

Part 1: The Background of the Problem in Islamic Philosophy

The philosophical problem between causality and freewill is that there are two very obvious facts, the first is that we, as mankind, feel that we are free to choose what we are going to do, and we can do or not do what we want. The second fact is that every possible thing that exists needs a determining factor or cause which means that the human free act is dominated by the determined cause, here the paradoxical conflict arises between our feeling of free action and the determination of the factors which influenced us to do what we do.

To have a clear idea of this philosophical debate in the Islamic thought, we need to know the real meanings of the main terms in this discussion and to know a brief history about the main sources of this debate in the history of Islamic thought. In the first part of this study the main terms of this discussion will be clarified, and the short story of the source of this philosophical debate in the history of Islamic thought will be presented.

In the history of Islamic thought, there were several currents and many thinkers. It was not possible to mention all of them, here my attempt is to focus upon the main current and the main thinkers who brought about a new theory or established a new school of thought

One of the earliest problems in philosophy that has occupied minds of great philosophers and has been debated in different philosophical ages is the problem of causality and its relation to freedom.

On one side, the depth of philosophical issues related to causality and freedom and the close relationship between these two issues and the intellectual and practical systems of man and also the many philosophical and theological issues that exist has made this issue in the field of philosophical and theological discussions especially important.

The fundamental role of this subject in the field of social sciences is also prominent and noteworthy. On

one hand, the field of law and crime prevention and discernment and determination of the real criminal and also the determination of the involvement of the will of the criminal in the accomplishment of crime on the other hand as well as the role of the society and the inherited factors and the family and educating environment in the formation of the personality of the criminal and the shaping of his criminal will, all have a close relationship with the issue of man's freedom and its connections with causality.

In the field of sociology, the influence of group spirit in the formation of the individual character of man and his will and also the effect of various geographical and historical factors and etc. in the emergence and shaping of the group spirit and will are all issues that have a close relationship with the freedom of man's will.

There are some psychological and sociological theories that regard the will and personality of man- in both social and individual aspects- the product of deterministic factors. The theory of Freud on the influence of sexual instinct in shaping the personality and behaviour of man and the theory of Karl Marx on the influence of productive forces in shaping of the group spirit and intellect and then in the thought and personality of an individual, are among the theories that regard the personality and will of man to be denounced by factors beyond his personality and freewill and do not consider the freewill to be able to determine his destiny clear of these factors.

There are also theories in the field of morals, education and economics that consider the deterministic forces beyond the will of man to shape the moral and economical character that direct the moral, educative and economical behaviours.

It is for this reason that the topic of freedom of man and its relationship with other causes and with the principle of causal law are among the most important issues that must be carefully analysed and discussed.

The problem of 'Causality' and its relation to 'Freedom' has been discussed in ancient Greek, Indian, and Persian philosophy before the Islamic Age.

After the emergence of Islam, one of the main philosophical and theological cases propounded by the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and the infallible Imams was the creation of the world and man by God on one hand, and man's freedom and responsibility on the other, which led the Muslim scholars and philosophers to long philosophical discussions that resulted in various trends of thought and schools.

The argument about the relation between God and the creation led to the problems of causality and necessity, and the discussion about the relation between God and man led to the question of man's responsibility and freedom.

To clarify the philosophical problem of the outwardly conflict between causality and necessity on one hand, and freedom on the other hand, we need to point out the philosophical definition of the three main

terms in our discussion which are: Cause, Necessity, and Freedom.

1. Cause

The term 'Cause' when used without any added condition, has two meanings in the Islamic Philosophical terminology:

1. All elements needed for the existence of effect. This meaning of cause includes the whole four types of causes which are: agent cause, material cause, formal cause, and ultimate cause. Imam Fakhr Al Deen Al Razi (d. 1209, 606 AH) says: 'When we want to define The Cause as including these four causes we say: The cause is the thing needed for its reality and existence.' [1](#)

2. The Agent Cause which means the thing that grants the effect its existence, or in other words; the source of the existence of effect. Continuing the former expression, Fakhruddin-al-Razi says: 'What Sheikh (Avicenna) mentioned in his book Alhodood (Definitions) is that 'The Cause is the thing that occasions the existence of another thing which its actual being derived from actual existence of the former, but the actual existence of the former is not derived from the latter' then –in fact– it doesn't mean but the agent cause.' (Ibid)

The agent cause in this term means an agent with full powers of agency. Therefore, it includes all implements needed by the agent in the process of creating the effect. Moreover, it includes the Ultimate Cause as well, because the agency of cause has not been completed without the Ultimate Cause.

In his book 'Ayn-ul-Qwa'ed' Katibi Qazwini (d. 1276, 675 AH) says:

'It (The Ultimate Cause) is a cause for the causality of Agent Cause, and its being is later than the effect in object, but earlier in subject.' [2](#)

The ultimate cause is a former in respect of the effect in subject, for it is a cause for the causality of Agent Cause in subject, because the Agent Cause needs an ultimate to move towards the action that results in the effect. And it's being is a latter in respect of the effect in object, because it is a result of the effect in the reality.

