

Lesson 26: Man and Freewill

One of the controversial issues in the justice and wisdom of God is the question of man's freewill (*ikhtiyār*) in actions which are within the domain of obligation (*taklīf*) and for which he is either praised or condemned. This is because obliging a person under compulsion, and praising or condemning him for an action he does under such condition is evil and incorrect, and as dictated by the principle of justice and wisdom, God is immune from evil deeds.

In refuting the notion of those who regard the Divine decree and providence as tantamount to the absence of freewill in the human being, Imām 'Alī (‘a) has said:

لَوْ كَانَ كَذَلِكَ لَبَطَلَ الثَّوَابُ وَالْعِقَابُ، وَالْأَمْرُ وَالنَّهْيُ وَالزُّجْرُ وَالسَّقَطُ مَعْنَى الْوَعْدِ وَالْوَعِيدِ، وَلَمْ يَكُنْ عَلَى مُسَىءٍ لَائِمَةٌ
وَلَا لِمُحْسِنٍ مَحْمَدَةٌ.

“If it was such, reward and punishment, command and prohibition and chastisement were false, and promise and warning baseless, and the wrongdoer would not be condemned and the doer of good be praised.”¹

Muḥammad ibn ‘Ajlūn asked Imām al-Ḥadiq (‘a), “Had God compelled [His] servants in their actions?” The Imām (‘a) replied, thus:

اللَّهُ أَعْدَلُ مِنْ أَنْ يُجْبِرَ عَبْدًا عَلَى فِعْلٍ ثُمَّ يُعَذِّبُهُ عَلَيْهِ.

“Allah is more just than that He would compel a servant to do something and thereafter punish him.”²

Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī Washsh’ asked Imām al-Riḍā (‘a), “Does Allah compel [His] servants to commit sins?” The Imām (‘a) replied:

اللَّهُ أَعْدَلُ وَأَحْكَمُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ.

“Allah is more just and wise than that (compelling His servants to commit sins).”³

In the said traditions (*ad-dath*), predetermination’s inconsistency with the justice and wisdom of God as well as with [the implication of] duty, promise, warning, reward, and punishment has been pointed out and emphasized.

The justice-oriented theologians have also regarded the notion of predetermination (*jabr*) as contrary to the Divine justice, and by citing the justice and wisdom of God, they have argued for the freewill of man. For instance, W^{il} ibn ‘A^{il} has said:

إِنَّ الْبَارِيَّ تَعَالَى عَدْلٌ حَكِيمٌ... وَلَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُرِيدَ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ خِلَافَ مَا يَأْمُرُ، وَيَحْتُمُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَيْئاً ثُمَّ يُجَازِيهِمْ عَلَيْهِ.

“Indeed God, the Exalted, is just and wise... It is not inconceivable [for Him] to desire for [His] servants that which is contrary to what He commands, and to compel them to do something and punish them afterward [for doing so].”⁴

After pointing out that the existence of freewill in man is something axiomatic in that it requires no more proof, Ibn Maytham al-Ba^r has mentioned forms of warning two of which are as follows:

1. Every reasonable person considers good to praise what is good and to condemn what is evil, and this point depends on the fact that the doer of good and the evildoer are the agents of their respective actions.
2. Our conscience can discern that our actions depend on our motives and freewill has no meaning other than this.⁵

Mu^{aq} al-^s has also considered self-evident the agency (*f^{iliyyah}*) and freewill of man, saying thus:

وَالضَّرُورَةُ قَاضِيَةٌ بِاسْتِنَادِ أفعالنا إِلَيْنَا.

“Axiomatic perception testifies that our actions are traceable to us.”⁶

The Theologians’ Opinions on the Interpretation of Freewill

The abovementioned rational and textual proofs affirm the principle of freewill for man. On this basis, belief in predeterminism in actions is invalid. Now, let us see how the Muslim theologians have interpreted freewill. On the interpretation of freewill, three views have been advanced, viz. (1) *tafw^{iq}* (total delegation), (2) *kasb* (acquisition), and (3) *amr bayn al-amrayn* (position between two positions).

