of meaning, inner peace, and harmonious relationships with others. Ricard calls this double happiness, which is when doing good deeds towards others while enriching one's own inner life.<sup>25</sup>

Altruism is characterized by sincere kindness to all selfless beings. It appears at any time to support others, manifests in the mind, and is expressed appropriately according to the situation to meet the needs of others. Forms of altruism include several aspects. First, kindness that reflects attitudes in accordance with life values and is manifested through tangible actions to improve the well-being of others. Second, dedication, which is selfless devotion in serving individuals or goals that benefit the wider community. Third, brotherhood is born from the realization that all human beings are part of one great family of humanity. Fourth, solidarity that grows when individuals face challenges and difficulties together.<sup>26</sup>

In Matthieu Ricard's view, humans know that an action is good not only through social norms or habits, but through inner awareness trained by compassion. Ricard believes that true kindness comes from empathy that is aware of the ability to feel the suffering of others and sincerely desire to alleviate it. Actions are judged good when they are born out of selfless motivation, not driven by ego or the pursuit of personal gain, but rather by the intention to cultivate happiness and alleviate the suffering of other beings.

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<sup>23</sup> Fuadi, *Studi Tematik Narasi Pendidikan: Kajian Analisis Filosofis*, (Aceh: Ar-Raniry press, 2021), . 42-43

<sup>24</sup> Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005). 42

<sup>25</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown And Company, 2015). 15

<sup>26</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 3

Thus, within the framework of Ricard's moral philosophy, the measure of the morality of an action lies in its altruistic intentions and its positive impact on the common well-being, not on one's own interests.<sup>27</sup>

One of the important aspects of altruistic love is courage. Individuals who possess true altruism will act decisively and fearlessly. Insecurity and fear are the main obstacles to realizing an altruistic attitude. In Buddhism, the concept of "courageous compassion" is known. This is in line with Gandhi's statement that "love is not afraid of anything and anyone, love removes fear to its roots".<sup>28</sup> Matthieu Ricard quotes the Dalai Lama's view to distinguish between two types of altruism. The first type arises spontaneously as a result of biological predisposition inherited through evolutionary processes. On the contrary, altruism tends to be more neutral and impartial. For most people, this altruism does not arise spontaneously and requires effort to develop.<sup>29</sup>

Respecting others and paying attention to the condition of others are two aspects of altruism. When this attitude appears in a person, it will be manifested in acts of kindness towards others, which in turn manifest in an open attitude and willingness to pay attention. When aware of the existence of needs or desires in others that if fulfilled can save them from suffering or bring prosperity, empathy participates in increasing awareness of these needs. Furthermore, concern for others encourages to help meet those needs.<sup>30</sup>

Love and compassion are two aspects of altruism, which are distinguished by their object. Love focuses on the desire for all beings to feel happiness, while compassion focuses more on trying to eliminate their suffering.<sup>31</sup> The main goal of Matthieu Ricard's concept of Altruism is to increase the happiness of living beings and reduce the suffering experienced. Altruism and compassion have the goal of spreading themselves widely. In this regard, it is necessary to understand that our own well-being and the world in general cannot be achieved by ignoring the happiness of others or refusing to care about the suffering that exists around us.<sup>32</sup>

Altruism does not mean minimizing or tolerating the faults of others, but alleviating suffering in all its forms. The goal is to break the cycle of hate. "If we practice an eye for an eye," Gandhi said, "and a tooth for a tooth, the whole world will soon be blind and toothless." More subtly, Shantideva wrote: "How many bad people can I kill?

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<sup>27</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 13-14

<sup>28</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 19

<sup>29</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 20-21

<sup>30</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and The World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 7

<sup>31</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 15

<sup>32</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 13-14

They are everywhere and we will never be able to finish them off. However, if I kill hatred, I will overcome all my enemies.<sup>33</sup>

Happiness itself is generally divided into 2 types, namely: First, external happiness, which is happiness produced by fulfilling material or material needs. Second, happiness that is internal, that is, happiness that is related to the soul or mind, so that whatever comes and is obtained is a gift or something outside of material things.<sup>34</sup>

With altruism, the benefits given to others do not have to sacrifice our happiness. When we help sincerely, such as sharing or providing comfort, it actually fosters a sense of accomplishment and joy. For altruistic individuals, sacrifice is a source of happiness, not a loss.<sup>35</sup> As the Dalai Lama explains in his book Free in Exile, suffering comes from ignorance. Many people unknowingly cause suffering to others in pursuit of personal happiness or satisfaction. However, true happiness actually comes from inner peace and contentment, which can only be achieved through the development of an attitude of altruism, love, compassion, and by getting rid of anger, selfishness, and greed.