Allamah Hilli in his book 'Idhah-ul-Maqasid' describing the above expression says:

'The Ultimate Cause has two aspects: The first is in respect of the agent, the second is in respect of the effect. When it is attributed to the agent it will be the agent of its attribution of agency, because the agent doesn't do his action except by reason of the ultimate, and when it is attributed to the effect it will be an ultimate in respect of it, which means that the effect existed due to that ultimate, then it has been a cause for the effect, because unless the ultimate, the effect has not been existed.' [3](#)

According to Islamic philosophical terminology the term 'Complete agent' can be used with two

meanings; Sometimes what is meant by the term complete cause is its former meaning that includes whatever interferes within the existence of a being (which includes the four types of causes).

Katibi Qazwini says:

‘Whatever the object needs within its existence is known as the cause, and this cause is either complete; which consists of whatever the existence of the object depends upon, or incomplete, which is some of the elements that the existence of the object depends upon.’ [4](#)

In the exegesis of the above Allamah Hilli says:

‘Be aware that the complete cause includes Material, formal, Agent and Ultimate plus Condition and non-obstacle. Each of these is a part of the meaning of the complete cause.’ [5](#)

Some times what we mean by complete cause is its second meaning. This means that the agent cause is in full agency, in which case although in some ways it includes the ultimate cause, but it does not include the material and formal causes. The complete agent cause includes all the elements which play a role in the agency of the agent, contrary to the partial cause which means the things that is necessary to create the effect but it is not sufficient. For this reason it includes all the tools and facilities which the agent would use for establishing the effect.

However, it does not include equipments (Mo’iddaat) (i.e. things that are needed to complete the capacity of effects to be existed by the agents like the water or sunlight for the growth of a plant that has been placed by the farmer agent) conditions and non-obstacles. This is due to the fact that these three elements bear on the capability of the object (i.e. effect) and not the agency of the agent. Therefore they are counted as parts of the material cause.

Fakhr Al Deen Al Razi says:

‘But conditions are truly a part of the material cause, because capable would only become capable if it complies with the conditions. But the equipments are truly a part of the agent cause, where its agency depends upon the equipments and it would not be completed without them. Therefore, if the agency of the agent would have been completed without equipments, the mediation of the equipments would become impossible.’ [6](#)

Finally it is useful to mention that the second meaning of the complete cause which was the agent cause with the full agency is equal to the sufficient cause in western philosophy’s terminology, whilst necessary cause includes both the complete and partial cause.

[2. Necessity Or The Necessity Of Existence](#)

Necessity or the necessity of existence is absurdity of absence. Anything whose non-existence is impossible, its existence is necessary. The phrase Necessity or the Necessity of Existence has been used in a variety of different meanings within the philosophical terminology. At this stage we will discuss

two important meanings in accordance to our discussion:

The necessity simultaneous to the existence of being or conditional upon its existence, which is interpreted in philosophical terminology as predicated necessity. This means that whenever we take into account a being bounded by the state of existence, its existence within this condition would be necessary. This necessity which describes the existence is the 'Necessity Simultaneous to Existence' or the 'Necessity by Predicate.'

The necessity prior to existence: what is meant by priority in this type of necessity is not priority in the sense of time. What is meant is intellectual priority, which in philosophical terms is known as gradational priority (priority in terms of rank).

The necessity prior to existence within intellectual perception is described as: The object necessitated then existed. Here, the word then does not represent space of time. What it implies is Intellectual Graduation. This means from the point of view of intellect, the reason for existence is the necessity of its existence. And without the necessity of existence the existence of the object would be impossible and unjustified.

Therefore, the necessity of existence here represents the reason justifying the existence of the object. So as a result of this, the existence of the object would be preferred to its non-existence and its non-existence becomes cancelled and its existence will be necessarily achieved.

Mulla Sadra Sadrul-mota'alliheen Shirazi (d. 1640, 1050 AH) in his book 'Al-Asfar-al-Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah', at the end of chapter fifteen, says:

'And thereby was proved that any contingent nature or any contingent existence would not achieve existence, unless its existence would become necessary because of its cause. Therefore it is not conceivable that the cause is a cause unless it gives necessary preference to the existence of effect.' [7](#)

After that at the beginning of chapter 16 he says:

'What we discussed in the previous chapter was the prior necessity for the contingent, which has arisen from the full preferential cause (Al-Morajjih-u- taamm) of either existence or non-existence, before its occurrence, – until where he says: – after it has been occurred – the existence or non-existence of the object – it would find another necessity. This necessity at the time that the existence or non-existence attributed to the nature, with the aspect of describing the nature to one of the descriptions of existence or non-existence, and this is the next necessity which named the Necessity by Predicate.' [8](#)

3. Freedom

Freedom has also two meanings:

1. Civil or Social Freedom: Freedom with this meaning is used in opposition to social limitations.

Freedom in its social sense represents the freedom that the human possesses in the society. The boundaries of such freedom depends upon the amount of limitation that is exerted by the rulers of the society or other powerful elements – in a lawful or unlawful manner– and causes limitation upon the freedom of act and behaviour of Human. Due to the fact that the boundaries of such freedom – within lawful societies – is set out by law, and the fact that this type of law is one of the necessities of a civil society, this type of freedom is known as civil freedom.