Now, we shall examine these three views:

1. The Theory of Tafw

The outcome of the theory of *tafw* is that the voluntary action of man is brought into being by himself alone and it is not a creation (*makhlaq*) of God. The attribution of man's action to God is not a real attribution. It rather means that God had created man and has given him the ability to do an action, but He has no involvement in the performance or non-performance of any single human act. That is, his action is ontologically delegated to him. The proofs presented by Q 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Mu'tazil for this theory are as follows:

1. Man's actions depend on his motive and intention. He does whatever he intends. He does not do whatever he does not intend. Therefore, man is the creator of his own work, and God has not created it in him.⁷
2. God cannot be considered the creator of man's actions because among them are acts of injustice and oppression, and God is immune from injustice and oppression.⁸
3. Verses of the Qur'an also show that God is not the creator of man's action because according to the following verse, that which God creates is good:

﴿ الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ ﴾

"[It is He] who perfected everything that He created."⁹

And it is free from blemish as well:

﴿ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ﴾

"[It is He] who has made everything faultless."¹⁰

This is while some of the human actions are unacceptable and faulty. So, God can never be the agent and creator of these actions. The Holy Qur'an has thus stated:

﴿ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ﴾

"Let anyone who wishes believe it, and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it."¹¹

Examination and Criticism

1. From the proofs presented above, beyond the fact that man's action is truly traceable to him and he is real agent of his action and that he does it out of his own freewill and volition cannot be inferred. But that

his action is not a creation of God cannot be inferred from the same because good and evil are sometimes ontological and real, and at times, they are relative and abstractive. Ontologically, whatever exists in the universe has the attribute of goodness, and the verse “[It is He] who perfected everything that He created” refers to this fact.

2. Relatively, good and evil are abstracted after the materialization of action and in confirmation with the rational and religious rules. It is this good and evil attributed to man that makes his choice the basis of conformity or non-conformity of the action to the rational and religious rules. But that man’s intention or motive has a role in his action or that faith and unbelief are entrusted to his choice and will do not suggest his independence in doing his action and negating the action as being a creation of God.

3. *Tafw* is a kind of dualism and it is in conflict with the principles of the Divine Unity (*taw*) in creation (*khaliqiyah*) and management (*tadbir*).

After citing the theory of *tafw* and the motive behind it which is to defend the justice of God and to declare His immunity [from any false attribution], *ʿAdr al-Mutaʿallih* has criticized it and thus said:

“They have overlooked the fact that their view necessitates affirmation of so many partners of God. There is no doubt that belief in the individuals as the creators of [their own] actions is worse than the belief in the idols and stars as intercessors before God.”¹²

It is for this reason that in some traditions (*adith*), Qadariyyah (those who negate the Divine power in voluntary actions or those who subscribe to *tafw*) are described as the Magians (*majis*) of the Muslim community (*ummah*). In *Thawb al-Aʿmal*, for instance, Shaykh al-ʿAdiq recorded Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to have said:

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ مَجُوسٌ، وَمَجُوسُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا قَدَرَ.

“There is a Magian for every community and the Magians of this community are those who deny the Divine decree (*qadr*).”¹³

Another problem with this theory is that it goes against the universality of the absolute power and sovereignty of God. In the traditions (*adith*) narrated from the pure Imams (ʿa) about the refutation of the theory of *tafw*, this flaw has always been mentioned. For instance, it is thus stated in a tradition narrated by Imam al-ʿAdiq (ʿa) from the Prophet (ﷺ):

مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّ الْخَيْرَ وَالشَّرَّ بغيرِ مَشِيَةِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ أَخْرَجَ اللَّهَ عَنْ سُلْطَانِهِ.

“Anyone who imagines that good and bad are outside the will of Allah has thrown Allah out of His sovereignty.”¹⁴

In another *ʿadāth*, it is reported that Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) addressed ʿasan al-Baʿr, thus:

إِيَّاكَ أَنْ تَقُولَ بِالتَّفْوِيضِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يُفَوِّضِ الْأَمْرَ إِلَى خَلْقِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْهُ وَضَعْفًا.