#### **4. Ibn Miskawaih's Concept of Ethics**

According to Ibn Miskawaih, morality, ethics, or morals are mental attitudes that encourage a person to act automatically without going through a thought process or consideration first.<sup>36</sup> Ibn Miskawaih built his ethical thinking by tracing the human soul. Ibn Miskawaih's understanding in building the concept of ethics is influenced by Western philosophical schools, especially Aristotle's thought, so that his thought style has Aristotelian nuances. He is of the view that humans have a soul that needs to be studied and explored because knowledge of the soul will lead humans to understand other sciences. Without understanding the science of the soul, a person will have difficulty in seeing truth and falsehood.<sup>37</sup> Ibn Miskawaih explained that morality is a state of the soul that gives birth to various qualities, good and bad. If the condition of the soul produces negative behavior, then a person's morals are considered bad, while if it causes various positive attitudes, then his morals are considered good.<sup>38</sup>

Ibn Miskawaih began his thoughts on ethics by studying in depth the human soul.<sup>39</sup> The main problems discussed in the study of morality are goodness (*al Khair*), happiness (*al sa'adah*) and priority (*al fadhilah*).<sup>40</sup> In Ibn Miskawaih's concept of morality, which can be called the hierarchy of ethics, there are three main levels. First,

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<sup>33</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 27

<sup>34</sup> Bagir Haidar, *Risalah Cinta Dan Kebahagiaan*, (Jakarta Selatan: Mizan Publiko), 2013. 50

<sup>35</sup> Matthieu Ricard, *The Power of Compassion to Change Yourself and the World*, Terj. Charlotte Mandel And Sam Gordon, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015). 81

<sup>36</sup> Nilda Miftahul Jannah, & Aryanti, Etika Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Islam, *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2018, 2(2). 5

<sup>37</sup> Fadhilah Sukmawati, and Muhamad Parhan. *Filosofi Etika Ibn Miskawaih Dan Implementasinya Terhadap Pendidikan Agama Islam*, Vol. 14, 1 , 2025. 90

<sup>38</sup> Lufathul Qibtiyah, Perbandingan Pendidikan Moral Perspektif Islam dan Barat. (Anggota IKAPI: Jawa Barat, 2016). 19

<sup>39</sup> Nizar, Pemikiran Etika Ibnu Miskawaih, *Jurnal Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality*, Volume 1, Nomor 1, Juni 2016. 38

<sup>40</sup> Nizar Barsihannor dan Muhammad Amri, Pemikiran Etika Ibnu Miskawaih, *Kuriositas*, Vol 11, No 1, Juni 2017.54

goodness (*al-khaiyr*) is when a person reaches the peak of the perfection of his being. In other words, this goodness depends on the noble qualities that man possesses, because only through these qualities can man attain the perfection of form. The ultimate goal of everything is good. Second, happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) is a form of perfection as well as the main goal in morality. Only humans who have intellect are able to feel happiness, because they can meditate, be aware, and understand its existence deeply. Happiness is a measurable condition, which allows a person to feel satisfaction, desire, and awareness of the good things he has. Therefore, only true human beings can experience happiness. Third, virtue (*al-fadīlah*) is a psychological condition that allows a person to act wisely and voluntarily without coercion. Thus, the concept of morality according to Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes the close relationship between goodness, happiness, and virtue as the foundation for achieving moral perfection and a harmonious life.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, Ibn Miskawaih views reason as the center of the control of the soul that guides humans in distinguishing good and evil rationally. Virtue (*al-fadīlah*) arises as a result of the control of reason over passions and emotions, allowing one to act voluntarily and consistently in goodness. Happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) is the highest goal attained through the perfection of the soul, i.e. the harmony between reason and virtue. Ibn Miskawaih emphasized that the highest happiness is the perfection of the rational soul in knowing God and doing good according to that knowledge. Thus, Ibn Miskawaih's ethics emphasized that true happiness is achieved only through the development of virtues based on rational reason and equanimity of the soul.