2. Philosophical Freedom: The term Philosophical freedom is used in contrast to Philosophical constraint. What is meant by freedom here is the fact that the human being or any other agent commits their act without any sort of external constraint or pressure or impediment, and solely by internal power.

The opposite side to this type of Freedom is Fatalism or Determinism (Jabr). Determinism or Fatalism means that the agent of an action is acting under the pressure of another agent or is being as a tool of another operator, and as a result, the superior operator sets out and determines the nature and the direction of the act which is carried out by the direct conductor or agent.

In other words conductor and the agent do not possess any power or will to change the direction and the type of act which is set out by the superior operator.

John Stuart Mill in the opening chapter of his book 'on Liberty' addressing the difference between the two types of freedom says:

'The subject of this essay is not the so-called liberty of the will, so unfortunately opposed to the misnamed doctrine of philosophical necessity; but civil, or social liberty: and the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual.'⁹

Robert Kane in his book 'Free will' refers to the two types of freedom. He recognises the Civil or Social Freedom as the apparent surface of Philosophical Freedom, and the Real Freedom of humans to depend on their Philosophical Freedom.

He says: 'Nothing could be more important than freedom to the modern world. All over the globe, the trend (often against resistance) is towards societies that are more free. But why do we want freedom? The simple but not totally adequate, answer is that to be more free is to have the capacity and opportunity to satisfy more of our desires. In a free society we can walk into a store and buy almost anything we want. We can choose what movies to see, what music to listen to, whom to vote for.

But these are what you call surface freedoms. What is meant by free will runs deeper than these everyday freedoms. To see how, suppose we had maximal freedom to make such choices to satisfy our desires and yet the choices we actually made were manipulated by others, by the powers that be. In such a world we would have a great deal of everyday freedom to do whatever we wanted, yet our free will would be severely limited. We would be free to act or choose what we willed, but would not have the

ultimate say about what it is that we willed. Someone else would be pulling the strings, not by coercing us against our wishes, but by manipulating us into having the wishes they want us to have.’ [10](#)

From what we said so far it is clear that each of the following phrases: Causality, Necessity of existence or Necessity (wujooob), and freedom have all got two meanings and within our discussion the second meaning for these phrases is the substance of the subsequent discussion.

Cause is Agent cause, Necessity, or the Necessity of existence is the Necessity prior to existence, and Freedom is Philosophical freedom. The words will hereafter be used in this sense, unless otherwise stated.

A Brief History of Islamic Philosophical Debates Concerning Causality, Necessity and Freedom

The main source of the philosophical debate in the relation between causality and free will in the history of the Islamic thought is the discussion about the monotheism of God’s action and the relation between his actions and creations including the act of mankind as part of his creations. If all God’s creations, including humans, emerged by God’s decision through the determined causal law it would result in the negation of both the human’s free will, and also the human’s responsibility towards his actions, which will then lead to the exoneration of all criminals in human society.

There are three main schools of Islamic thought which interpret God’s action to justify the free will of human and his responsibility towards his action while considering the reasonable monotheism of God’s action:

1. The school of theologians which are divided into two theories:

- The Ashariete’s ‘Theory of Kasb’
- The Mo’atazeli and Imamiyyeh theologians’ ‘Theory of priority Awlawiyyah’

2. The school of Islamic Philosophers’ ‘Theory of necessity’

3. The school of ‘Usooliyyon’, the experts of principles of jurisprudence which are divided into two theories:

- The theory of Ikhtiyar (to will)
- The theory of Saltanah (Sovereignty)

‘The foremost in religion is His knowledge, the perfection of His knowledge is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying him is to believe in His oneness, the perfection of believing in His oneness is to regard Him pure and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a

proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute.

Thus whoever attaches attribute to Allah recognises His like, and who recognises His like regards Him two and who regards him two recognises parts for Him and who recognises parts for Him mistook Him; and who mistook him pointed at him and who pointed at him admitted limitations for Him and who admitted limitation for Him numbered Him.

Whoever said in what is He, held that he is contained and whoever said that on what is He, held He is not on something else. He is being but not through phenomenon of coming into being. He exists but not from non-existence. He is with everything but not in physical nearness. He is different from everything but not in physical separation.’ [11](#)

Amongst the philosophical discussions which have been propounded in Nahjul-balaghah, is the discussion regarding Divine Decree and Destiny.