“Never say ‘delegation’ (*tafwīz*) for Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, has not delegated the affair of creation and control to His creatures out of weakness and impotence.”¹⁵

And Imām al-Qādiq (‘a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ الْقَدَرِيَّةَ مَجُوسٌ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ وَهُمْ الَّذِينَ أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَصِفُوا اللَّهَ بِعَدْلِهِ فَأَخْرَجُوهُ مِنْ سُلْطَانِهِ.

“Qadariyyah are the Magians of this community. They are those who want to describe God with justice but the consequence is that they got rid of his sovereignty.”¹⁶

2. The Theory of Kasb

The majority of Ash‘arī theologians are of the opinion that the human actions are only realized through the power of God, and man’s ability and freewill have no role at all in their realization. The author of *Al-Mawāqif* has said:

إِنَّ أَفْعَالَ الْعِبَادِ الْإِخْتِيَارِيَّةَ وَاقِعَةٌ بِقَدْرِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى وَحْدَهَا.

“Indeed the voluntary actions of the servants are solely realized by the power of Allah, the Glorious and Exalted.”¹⁷

Their most important motive in advancing this theory is to defend the principle of the Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) in Creatorship (*khaliqiyah*).

Now, this objection can be raised: if the voluntary actions of man are solely creations and caused by the power of God and that the ability and freewill of man has no role at all in their realization, it follows that he is an agent under compulsion, and as the Ash‘arīs have considered the theory of *jabr* (compulsion) unacceptable, they regard the human being as free (*mukhtār*).

In order to get out of this impasse and explain man’s freewill and that his power and will have a sort of relationship with his voluntary actions, they have put forth the theory of *kasb* (acquisition). As Taftazānī has said,

“That man is a free agent has no meaning other than that he creates his actions through [his] own motive and will, and on the other hand, God is the free Agent of all things including man’s actions. And it

is clear that two independent powers cannot be associated with a single action. In order to get free from this impasse, there is no escape except for us to say that God is the creator of man's action, and man is the one who acquires it.”¹⁸

The Interpretation of Kasb

In interpreting *kasb*, Ash'arī theologians have expressed different views, but the most popular of them is that the connection between God's creation of the human action and man's power and freewill – which are also God's creations – is called *kasb* (acquisition), and the said connection is not that of cause-and-effect.

That is, man's ability and freewill have no role in the realization of its action; it is rather that of the connection between the receptacle (*ʿarf*) and the utensil (*maʿrʿf*), the dwelling (*ʿill*) and the dwelling place (*maʿall*). As Mār Sayyid Sharʿf Gurgānī and Fāʿil Qawshchī have said,

أَلْمُرَادُ بِكَسْبِهِ إِتْيَاهُ مُقَارِنَتُهُ لِقُدْرَتِهِ وَإِرَادَتِهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَكُونَ هُنَاكَ مَعَهُ تَأْتِيرٌ أَوْ مَدْخَلٌ فِي وُجُودِهِ كَوْنَهُ مَحَلًّا لَهُ

“That man ‘acquires’ his own action means that his ability and will have connection with the occurrence of the action without his ability having any influence on the existence of the action except that man is the locus of the action's occurrence.”¹⁹

A Criticism of the Theory of Kasb

The theory of *kasb* is criticized and refuted not only by those who oppose the Ash'arīs (i.e. the justice-oriented theologians). In fact, some Ash'arī scholars have also considered it not enough to solve the problem of predestination. For instance, Aḥmad Amīn al-Miṣrī has regarded it as a new terminology for the theory of predestination, saying thus:

وَهُوَ – كَمَا تَرَى – لَا يُقَدِّمُ فِي الْمَوْضُوعِ وَلَا يُؤَخِّرُ، فَهُوَ شِكْلٌ جَدِيدٌ فِي التَّعْبِيرِ عَنِ الْجَبْرِ

“And as you can see, it does not offer or suspend anything from the subject as it is [just] a new form of the expression of ‘predestination’.”²⁰

In criticizing the theory of *kasb*, Shaykh al-Shaltūt has also said, thus:

“The interpretation of *kasb* as a common symmetry between man's action and ability without his ability having any role in the realization of the action – in addition to being inconsistent with its literal and Qur'anic expression – is also beyond explanation of the question of duty and the principle of Divine justice and man's responsibility.