Regarding the human soul and its potential, Ibn Miskawaih divides the soul into three parts, namely the soul of thinking (*al-guwwah an-nathigah*), the soul of anger or anger (*al-guwwah as-ghadhabiyah*), and the soul of orgasm or desire (*al-guwwah as-syahwiyyah*). If a person is able to use his thinking soul to control these two passions, then virtue qualities will emerge. These virtues become the middle point (*wasath*) that creates balance and harmony between advantages and disadvantages.<sup>42</sup>

Ibn Miskawaih divided happiness into five types. First, happiness comes from physical health and sensory sensitivity that are well maintained thanks to a balanced temperament, so that hearing, sight, smell, feeling, and touch function optimally. Second, happiness is obtained from luck, friendship, and the ability to use wealth to do good anywhere. Third, the happiness that arises from good name and recognition among virtuous people, because of praise for their good deeds and ideals. Fourth, the happiness that arises from the success of achieving goals and ideals perfectly. Fifth, happiness is only obtained by people who have clear thinking, correct beliefs both in the realm of religion and non-religion, and the ability to give the right instructions without falling into errors.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Nor Hanifah dkk, Analisis Komparasi Etika Islam Ibnu Miskawaih Dan Modifikasi Perilaku Dalam Psikologi Barat." *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2025. 130

<sup>42</sup> Zainuri Mustopa, Ibnu Miskawaih Biografi dan Intisari Filsafatnya, (Pustaka Pelajar: Yogyakarta, 2004), 15

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998). 93

According to Ibn Miskawaih, happiness has a higher position than praise, because all other goodness will be commendable when associated with Allah SWT and His goodness. Praise itself is a right of virtue and its implementation.<sup>44</sup> Everything that has to do with humans can be classified into two groups, namely good things and bad things. Meanwhile, true happiness is happiness that is clean from the element of falsehood.<sup>45</sup> Perfect happiness can only be achieved through complete mastery of philosophy and wisdom. Wisdom, which is the highest quality of life, involves the purification of the soul from physical desires and passions to prepare oneself to meet God.<sup>46</sup>

According to Ibn Miskawaih, man knows that an action is good through a combination of the three main elements of reason (*'aql*), virtue (*faḍīlah*), and the consciousness of ultimate happiness (*sa 'ādah*) within the framework of rational ethics. First, the human mind has the capacity to recognize universal norms and moral principles it not only thinks logically, but also judges and directs the soul. In his work *Tahdzīb alAkhlāq*, Ibn Miskawaih states that man has an intelligent soul (*annafs alnātiqah*) that distinguishes himself from other beings, and the function of this intellect is to choose the middle path between extremes, rejecting advantages and disadvantages, as a form of virtue.<sup>47</sup>

Second, virtue becomes a concrete manifestation of the correct use of reason when reason regulates the passions and gives direction to the action to the soul, then virtue appears as a state of the soul that encourages good actions without having to go through consideration all the time. Ibn Miskawaih described that virtue is a state of the soul that encourages a person to do deeds without going through thought and consideration because the soul has been trained.<sup>48</sup>

Third, happiness (*sa 'ādah*) is the ultimate goal of this series, that is, when good deeds rest on a trained mind and a virtuous soul, then man attains the highest state of moral life. In his book, Ibn Miskawaih said that morality is the first asset to achieve happiness in life, that is, happiness that is not measured by property or material life but by mental and spiritual achievements.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in the framework of Ibn Miskawaih, man knows that actions are good if his intellect recognizes the moral norms that are right and rejects the wrong. His soul has been trained in virtue so that good deeds become a natural tendency and such actions lead to *sa 'ādah* i.e. perfection of soul and supreme happiness.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998). 108

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998).40-43

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998). 100-102.

<sup>47</sup> H. Muhtadi, H, 'Konsep Pendidikan Akhlak Perspektif Ibn Miskawaih', *Sumbula : Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial Dan Budaya*, Vol.1 No.1.Konsep Pendidikan Akhlak (2016), 22-42. 38

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998). 39

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998). 91

Without these three elements, the judgment that a good action depends only on social habits or rules, and thus does not reach the deeper dimensions of moral philosophy.<sup>50</sup>

In Ibn Miskawaih's view, the pinnacle of ethics is the attainment of moral perfection, when all human actions no longer stem from worldly impulses, but reflect divine attributes. At this stage, every deed becomes a manifestation of the absolute goodness of goodness that is not done for any other purpose outside of itself, but because it is valuable as an end itself. True goodness, in this case, is intrinsic and final. Thus, when man has made all his actions a reflection of the Divine will, he has not only acted ethically, but has become one with the essence of goodness itself.<sup>51</sup> The true essence of man is manifested when he has an enlightened soul. Through the intelligence of the soul, man not only transcends existential superficiality, but also attains a spiritual position on par with the angels. This soul is the boundary between humans and other creatures who live simply by instinct. The most noble man is he whose soul is deepest, and who in every aspect of his life is always directed by the light of reason and wisdom that springs from the enlightened soul.<sup>52</sup>