In the section of short-sayings and advices in Nahjul-balaghah it has been said:

‘A man enquired from Amirul-Momineen (Imam Ali): ‘was our going to fight with the Syrians (Shamees) destined by Allah’? Amirul-Momineen gave a detailed reply a selection of which is hereunder: Woe to you. You take it as a final and unavoidable destiny (according to which we are bound to act). If it were so, there would have been no question of reward and chastisement and there would have been no sense in Allah’s promises or warnings. (On the other hand) Allah the glorified has ordered his people to act by free will and has cautioned them and refrained them (from evil). He has placed easy obligations on them and has not put heavy obligations.

He gives them much (reward) in return for little (action). He is disobeyed, not because he is over powered. He is obeyed, but not under force. He did not send prophets just for fun. He did not send down the book for people without purpose. He did not create the skies, the earth and all that is in between for nothing. And he created not the heaven and the earth in vain. ‘That is the imagination of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve – because of the fire.’ [12](#)

These two passages very well reveal the matters regarding Monotheism and Divine Decree and Destiny which were set forth by the very first religious leaders of Islam. From these two main issues derived the philosophical debates in Islamic thought and it gradually spread and developed amongst Muslims.

The truth is that the arguments concerning divine destiny derive from Divine Monotheism debates. Divine Monotheism and the questions relating to it were the starting point of Philosophical and Theological thoughts in the history of Islam. Difference of opinion in the matters related to Monotheism brought about different tendencies, and different schools of philosophy and theology, resulting in different theories about the relation between causality and freedom.

Islamic thinkers divide the Divine Monotheism into three main stages outlined as follows.

1. Divine Essence Monotheism (Unity In God's Essence)

This means oneness of the essence of the creator, and negation of dualism and all kinds of multi cause in the origin of creation. Monotheism of the Essence was agreed upon by all the Islamic thinkers. Apart from the difference of opinion which was created later between mystics (Urafa'a) and other Islamic scholars such as Philosophers and theologians (Motakallemeen) on the interpretation of Monotheism of the divine Essence, there was no further difference of opinion between the Islamic thinkers in this respect. The main roots of this disagreement refer to the arguments of divine acts Monotheism.

2. Divine Attribute Monotheism (Unity In God's Attributes)

Divine Attribute Monotheism means the unification of Attribute and Essence, and rejection of complexity in the Essence of God the Almighty, and to assert the merely simplicity of God the Almighty. Allamah Tabatabai says: 'Considering that God's essence is unlimited, actually His perfections (i.e. His attributes) are united with his essence, meaning that His essence is merely simple and one, and His attributes are alike and its variation is just conceptual' [13](#)

In the subject of Divine Attribute Monotheism of God the Almighty, two issues were discussed:

1. Unification of Attribute and Essence: Imamiyyah and Mo'tazilah believed in the unity of attribute and essence. On the other hand Asha'erah believed in the separation of the Attribute from the essence of God the almighty. [14](#)

2. The Particularity of the Attributes of God the Almighty: In this respect it was discussed that, what is the meaning of attributes such as knowledge, power, will, word, and as such which have been mentioned for God the Almighty in the Holy Qur'an and by the Holy Prophet of Islam? Does the knowledge of God include every single object and every part of this world from eternity to forever? Or is it that the divine knowledge is knowledge of generalities? Some of the Islamic philosophers came to the belief that the Eternal Knowledge of God is the knowledge of generalities of the objects and realities. The same question was applied with regard to the Divine Power; what is the meaning of the Divine Power? Is the meaning of the Divine power the ability to do or not to do, as Theologians [15](#) have said? Or does it mean 'If he wanted, he would act and if he wanted not, he would not act,' as the Philosophers [16](#) believed in?

And there was set forth other questions concerning the Divine Will and Divine Word. The disagreement between Asha'erah who believed in the eternity of Divine Word, and Mo'tazilah who believed in temporality of the Divine Word, should be accounted as one of the most important ideological conflicts of the Muslim Society in the second century after Hijrah (approximately the eighth century).

One of the branches of the discussion related to Divine Power and Will was the discussion concerning

causality and its meaning and the ascription of the Essence of God the Almighty to causality and the particularity of Divine eternal Will of God the Almighty.

Causality with the meaning described by the Philosophers – that includes the prior necessity of effect – was not accepted by the Theologians. This is due to the fact that they find the causality with such meaning to be in contradiction with the Power and Free Will of God the Almighty. For this reason the Islamic Theologians provided a new interpretation of causality in which cause would not give necessity to the existence of effect, but as a matter of fact it would give priority to the existence of effect. From this a new theory was developed known as theory of priority by the Islamic theologians against the theory of Causal Necessity.