This is because the said connection is the outcome of the creation of action by God within the receptacle of man's ability, and not a creation or affordable to man so as to be emender of the action's relation to man. Just as action has connection with man's ability, it has also connection with his hearing, sight and knowledge. In this case, ability has such distinction that action's connection with it makes attribution of action to man be known!"²¹

The Theory of the "Position between Two Positions" (amr bayn al-amrayn)

It becomes clear from the above point that none of the two theories – *tafw* and *kasb* – in relation to the interpretation and justification of the principle of freewill can be accepted. The theory of *tafw* is inconsistent with the explanation on God's creatorship and universality of His absolute power and sovereignty, and the theory of *kasb* is no different from determinism except in expression or terminology, and as a result, it is incompatible with the principle of the Divine justice, duty and its functions.

Here, there is another theory which is well known as the "position between two positions" (*amr bayn al-amrayn*). This theory was put forth by the Imams from among the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and was accepted by the Imams theologians and Muslim philosophers.

A Historical Survey of the "Position between Two Positions"

It can be inferred from the study of traditions (*ahadith*) that this theory was first advanced by Imam 'Alī ('a). As narrated, Imam 'Alī ('a) was talking about the wonders of the human soul and heart when someone stood up and asked him to talk about predestination (*qadar*). Because of the intricacy and profundity of the issue, the Imam ('a) considered it inappropriate to talk about it under such circumstances and asked the person to refrain from raising the question. However, he raised his question again while the Imam ('a) kept on refraining from dealing with the issue of *qadar*. When he repeated his question for the fourth time, the Imam ('a) said:

لَمَّا أُبِيَّتَ فَإِنَّهُ أَمْرٌ بَيْنَ الْأَمْرَيْنِ، لَا جِبْرَ وَلَا تَفْوِيضَ

"Since you insist, [then be it known that] the position is between two positions; there is neither predetermination (*jabr*) nor absolute freewill (*tafw*)."²²

During the time of Imam al-Hasan, Imam al-Usayn and Imam Zayn al-'Abidin – on account of the exceptional political conditions created by the Umayyad rulers throughout the Muslim world of that ear, the people's link with the People of Revelation was severed and they were not even referred to in matters relating to the religious laws and ideological issues. For this reason, the traditions (*ahadith*) concerning them are very few and the number of *ahadith* regarding the "position between two

positions” is also very insignificant.

During the time of Imām al-Baqir and Imām al-Qādiq (‘a), however, the atmosphere of suppression and persecution was somehow mitigated and the people could then be able to refer to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) on matters pertaining to religious questions and teachings. The *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), in turn, were able to initiate and strengthen a profound and deep-rooted cultural movement. As such, ample traditions (*ahādīth*) in various aspects of the religious teachings have been narrated by them. Among these *ahādīth* are about the incorrectness of predeterminism and absolute freewill, and the correct position is the “position between two positions”. We shall now cite examples of these traditions.

A Manifestation of the Divine Grace

Someone asked Imām al-Qādiq (‘a), thus: “Has God compelled [His] servants to commit sins?” The Imām (‘a) said, “No.” The person asked, “What is the truth then?” The Imām (‘a) said:

لُطْفٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ.