Matthieu Ricard views the source of moral knowledge as something inward and emotional, which grows through compassionate awareness and experience. Moral knowledge for Ricard arises from trained empathy and deep altruistic motivation. Meanwhile, Ibn Miskawaih saw that the source of morality comes from rational reason and the ability of the soul to control lust, so that virtue becomes a trait of the soul that encourages moral action automatically. According to Ibn Miskawaih, moral knowledge is intellectual and practical, rooted in reflection and the formation of correct habits. Both place the internal experience of man as the center of morality, but Ricard emphasizes the spiritual and emotional dimensions more, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes the rational and structural aspects of the human soul. Thus, the two views provide a rich and complementary perspective in understanding the source of human morality.

## 5. Comparative Studies of Matthieu Ricard and Ibn Miskawaih's Islamic Ethics

Aspects	Matthieu Ricard	Ibn Miskawaih	Philosophical Cause & Meaning	Differences and Similarities Arguments
<b>The Source of Morality</b>	Morality comes from the inner and the emotional, especially <i>compassion</i> and	Morality comes from rational reason and the soul's control over lust, so	Ricard emphasizes the spiritual and emotional dimensions as	This difference arises because of his cultural background and philosophical

<sup>50</sup> Abdul Hakim, Filsafat Etika Ibn Miskawaih, *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2016, 204

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Miskawaih, *Menuju Kesempurnaan Akhlak Buku Daras Pertama Tentang Filsafat Etika*, terj. Helmi Hidayat (Bandung: Anggota IKAPI, 1998). 98-100

<sup>52</sup> Abdul Hakim, Filsafat Etika Ibn Miskawaih, *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2016.. 204

	the experience of empathy	virtue becomes an automatic soul trait	the center of moral experience, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes rationality and the structure of the trained soul	traditions, Ricard combines Buddhism and Western science that emphasizes subjective experience, while Ibn Miskawaih is influenced by Greek philosophy (Aristotle) and Islamic teachings that prioritize reason and habit formation. However, both agree that morality grows out of human internal experience, both emotional and rational, so both contribute to a universal understanding of morality.
<b>The Role of Emotions and Reason</b>	Compassion emotions become the center of moral development, intellect more as a supporting tool	The intellect becomes the center of the control of the soul, regulating the passions and emotions to produce virtue	In Buddhism, positive emotions such as compassion are considered the foundation of ethics, whereas in Islamic philosophy, reason is the regulator and determinant of right moral actions	This distinction reflects an integrative approach between spirituality and rationality: Ricard emphasizes empathy as a moral experience that moves action, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes the structure of the soul and the

				control of reason to form virtue. Yet both recognize the importance of internal consciousness as the center of morality.
<b>The Concept of Virtue</b>	Virtue arises from altruistic actions based on selfless compassion	Virtue is a state of the soul that encourages good actions automatically without consideration	Ricard sees virtue as the fruit of sincere and spiritual motivation, Ibn Miskawaih sees virtue as the result of the training of reason and habit	Both agree that virtue is not just an outward behavior, but also an internalized inner state reinforcing the universal moral idea that true morality is the consistency between intentions and actions.
<b>Ethical Focus</b>	Altruism, compassion, and inner happiness as a result of selfless actions	Virtue ( <i>fadilah</i> ), perfection of soul, and happiness ( <i>sa'ādah</i> ) as the highest goals through reason and the control of the passions	Ricard sees happiness as a direct result of altruistic actions rooted in compassion, Ibn Miskawaih sees happiness as the result of the harmonized of the mind and the virtuous soul	Although the terminology is different, both consider happiness to be the highest moral goal achieved through Ricard's inner transformation through daring love, Ibn Miskawaih through the mastery of reason and virtue. This shows that universal morality includes the inner

				dimension and the harmonious purpose of life.
<b>Moral Motivation</b>	Moral motivation is altruistic, aiming to reduce suffering and increase mutual happiness	Moral motivation is rational consciousness that leads to the perfection of the soul	Ricard views motivation as the result of active love, Ibn Miskawaih sees it as the result of the mastery of reason that combines virtue and consciousness	Both thinkers reject egoism as the primary moral motivation and emphasize motivations that go beyond self-interest, affirming the existence of an essential commonality in the universal moral values of sacrifice and the common good.
<b>Methods of Moral Development</b>	Practice compassion, meditation, and spiritual development through hands-on experience	Education, habit formation, and rational reflection	These differences are related to the cultural context and practices of each Buddhist tradition emphasizing contemplative practice, Islam and Greek philosophy emphasizing education and reason	Both recognize the importance of practice and habituation to attain a good moral state, although with different approaches this underscores the universal principle that morality is a process that is constantly being developed.