Sadruddin Shirazi [17](#)(d.1497, 903 AH) is amongst the distinguished theologians of the history of Islam. He is one of the most famous people who very strongly defended the theory of priority. And Sadrul-muta'alliheen Shirazi, famously known as Mulla Sadra who is the founder of Islamic transcendent-Philosophy strongly opposes his idea and rejects this theory based on strong philosophical arguments in his book Al-Asfarul-arba'ah. [18](#)

3. Divine Act Monotheism (Unity Of Divine Act)

Divine action monotheism is the most disputed part of the discussion of monotheism. In Divine Action Monotheism the unity in the source of actions, movements and wills, and even notions and thoughts is argued.

In accordance with Divine Action Monotheism, all the actions including actions based on will –such as the act of human– or internal acts such as thinking, love, anger etc., or actions which are not based on will such as the movements of planets and stars and the changes in the nature all arise from one source which is God the Almighty. As a matter of fact, the only independent agent is the Essence of God the Almighty. All other agents, including the natural agents and the agents who act on their will, are dependent to the main independent agent which is God the almighty. Divine Action Monotheism with such definition has been very much emphasised in the Holy Qur'an and the traditions narrated from the Divine Leaders of Islam. God the Almighty in the Holy Qur'an says:

***'Say (O'Muhammad PBUH) I possess no power over benefit or hurt to myself except as Allah wills.'* (7: 188).**

He also says in his Holy book:

***'But you cannot will unless Allah wills.'* (76:30).**

The Islamic Mystics have gone another step forward by believing not only in unity of agent but also unity of the Act of God the Almighty by referring to verses from the Holy Qur'an. Based on this, every act returns to God [19](#) and therefore his Act similar to its Essence is not but only one, ***'And is not our***

command but one. '(Holy Qur'an, 54:50).

The philosophical school of Mulla Sadra which reconciled philosophy with mysticism has given a philosophical format unity for act and essence of God the Almighty. He tried to solve the philosophical problems related to the unity of Act, Essence, and Attribute of God the Almighty based on the theory of asalat al-wujud 'principlality or originality of existence'.

Asha'erah on the base of God's acts unity believed that the Essence of God the Almighty is the exclusive agent cause in the living world (i.e. unity of agent). Based on this they explained the relation between Cause and Effect in the natural agent or unwilling agent using the theory of 'Habit' a'adah, and between the willing agent such as human, using the theory of 'Acquirement' kasb which is defined by Al Baghellani (1947, pp. 307-8) as follows: 'to generate an action by a simultaneous power which makes the act unnecessary'. [20](#)

Based on the theory of 'Habit' there is not any essential relation between cause and effect, but any effect which has come from a cause is due to the fact that the habit of God has over ruled upon it, so that it would create effect after the creation of cause. Therefore there is no true agent but the Essence of God the almighty, and the relation between effect and its natural cause is nothing but the pursuit relation on the basis of 'Divine Habit'.

Ghazi Adhododdeen Eyji (d.1355, 756 AH) narrates from Abul-Hasan Al-Ash'a'ri (The founder of school of Asha'erah in Islamic theology, (d.935, 324 AH)) that in the explanation of the theory of Habit, he said:

'There is no relation between pursuing events under any circumstances, unless habit has over ruled the fact that one is created after the other, such as burning after touching the fire or satiety after having drunk water'[21](#)

Asha'erah (i.e. Abul-Hassan Al-Ash'a'ri and his followers) after they explained the relation of natural Agent with its effect, in order to be able to explain the responsibility of the human for the acts that have been committed by him, they explained the relation between human and his acts or effects on the basis of the theory of 'Acquirement' kasb.

In accordance to the theory of Acquirement kasb although whatever is committed by human based on the theory of Habit is created by God and is His creature, but human will play an important role in originating the act. The role of the will of humans, in committing an act is known as 'Acquirement' kasb.

The conclusion of what can be understood from the sources of Asha'erah thought, is that the Acquirement kasb is nothing but human will. Therefore what Asha'ereah mean by the theory of 'Acquirement' kasb is that whenever a human wills to commit an act, God the Almighty gives existence to that act.

Shahrestani (d.1149, 548 AH) in the explanation of the Abul-Hassan Al-Ash'a'ri's theory of

'Acquirement' kasb writes:

'God the Almighty has over ruled His tradition upon the fact that; after He gives a power to His servant, either under or accompanying that power he creates the act of that servant as the servant puts his will and prepares for that act. This procedure is known as 'Acquirement' kasb. Therefore the creator of the act is God Almighty, but it is obtained by the servant and it is under his control'[22](#)

If the Asha'erah are criticised for the fact that Human will is not God's creation and is not under His power; and if human will is God's creation what would be the role of human in originating his act? There is no clear answer at hand in reply to this criticism from Asha'ereah.

Mo'tazilah and Imamiyyah theologians – opposite to Asha'erah – believed that the acts committed by the natural agents whether willingly or unwillingly are all creatures of the agent himself. Therefore there is an essential relation between causes and effects amongst the objects, and they interpreted the Divine Agent Monotheism (i.e. unity of agent) as God the Almighty being the only independent Agent in the living world, an agent that has not received His being and power from any superior agent or power above Him. Whereas all the other agents including willing and unwilling agents have received their existence and power from God the Almighty who is the origin of the existence, and they are all dependent in their act and effect to the origin of the world that is the Essence of God the almighty.

