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The Theory of Sovereignty in the Interpretation of Causality and its Relation to Human Freedom

Mirza Na'ini, one of the founders of modern principles of jurisprudence, was the first one to develop and defend this theory. According to an exposition of the lectures of Na'ini (*Ajwad al-Taqrirat*), this theory can be traced back to Mirza Muhammad Taqi Isfahani, the author of *Hidayat al-Mustarshidin* (a commentary work on *Ma'alim Al-Usul*). After Na'ini, our great master, the martyr Sadr, reconstructed this theory to meet the problems raised against the theory and, in an innovative way, developed it and called it "*The Theory of Sovereignty*". In what follows, we will briefly present the ideas of Na'ini and then will focus on the theory of sovereignty.

Na'ini starts his argument with two common sense laws that both can be affirmed after a short reflection:

First Law: Will (*iradah*) of the free agent itself is not voluntary. Reflecting on the process of decision-making inside ourselves, we realize that after conceiving the act and affirming its benefit our will automatically comes into existence. Will is an inevitable outcome of conceiving the act and affirming its benefit. Na'ini says:

"Surely, all those qualities that belong to the soul such as will, conception and affirmation are not voluntary ."[1]

In respect to God, it can be demonstrated that His will is not voluntary, because his essence is simple and free from any attributes accidental and additional to it. Therefore, will cannot be accidental to His essence, since it is in conflict with the simplicity of the essence. Will of God is identical with His essence and this implies that the Divine will is essential and it is self-evident that essential attributes are not voluntary. We find in an exposition of Na'ini's lectures that:

"Surely the will that is the complete cause of the existence of the effects is the same as His essence, and self-evidently His essence, the Exalted and the Glorified, is not voluntary for Him."[2]

Second Law: Human soul has complete sovereignty and authority upon its voluntary acts. In other words, man always feels very clearly that has complete power to make his decisions regarding his voluntary acts. Na'ini writes:

"Surely, the soul has complete effect and authority on muscles without facing any obstacle in exercising its sovereignty."[3]

Na'ini concludes that there must be something between the will (*iradah*) and act. He calls this element "*ikhtiyar*". *Ikhtiyar* is an act of soul that takes place after the formation of *iradah* and its prerequisites. In this way, Na'ini argues for his position and adds that it is the only solution for the well-known objection of Fakhr al-Razi, who asserted that voluntariness of an act implies its involuntariness, since voluntariness of an act means to be caused by the will, but the will itself is determined by causes that produce it necessarily. Na'ini responds to this objection by saying that the voluntary act is not caused by the will; rather it is caused by something, which occurs between the will and act, i.e. *ikhtiyar* (or *talab*). *Ikhtiyar* is not caused by the will; it is originated from the essence of the soul.

Na'ini believes that there is no necessary relation between *ikhtiyar* and the soul. Human soul in making *ikhtiyar* just needs some preponderating factor. For this it would suffice that the agent purses an end or goal in the act.

There are many objections to Na'ini's theory. First, the difference between *iradah* and *ikhtiyar* is not known. If the *ikhtiyar* can escape cause-effect necessity why cannot *iradah* do this?
Second, Na'ini has not solved the problem in relation to the Divine acts, because *ikhtiyar* also cannot be additional to His essence and according to Na'ini himself the Divine essence is not voluntary for God. Now the question is: Does Na'ini believe that Divine acts are voluntary?! How does he treat the decisive and certain belief in His power and His willingness?

Third, is *ikhtiyar* or *talab*, which is the basis of Na'ini's theory on voluntariness of acts contingent or necessary? Na'ini does not accept its necessity and takes it to be contingent. Therefore, it must have equal relations to both existence and non-existence and according to the law of impossibility of preference without a preponderant; it would be impossible for *ikhtiyar* to exist. There is no solution for this problem in Na'ini's account.

1. Mirza Na'ini, Ajwad al-Taqrirat, vol. 1, p. 91.
2. Mirza Na'ini, Ajwad al-Taqrirat, vol. 1, p. 91.
3. Mirza Na'ini, Ajwad al-Taqrirat, vol. 1, p. 91.

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