## 6. Philosophical Limitations

Although Matthieu Ricard's thought offers profound insights into altruism rooted in compassion and inner happiness, this theory faces philosophical limitations in practice. Ricard's approach emphasizing spiritual enlightenment and inner transformation is often considered utopian and difficult to apply widely without strict spiritual discipline.

Altruism in Ricard's framework is not just a social action, but the result of a deep exercise of consciousness and development of the soul, so that for many laypeople, this concept can feel abstract and less practical in everyday life.

In contrast, Ibn Miskawaih presents a more rationalistic and structural approach to ethics, with an emphasis on reason as the center of morality and the formation of trained habits. However, this approach can be considered elitist because it requires individuals to have a high intellectual capacity and moral reflection to achieve true virtue. Ibn Miskawaih's ethics, which rely heavily on reason and the control of passions, sometimes lacks the emotional and spiritual dimensions that are vital in building genuine social relationships.

This limitation opens up space for potential complementarity between the two theories. Ricard emphasizes the importance of inner enlightenment and holistic universal happiness, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes the akali happiness (*sa'ādah aqliyyah*) that arises from the balance of the soul and the use of reason. By combining the two, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of altruism as the spiritual and emotional aspects that drive sincere intentions (Ricard), combined with rational discipline and the formation of moral character (Ibn Miskawaih). This combination can strengthen the theory of altruism as a foundation of universal ethics that is relevant and applicable in the modern context.

This article argues that although Matthieu Ricard and Ibn Miskawaih came from different philosophical traditions, Ricard from contemporary Buddhism and Ibn Miskawaih from classical Islamic philosophy both expressed moral universality through the concept of altruism. These two figures highlight the importance of selflessness as the core of ethics, although they emphasize different aspects. Ricard on compassion and inner happiness, and Ibn Miskawaih on reason and virtue. The common thread that connects their thinking is that altruism is not just a social norm, but an expression of a deep moral consciousness and is the foundation for true happiness and universal harmony of humanity.

## **Conclusion/Conclusion**

From Matthieu Ricard's perspective, altruism is closely related to *compassion* born of inner enlightenment, which is a consciousness that is able to transcend personal selfishness and bring universal happiness. Ricard emphasized the importance of spiritual experience as a foundation for realizing sincere and all-round affection. However, his approach is often considered idealistic and difficult to apply widely without intense spiritual discipline. Meanwhile, Ibn Miskawaih emphasized the aspect of virtue that is built on the basis of reason and self-control. According to him, *happiness (sa'adah)* is obtained through the formation of rational character. This approach offers a strong and measurable moral foundation, but tends to be elitist and lacks the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the human being.

A comparative study of Matthieu Ricard's thought and Ibn Miskawaih's Islamic ethics on altruism reveals that although both depart from different philosophical perspectives, spirituality and rationality both touch on the universal dimensions of human morality and goodness. More than just a comparison, this study presents a new idea that can be called *transcendental altruism*, which is a form of altruism that goes beyond the limits of just social action or individual virtue. This transcendental altruism is a synthesis between compassion that is transcendent and intuitive according to Ricard, with the rational virtues and self-control emphasized by Ibn Miskawaih.

By integrating spiritual depth and the discipline of reason, this concept not only enriches the understanding of the ethics of altruism, but also opens up opportunities for a more inclusive and holistic practical application in modern life. This approach encourages individuals to develop deep empathy as well as rational wisdom, so that altruism becomes a moral force that is able to bridge the plurality of cultures and beliefs. Thus, *transcendental altruism* not only answers the limitations of each theory, but also offers a new ethical paradigm that is relevant to confronting contemporary social challenges, in which inner enlightenment and moral intelligence must go hand in hand for the creation of universal happiness and justice.

#### Next Research Suggestions

Comparative research between Ricard's concept of altruism and that of other figures such as Albert Schweitzer, Peter Singer, or even Imam Al-Ghazali can enrich the discourse on global ethics.

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