Despite the difference of opinion in interpreting the relation of causality between Asha'erah from one side and Mo'tazilah and Imamiyyah theologians from the other, what unifies the three groups (whom collectively in philosophical terminology are known as theologians) in direction (i.e. what brings them together) is the negation of the relation of necessity between cause and effect.

Most of the theologians—including Asha'erah, Mo'tazilah and Imamiyyah– did not recognise the Agent who gives existence to necessitate the effect. They usually believed that every contingent effect possesses priority in existence. Some believed that the effect gets its priority of existence from its cause. This means that the Agent cause first provides its effect with priority of existence and then it provide it with existence. And some believed that the priority of the existence of effect is within its essence, and every contingent effect possesses priority of existence by itself.

The mystery behind the insistence of theologians –including Asha'erah, Mo'tazilah, and Imamiyyah – on rejecting the relation of necessity between cause and effect, was the conflict which they believe between the necessity of causal relation on one hand, and the power of God the Almighty and His free will, as well as human free will and responsibility –including accountability, blameworthiness, praiseworthiness and reward in this world and the next – on the other.

Other than this, despite the fact that Mo'tazilah and Imamiyyah in opposition to Asha'erah shared the same view in the interpretation of Divine Action Monotheism (Unity of Divine Action), but Imamiyyah and Mo'tazileh did not share the same view in the way of attribution the acts to other agents—other than God—, this is because Mo'tazilah believed that the other agents are dependent to God the Almighty in their

existence, but in their acts they are independent in their agency. Therefore the unity of act of God the almighty according to Mo'tazilah means that God the Almighty is the only being that provides the world of creatures with existence and all the other Agents owe their existence to the origin of the world God the Almighty, but in their acts they are independent.[23](#)

Due to this, Mo'tazilah are known as Mofawwidhah (indeterminists) in the history of Islam, Which means that God the Almighty has created the objects giving them the full authority and power of committing their acts and having their effects and consequences without any interference of God and He has provided them with complete liberty (tafweedh or indeterminism) of causation and agency.

Imamiyyah believed in the theory of 'Not determinism (fatalism)' and 'not indeterminism (absolute liberty)' but something between the two, could be described as a moderate indeterminism. This theory was initially explained by their religious leaders (i.e. infallible Imams).

Kolaini (d.940, 329ah.) one of the great Imamiyyah scholars, in his book Usul-ul-Kafi, narrates (through the accurate chain of narrators) from Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq, that they said:

'Allah is more kind than forcing his servants to commit sins, and then punish them for those sins. And he is more powerful than wanting something and it does not take place. After this they- Imam Baqer and Imam Sadiq- have been asked a question that: is there a third way to determinism and indeterminism? They replied: yes, wider than whatever exists between the sky and the earth.'[24](#)

Also he narrates from Imam Sadiq that:

'Not determinism and not indeterminism but an idea between the two, the narrator asked: what does something between the two mean? He replied: it is the example of a man that you find him committing a sin and you try to caution him and stop him, but that would not be effective and he would still carry on, so you would leave him by himself so that he would commit sin, so due to the fact that you prohibited him and it was not affective and he still committed sin and thereby you left him by himself, you were not the one who persuaded him into commit sin, in fact it was himself who got himself involved in sin.'

According to this theory, Imamiyyah opposed both Mo'tazilah and Asha'erah. And as a result, they rejected the view of Asha'erah, which stated; that the only agent in the world of being is God, and the acts and the effects of all willing and unwilling agents are created by Him. They said this view is a 'complete determinism and fatalism' which is in contradiction with the power of the Almighty and the responsibility of the human being.

Also they rejected the point of view of Mo'tazilah that; 'God the Almighty gives existence to all the agents and has no role in the acts and affects committed by willing and unwilling agents'. And they found this to be in contradiction with the theory of Divine Act Monotheism, and the ultimate power of God and it also opposes His unique worldly governance.

They believed in a concept between these two ideas, and they called it ' a matter between two matters'

which resulted in believing that all the agents including willing and unwilling agents not only do they owe their existence to God the Almighty, but also continuously owe their power of agency and effect to the Lord of the world. And the willing Agent not only do they continuously owe their existence and power to God but also they owe Him their power of will. This means that it is Him who has given them the power of having will, and he has also given them the ability and authority to be able to be willing, and to bring about whatever they have willed for.

In contrast with theologians (including Asha'erah, Mo'tazilah, and Imamiyyah) the Islamic philosophers described the relation of cause and effect on the base of (necessity). They believed that no any possible thing or contingent could be existed unless its existence has been necessitated by the agent, and this relation of necessity not only does it not contradict the power and the will of God the Almighty, but with the negation of necessity the power and the will of God the Almighty will also be negated, and also in the other willing agents such as human being the necessity given to the effect by the Agent cause is the base and the essence of the power and the will of the agent upon its effect.