“The grace emanating from your Lord is between that.”²³

[Regarding the word *luṭf* (grace), Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī thus writes:]

“In lexicon, the word *luṭf* or *liṭṭah* means *ṣirṭah* (elegance) which is used for something abstract and subtle. *Luṭf* is one of the Attributes of Divine Beauty and one of the Best Names (*asmā’ al-ḥusnā*) of God. Sometimes, it is [meant as] an Attribute of the Divine Essence and refers to His knowledge of the subtleties of things. At other times, it is [meant as] an Attribute of the Divine Action and refers to the special and judicious management on the basis of the Divine mercy.”²⁴

Of the said two meanings, the second meaning is suitable to the Station, and as a result, what is meant by wisdom of the Divine grace which is between predetermination and absolute freewill is that each predetermination or each absolute freewill is in conflict with the justice, wisdom and mercy of God which are considered the foundations of God’s active grace. Between these two, therefore, there is a third way which is based upon the Divine grace and reflects the wise, just and compassionate management of God. This way which is the manifestation of the Divine grace, and real at the same time, is elegant and subtle, and to grasp them is beyond the common intellectual levels. And for this reason, the Imām (‘a) would refrain from interpreting it to the one who asked.

Known Only to the True Men of Learning

Someone asked Imām al-Qādiq (‘a) about predestination and absolute freewill. The Imām (‘a) thus replied:

لا جبرَ ولا قدرَ ولكنْ منزلةً بينهما، فيها الحقُّ التي لا يعلمها إلا العالمُ أو من علمها إياه العالمُ.

“There is neither predestination nor absolute freewill, but between them is a position in which is the truth, and no one knows it except the learned person or one who is taught by a learned person.”²⁵

An Illustrious Example

It is recorded in another *ʿadith* that Imām al-ʿadīq (‘a) was asked about the truth of the “position between two positions” (*amr bayn al-amrayn*). The Imām (‘a) said:

“Allegorically, the ‘position between two positions’ is like seeing someone who is committing a sin. You dissuade him from doing so but he does not pay attention to you. So, you leave him alone. In this case, neither did you command him to commit a sin nor did you persuade him to do so.”

In his commentary to this tradition, ʿadr al-Mutaʿallih has some interesting remarks. He says:

“The [level of] thinking or intellect of so many theosophers and scholars has failed to understand and grasp the truth of the ‘position between two positions’, let alone the common people with a superficial level of understanding.

And the allegory chosen by the Imām (‘a) for the guidance of people with such ideas and the protection of their beliefs from deviation toward predeterminism or absolute freewill is illustrious and rational, because in this allegory two points have been highlighted, viz. dissuading the sinner and the absence of compulsion in committing sin.

“The first point stresses that he is not totally left to himself and thus the notion of *tafwīḥ* is invalid. Similarly, the second point highlights someone’s not being compelled with respect to the sin he commits.”²⁶

A Firm Principle

There was a discussion about predeterminism and absolute freewill in the presence of Imām al-Riḍā (‘a). The Imām (‘a) addressed those who were present by saying, “Regarding this issue, do you want me to teach you a principle with which you will prevail over your opponents in a debate? Those who were present expressed interest and the Imām (‘a) thus said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يُطَعْ بِإِكْرَاهٍ، وَلَمْ يُعْصَ بِغَلْبَةٍ وَلَمْ يُهْمَلِ الْعِبَادَ فِي مُلْكِهِ.

“Indeed Allah, the Almighty and Glorious, is not obeyed by compulsion and not disobeyed by dominance, and He has not abandoned [His] servants in His dominion.”

هُوَ الْمَالِكُ لِمَا مَلَكَهُمْ، وَالْقَادِرُ عَلَى مَا أَقْدَرَهُمْ عَلَيْهِ.

“He is the Master of the things to whom He is entitled, and He is Omnipotent over the things on which He has power.”²⁷

These two statements speak of the truth of the “position between two positions” (*amr bayn al-amrayn*) which combines the sovereignty and omnipotence of God and man; that is, man is the owner of his own action and has power over it and also his action is within the dominion of God and predestined by Him. These two are parallel to each other and not opposite to each other, thus requiring contradiction and opposition.