The Islamic philosophers are divided into two groups: Al-Ishraqiyyoon (Intuitionists) The philosophers who follow the method of Ishraq Intuition, the most distinguished philosopher of which is Shahabuddeen Al-Sohrevardi (killed 1191, 587ah) and Al-Mashsha'iyyoon (peripatetics or argumentationists) the philosophers who follow the method of Argument, the most distinguished Philosophers of which are Farabi (d.950, 339 ah) and Abu Ali Sina Avicenna (d.1037, 428 ah).

There is not a major disagreement between the Intuitionist Al-Ishraqiyyoon and Argumentationist Al-Mashsha'iyyoon (peripatetics) on the origin of the theory of necessity (the interpretation of the relation between cause and effect based on the necessity of existence). But in the way of explaining the essence of the dependence of effects to the first origin, the philosophers of Mashsha'a have recognised the existence of effect as an independent existence in respect of cause. But the philosophers of Ishraq denied any independent existence of effect and believed that the essence of effect is not but a merely dependence to the cause and expressed that as an 'Ishraqi dependence (Emanative dependence)'.

This theory was later reformed and improved by Sadrul-mota'allheen through his theory of Asalat-ul-wujud (the reality or principality of existence) backing it by strong philosophical arguments, that we shall go into more details, when we would explain the theory of Asalat-ul-wujud.

After Khajeh Naseeruddeen Tousi (Tousi, ND [d.1274, 672 ah]) the school of Mashsha'a Philosophy in the Islamic thought became only restricted to Shi'a academic Seminary, and it was quite active until the time of Meer-damaad(d.1631, 1040 ah). The Ishraq Philosophy did not have a long life after Shahabbuddeen Shohrevardi. Whereas theology was quite active amongst the Islamic thinkers until ninth and tenth Hijry (fifteenth and sixteenth A.C) century, and theologians such as – in Sunni school of thought – Fakhruddeen-al- Razi (d.1209, 606 ah), Adhododdeen-al- Eyji (d.1355, 756 ah), Sa'addudeen-al-Taftazani (d.1390, 792 ah), Mir Syed Shreef-al-Jorjani (d.1413, 816 ah), and in the shi'a school of thought theologians such as: Ibn Maytham-al-Bahrani (d.1279, 678 ah), Al-Allamah-al-

Hilli (d. 1325, 726 ah), Al-Miqdad-al-See-u-ry (d. 1423, 826 ah) and at last Mohammad Baqir-al-Majlesi, (1700, 1110 ah) can be mentioned as the most prominent theologian thinkers during the last centuries of the age of Islamic theology.²⁵

The 11th century of Hijry (coincides the 17th century A.C) despite witnessing the last breaths of the classic Islamic theology, it accompanied some unique transformation of thoughts in Shi'a school of thought. On one hand –in the field of rational sciences–with the manifestation of Sadru-Imota'alliheen Shirazi (d. 1640, 1050 ah) and the establishment of his school of philosophy which called 'Hikmate Mota'aaliyeh The Transcendent Wisdom', the field of Islamic Philosophical thought became over taken by this philosophical movement, and philosophical currents of 'Masha'a' and 'Ishraq' were gradually set aside. In this new philosophical thought Mysticism and philosophy on one hand, and the school of Ishraq and Mashsha'a on the other hand reconciled, and with an innovative philosophical plan of Sadru-Imota'alliheen the newly born school of 'Hekmate Mota'aaliyeh Transcendent Wisdom' took place. At the recent age the most well-known philosopher who defended and expended the Sadraian transcendent philosophy is Allama Mohammad Husain Tabataba'ei (d. 1980, 1400 ah).

On the other hand –in the field of narrative sciences– with the appearance of 'Al-Akhbariyyoon Traditionist' movement in the Shi'a school of thought by its founder Mulla Mohammad Amin Istaraabaadi (Istaraabadi, 1984 [d. 1624, 1033 ah]) which opposed the rationalist method in the field of religious arguments, a new movement under the name of 'Principlists Usooliyyoon'²⁶ rose up and stood against Al-Akhbariyyoon Traditionists very strongly defending the rational method in religious arguments especially jurisprudence. Eventually the school of 'Akhbariyyoon Traditionists was defeated by wahid Behbehani (Behbehani 1996 [d. 1739, 1208 ah]) the leader of the Principlists Usooliyyoon Movement and the current of principlists Usooliyyoon who was a defender of rationalism completely took over the Shi'a school of thought (Al-Sadr, 2000).

With the domination of principlism over the Shi'a school of thought, and the spread of the science of 'The Principles of Jurisprudence' which resulted in exertion of the rational method, a new rival was appeared for the Philosophical current of thought in the Shi'a Islamic school. This new rival which was the science of 'Modern Principles of Jurisprudence' after the decline of Theologian thought was competently able to challenge the Modern Philosophical thought that had been manifested in Transcendent wisdom the 'Philosophy of 'Sadrul-mota'alliheen'. The new science of 'Principles of Jurisprudence' was able to challenge the Modern Philosophical thought in various philosophical topics and also give a new warmth and mirth to the intellectual discussions.

One of the most controversial problems among Muslim philosophers and theologians that led to most heated debates between philosophers and theologians was causality, determinism, and their compatibility to freedom. With the decline of Theology, the intellectual discussion relating to these topics was close to being forgotten, until the appearance of the new science of 'Principles of Jurisprudence' and the 'Modern Principlists' which caused a new controversial struggle in mentioned topics. The

Modern Principlists started to criticise the philosophical views in many topics and suggested new ways to solve the philosophical problems in challenge to the philosophy of Sadrul-mota'alliheen 'The transcendent Wisdom'.

Among the modern usuliyyoon, Akhund Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani (d.1911, 1329 ah) represents Sadraian Islamic thought. Defending the principles of "Sadraian philosophy", Akhund greatly supported the Sadraian view in the interpretation of causality and its relation to freedom.[27](#)

On the other side, his intelligent and insightful pupil, i.e. Mirza Na'ini (d.1936, 1355 ah) was one of the strong critics of Sadraian view. In a new way and method, he criticised the Sadraian philosophical thought and presented a new viewpoint on the relation between causality and human freedom.[28](#)

Na'ini's idea was criticised by the great contemporary thinker and philosopher, the martyr Imam Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. Sadr established a new way to solve the problem of causality and freedom, through the theory of Saltanah, sovereignty (authority).[29](#)

On the ground of what I described, I will discuss the problem of causality and freedom in three parts:

Freewill and causality in the contemporary Islamic philosophy[30](#). In this part of my discussion, after explaining briefly the philosophical theory of Sadra on the relation between causality and freedom which I shall call later the theory of necessity (wujub) and also martyr Sadr's theory of sovereignty (saltanah), I will compare these two theories with each other. I will also criticise and analyse them.

I will cover some viewpoints about the relation between freewill and causality in contemporary western philosophy compared with the mentioned theories in Islamic philosophy.

Finally I will develop a further thesis about the solution of the problem between causality and freedom.

[1.](#) Al Razi, 1966, Vol 1, p. 458

[2.](#) Katibi Qazwini, 1959, p. 95

[3.](#) Al Hilli, 1959, p. 95

[4.](#) Ibid p. 94

[5.](#) Ibid p. 96

[6.](#) Al-Razi, 1966, Vol. 1, p. 458

[7.](#) Sadra, (ND), Vol. 1, p. 223

[8.](#) Ibid p. 224

[9.](#) Mill J.S, 1947, p. 1

[10.](#) Kane, 2002, p. 2

[11.](#) Ibn Abi Taleb Imam Ali, 1998, Sermon 1

[12.](#) Ibn Abi Taleb Imam Ali, 1998, Advice: 78

[13.](#) Tabatabai, 1967, pp. 73-74

[14.](#) Lahiji, 1892, pp. 172-173

[15.](#) Al Malahimi, 1992, p. 184

[16.](#) Sadra, (ND), Vol. 6, p. 307

[17.](#) Sadruddeen Shirazi (D.1497,903 AH) is amongst the most famous theologians, and he shares similar title with

Sadruddin Mohammad Shirazi who is a famous philosopher known as Sadra or Sadrul-Muta'alliheen (D. 1640, 1050 AH)

[18.](#) Sadra, (ND), Vol. 1, p199

[19.](#) Modarres, 1986, pp. 124–129

[20.](#) Badawi, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 616

[21.](#) Al Eyji, (ND), Vol. 1, p. 241

[22.](#) Al Shahrestani, (ND), Vol. 1, p. 130

[23.](#) Al-Hamadani, 1965, p. 323

[24.](#) Al Kolaini, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 159

[25.](#) Mutahhari, 1991, pp. 467–661

[26.](#) The word Usooliyyoon is the plural of the word Usooli which means the expert in the principles of the Islamic jurisprudence. The knowledge of principles of jurisprudence discusses the method and principles of presumption and inference Islamic instructions and laws from its sources e.g. Qura'nic text and prophetic traditions. The current Usooliyyoon emerged in contrast with the current Al-Akhbariyyoon who believed that there is no need of mediating any rational principles or method in the process of understanding Islamic instructions and laws.

[27.](#) Al Khurasani, 1992, pp. 337–8

[28.](#) Al Khoei, 1933, Vol. 1, pp. 91–92

[29.](#) Al Hashimi, 1997, Vol. 2, pp. 32–37

[30.](#) What I mentioned here are not all theories suggested by Muslim philosophers, but I mentioned only the theories which were adopted and followed by the recent most well-known Muslim thinkers and philosophers.

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