Imām al-Hādī (‘a) and the Interpretation of Amr Bayn al-Amrayn

There is a reported epistle of Imām al-Ḥādī (‘a) about predeterminism, absolute freewill and *amr bayn al-amrayn*. This epistle has been quoted by ‘Alī ibn al-Usayn ibn Shu‘bah al-Ḥarrānī (one of the Shā‘ah scholars during the fourth century AH) *Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl* and Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ḥabīb al-Ḥabarsī (one of the Shā‘ah during the sixth century AH), and except in some expressions, there is no difference between these two quotations.

According to the narration of Ḥabarsī, the said epistle was a reply to the letter of the people of Ahwāz.²⁸

It consists of an introduction and three general sections. One of these sections is allocated to a commentary or interpretation of *amr bayn al-amrayn*, and the axis of the discussion revolves around the *ḥadīth* of Imām al-Ḥādī (‘a) when he said, “There is neither predeterminism nor absolute freewill but rather the [correct] affair is between the two affairs.”²⁹

The said epistle contains subtle points in exegesis (*tafsīr*) and theology (*kalām*), and to examine them requires a separate book and it is beyond the scope of this discussion. It is sufficient for us to quote only part of that section which is related to *amr bayn al-amrayn*:

وَلَسْنَا نَدِينُ بِجَبْرِ وَلَا تَفْوِيضٍ، لَكِنَّا نَقُولُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ بَيْنَ الْمَنْزِلَتَيْنِ وَهُوَ الْإِمْتِحَانُ وَالْإِخْتِبَارُ بِالِاسْتِطَاعَةِ الَّتِي مَلَكَهَا اللَّهُ وَتَعَبَّدْنَا بِهَا عَلَى مَا شَهِدَ بِهِ الْكِتَابُ وَدَانَ بِهِ الْأُتَمَّةُ الْأَبْرَارُ مِنْ آلِ الرَّسُولِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ

In the above line, by mentioning the essence of the Divine duty and test Imām al-Hādī (‘a) has demonstrated the incorrectness of the notion of predetermination (*jabr*), and by stating that the ability which man possesses is a Divine grace which is bestowed upon him by God at every moment, the Imām (‘a) has pointed out the incorrectness of the notion of absolute freewill (*tafwīḥ*).

Then, in order to explain this subtle truth, the Imām (‘a) has cited a parable which is as follows: someone has a servant and although he is aware of his servant’s spiritual and mental condition, he wants to test

him. Accordingly, he gives him ownership of some of his properties and mentions some points related to them. He reminds him that this ownership is temporary and thereafter there shall be a longer life. If he (servant) will utilize the properties in the way pleasing to him (master), he will enjoy many rewards in the longer life. But if he will act contrary to that, he will incur punishment.

During the time when the servant is the owner of the said properties, the master always gives him advice and admonition. Then, after the end of the term, he (master) takes absolute possession of the servant and properties again (although during that term, he had not totally severed his sense of ownership of them), acting upon his promises and threats. The said servant is neither compelled by his master nor is he totally abandoned alone. Neither predetermination nor absolute freewill is applicable to him.

The application of this parable to the subject of our discussion is to say that God is the Great Master and the servants are the Children of Adam; the properties refer to the all-encompassing power of God and the philosophy of test is the expression of God's wisdom and power. The temporary life refers to the life in this world.

Some of the properties whose ownership is given to the servant refer to the ability endowed by God to His servants. The admonitions related to the properties refer to the instructions of the prophets of God and the things they prohibit are the ways of Satan. And the eternal life and Divine promises refer to the abode in the Hereafter and the perpetual blessings therein.³⁰

The Philosophical Interpretation of Amr Bayn al-Amrayn

The philosophical interpretation of *amr bayn al-amrayn* is based upon two philosophical principles:

1. As dictated by the authenticity and unity of the essence of existence (*wijūd*), existence in all its manifestations and levels has its special traces, and as such, citation of the actions and effects of beings – be they material and immaterial, animate or inanimate – is a real citation. For instance, the cause-and-effect relationship among the creatures can also be interpreted to be based upon the same principle; that is, the existence of ontological relationship and existential concomitance between the action and the agent, the effect and the cause.
2. Contingent existence is a dependent and wanting identity, and this dependence and indigence is its very essence and identity, and not something added and accidental to it; otherwise, it would have acquired a sort of independence and self-sufficiency and it would have been rival of and equal to the Necessary Being, and this is in conflict with the essence of the Divine Unity (*tawhīd*) in Essence of God. And since origination (*ʿsījūd*) is different from existence (*wujūd*), it follows that the contingent existences have no independence in origination and action, as they do in their very existence.

The clear outcome of these two principles is that man's actions have ontological and real relationship with his ability and freewill and he is indeed the agent of his actions [and therefore the notion of

predeterminism is invalid]. However, since his existence is a creation and product of God, his action – while having ontological and real emanation from Him – is also connected to God.

Hence, the notion of *tafw* is also invalid, and since these two citations are parallel to each other and not accidental, there will be no contradiction to follow. This interpretation is one of the original ideas of *ʿadr al-Mutaʿallih* and has been adopted by the followers of transcendental wisdom (*ʿikmat-e mutaʿliyah*) after him.³¹ *ʿak* Sabziw *ʿr* has brought out the said proof in this way:

لَكِنْ كَمَا الوجودُ مَنْسُوبٌ لَنَا فَالْفِعْلُ فِعْلُ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ فِعْلُنَا

Yet, as the existence is attributed to us,

*The action is hence the action of Allah and it is our action.*³²

Im al-Khumayn (may his soul be sanctified) has also interpreted *amr bayn al-amrayn* in the same way.³³

A Study of the Book of the Self

The best guide in discerning this profound subject and the manner of attributing man's actions to God as well as to himself is no other than the book of the self which is a microcosm of the world of creation. For instance, it has been emphasized in the Holy Qur'an and traditions to study and reflect on it:

﴿ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴾

“And in your own souls [are signs]. Will you not then perceive?”³⁴

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ.

“Whoever knows his self knows his Lord.”

The actions done by the various bodily limbs and members of man – while really and ontologically attributed to those limbs and are truly considered actions of those limbs – are also those of the self (soul). For instance, seeing and hearing are undoubtedly actions of the eyes and ears respectively and at the same time, they are actions of the soul.

Although the soul is a reality, therefore, since it is beyond matter or materiality, it is not confined to a particular place or direction, and it schematically encompasses human bodily limbs and parts and none of these limbs could function without the control of the soul.

The identity and unicity of the soul is a spark of the Identity and Unicity of God, and the type of attribution and citation all of contingent beings and their actions and effects to the One God is the same with the attribution and unicity of the action and effects of man's bodily limbs and members to his soul.³⁵

In conclusion, it must be noted that the Maturidi theologians have interpreted the theory of *kasb* (acquisition) in such a way that it is identical to *amr bayn al-amrayn*. In fact, many of them have clearly stated this point.³⁶

Review Questions

1. What is the statement of Imam 'Alī ('a) regarding those who regard the Divine decree and providence as concomitant to man being under compulsion?
2. State the view of the justice-oriented ('adliyyah) theologians regarding man's freedom.
3. How many views are put forth regarding the interpretation of *ikhtiyār* (free-will)?
4. Write down and criticize the theory of *tafwīḍ* (delegation) in brief.
5. Write down the theory of *kasb* (acquisition) along with the refutation to it.
6. Explain concisely the theory of *amr bayn al-amrayn* (position between two positions).
7. State the brief historical background of the theory of *amr bayn al-amrayn*.
8. What did Imam al-Qādiqī ('a) said in reply to the question about the Divine decree (*qadar*) and predeterminism (*jabr*)? State it along with the exposition of 'Adr al-Muta'allihīn.
9. How did Imam al-Hādī ('a) interpret *amr bayn al-amrayn*?
10. Write down the philosophical interpretation of *amr bayn al-amrayn*.

¹ Shaykh al-ʿAdāq, Al-Tawḥīd, section (bḥb) on the Divine decree and providence, ʿadāth 28.

² Ibid., section on the negation of predestination and absolute freewill, ʿadāth 6.

³ Ibid., ʿadāth 10.

⁴ Shahrīstānī, Al-Milal wa 'n-Nihal, vol. 1, p. 47.

⁵ Qawā'id al-Marḥūm, p. 108.

⁶ Kashf al-Murād, station (maqāḍ) 3, chap. 3.

⁷ Sharḥ al-Uḥūd al-Khamsah, p. 226.

⁸ Ibid., p. 231.

⁹ Sūrat al-Sajdah 32:7.

¹⁰ Sūrat al-Naml 27:80.

¹¹ Sūrat al-Kahf 18:29.

¹² Al-Asfār al-Arba'ah, vol. 6, p. 370.

¹³ Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 5, p. 120, ʿadāth 58.

¹⁴ Shaykh al-ʿAdāq, Al-Tawḥīd, section (bḥb) on the negation of predestination and absolute freewill, ʿadāth 2.

- [15.](#) [ʿAbars](#), [Al-Itijj](#), p. 327.
- [16.](#) Shaykh al-ʿadq, [Al-Tawd](#), section on predestination and freewill.
- [17.](#) [Shar](#) al-Mawqif, vol. 8, 146.
- [18.](#) [Shar](#) ‘Aq’id al-Nisfiyyah, pp. 115–117.
- [19.](#) [Shar](#) al-Mawqif, vol. 8, p. 146; [Shar](#) Tajrid al-‘Aq’id, p. 445.
- [20.](#) [ʿu](#) ‘I-Islm, vol. 3, p. 57.
- [21.](#) [Bu](#)th f ‘I-Milal wa ‘n-Nihal, vol. 2, p. 153, as quoted in Shaykh Shalt’s exegesis of the Holy Qur’an, pp. 240–242.
- [22.](#) [Bi](#) al-Anw, vol. 5, p. 57.
- [23.](#) [U](#) al-Kf, vol. 1, section (b) on predestination and absolute freewill, ʿadth 8.
- [24.](#) [R](#)ghib al-Ifah, Al-Mufrad, under the word lu.
- [25.](#) [U](#) al-Kf, vol. 1, section (b) on predestination and absolute freewill, ʿadth 10.
- [26.](#) [Shar](#) [U](#) al-Kf, p. 416.
- [27.](#) Shaykh al-ʿadq, [Al-Tawd](#), section (b) on the negation of predeterminism and absolute freewill, ʿadth 7.
- [28.](#) [Ahwz](#): city in southwestern Iran, the administrative center of [Khzestn](#) ([Khzistn](#)) Province. [Trans.]
- [29.](#) In [Tu](#)af al-‘Uq, instead of “but rather the [correct] affair is between the two affairs,” what is stated is “but rather the [correct] position is between the two positions.”
- [30.](#) [Tu](#)af al-‘Uq (Qum: [Ba](#)rat, n.d.), pp. 341–356; [ʿAbars](#), [Al-Itijj](#) (Mashhad: Nashr al-Murta, n.d.), pp. 449–453.
- [31.](#) [Al-Asf](#) al-Arba’ah, vol. 6, pp. 373–378.
- [32.](#) [Shar](#)-e Manmah, station (mad) 3, singularity (far) 2, “ghurar f ‘um qudratuh ta’.”
- [33.](#) [ʿalab](#) wa [Ir](#)dah, pp. 72–73.
- [34.](#) [S](#)rat al-Dhriy 51:21.
- [35.](#) See [Al-Asf](#) al-Arba’ah, vol. 6, pp. 377–379; [ʿalab](#) wa [Ir](#)dah, p. 82; [Jabr](#) wa [Ikhtiy](#), p. 288.
- [36.](#) For information on their views, see ‘[Al](#) [Rabb](#) [Gulpaygani](#), [Al-Kal](#) al-Maqrin.

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