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The Ontological Place of Invocation (*du'a*) from the Quranic and Islamic Gnosis Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article, which is to express the essence of *du'a*, starts with a question: what is *du'a*, and doesn't it constitute a gap in the system of causality and rational structure of the creation of the world? A definition of the essence of *du'a* and its dynamics is given through the presentation of the essential basis of the creation of the world according to some Quranic verses, as well as Islamic speculative Gnosticism according to which the world is based on desire and demand (*talab*). On this basis, the ontological status of *du'a* and the fact that it does not contradict God's wisdom is underlined. The second part of the study is based on an interpretation of a Quranic verse according to which the reality of *du'a* is made possible only thanks to God and through His creation of an innate divine human nature, which naturally searches its God and addresses its demands to Him. From this point of view, the special status of man in respect to all the other creatures who, through his supplications, is responsible of defining his ontological status in this world and the hereafter, is also presented

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Although in the course of human history, they were the philosophers who discussed on existence of God, as far as it is indicated in geography and history, they were the invocators who “discovered” God, and the same is true today. In the beginning of the discussion, it seems that a glance, though very briefly, to the meaning and essence of invocation is necessary. Although, invocation as an external concrete phenomenon is obvious to everybody, when we are going to give a definition for it, there will appear some difficulties. Friedrich Heiler who is one of the most famous researchers in our time and has written an admirable and scholarly book about this, after a lengthy and pleasurable discussion, in the concluding pages of his book, he states the main constituent elements of the essence of invocation as follows:

What does the simple, devout person, undisturbed by reflection, think when he prays? He believes that he speaks with a God, immediately present and personal, has intercourse with Him, that there is between them a vital and spiritual commerce. There are three elements which form the inner structure of the prayer-experience: faith in a living personal God, faith in His real, immediate presence, and a realistic fellowship into which man enters with a God conceived as present (Heiler, 1932, 356).

Although the presence of every three mentioned elements, i. e., the personal God, faith in His presence, and then establishment of sincere and objective companionship with Him is of essentials of the phenomenon of invocation, it seems that another main element is also at work, not that Heiler would have neglected that, but after mentioning it as the deepest root of any kind of invocation, it seems as if he has not recognized it as the constituent element for the essence of invocation and overlooks it. In the previous page of the mentioned paragraph, quoting from saint Augustine, he writes:

“When I Seek Thee, my God,” prays Augustine, “I seek a blessed life.” His words uncover the psychical root of all prayer (Heiler, 1932, 355).

And then some lines later he writes:

Even the Buddhist beggar-monk, who by meditation works himself up into a state of perfect in-difference, seeks in the denial of life to attain a higher and purer (Heiler, 1932, 355).

The effort to fortify, to reinforce, to enhance one’s life is the motive of all prayer. But the discovery of the deepest root of prayer does not disclose its peculiar essence.

In this way, Heiler, in spite of accepting the deep roots of psychological impulse even in worshiping and praying of the Buddhist monk, does not let such impulses enter into the definition of invocation, and only indicates the three above-mentioned elements as the constituents for the definition of invocation. It seems that such attempt of his would not be successful, because if we eliminate the element of demand and desire from the phenomenon of invocation, though we

enumerate other higher and necessary elements for it, the thing we are going to define, however, would not be the invocation we know. We are all familiar with the meaning of command. In any command there is a person with the name of commander and another person as the commanded, and a third thing as command. However, in the commanded there is some belief in superiority and the necessity of obedience of the commander whatever the reasons for such belief may be. Now if we want to change the three elements mentioned above from the relation of commander and the commanded into the relation of the desirer and the desired, it is enough just to change the commanding relation, which is the demand from a superior and transcendental position, into the relation of begging and request. In this case, the commanded is replaced by the commander but from a weak and begging position, and the commander is replaced by the desired and the beloved, and the command is also changed into request and desire. However, in this case, the mentality of the desirer and invocator regarding the desired should be a beneficial and loving approach, and this is the very same thing which Heiler eliminates it from the definition of invocation as the impulses of psychological root so that he places a friendly compassionateness and a loving presence for it. It is, however, quite acceptable that the spirit of invocation and the real origin of its genetic influence in the causal chain of the world, is the very objective reality of relation between the lover and the beloved, that is, the absolute beloved which all the causal determination are overflowed from His manifestations, but none of these could be as a permission for negating the characteristic of desire and demand which is the main element in the essence of invocation.

In other words, we can say that: the causal system of the universe is in gradation and layer by layer upon each other. The nearer layer to us is the very causal order among the sensible phenomena which we call as the lower layer, and the more internal layer of causality is the very supersensual layer superior than the matter of the causal order which is the very same manifestation of various divine attributes in the intermediate layer of existence - the imaginal and heavenly worlds. The creature of the lower grade of the hierarchy of existence, i.e, the material world, or the world of "Dunya: (nearer to the material man) as stated by the Quran all play roles with their physical existence and their spatial and temporal characteristics in completing the chain of causal order of the universe and let flowing the grace of being from the divine essence to every single creatures. Man among the creatures of the lower world-Dunya-besides his physical participation with his body and his physical actions in completing the causal chain, e also participates, through thinking and the will to think and the demands caused by his free will in influencing on the intermediate layer of the causal system and drawing the spiritual powers of the intermediate orders of existence towards himself. In this way, as the element of existential desire and the language of capacity and state in the beginning of existence and as the immutable archetypes in absorbing the sacred divine grace have played role in realizing the objective orders of existence, the element of existential desire is also playing role, this time in the lowest order of existence, Dunya, through the conceptual system of invocation, in drawing the powers originated from the sacred divine grace toward the

real demands of men. From this, the unique status of man and his free will in the evolutionary chain of being becomes more clear. Such objective influence of invocation in the objective and causal system of the world is, however, in compliance with the general teachings of the holy Quran by the divine additional agency in the causal system of the world which in many verses of the holy Quran, performance of certain actions, e. g, seizure of the spirit upon the death of man is attributed to definite agents of the genetic practitioners of the universe like angels: “Those whom the angles cause to die in a good state,... (The Bee, 32), “Those whom the angles cause to die while they are unjust to themselves, (The Bee, 28), “The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die... (The Adoration, 11) and at the same time attributes to Himself “Allah takes the souls at the time of their death” (The Companies, 42), and more important in some verses regard the voluntary actions of man, the action is simultaneously attributed to both man and God, including: “Surely this is a reminder, so whoever pleases takes to his Lord a way. And you do not please except that Allah please, surely Allah is knowing, wise”. (The Man, 29, 30). Thus, the voluntary demand and desire of man in that it is due to voluntariness of man’s action, in the same vein it is existentially considered as destiny and the deep planning of the divine creation and his immediate act. Accordingly, the doubt and confusion of discrepancy of voluntary will and action of man as to the destined divine system is removed.

This is somehow similar to what Brümmer in his book on prayer, quoting some contemporary Christian scholars advocating the “theory of open theism” like J. Burnaby in “Christian Prayer”, explains this theory of the divine dual agency. Vincent writes”:

God acts means of the natural order in a way analogous to that in which we do. But as we argued in the previous chapter, he also acts in what we do Some would go so far as to say that ‘the power of God’s love takes effect in human history in no other way than through the wills and actions of men in whom that love has come to dwell’ (Burnaby, 1962, 232-233).

In addition, quoting from Lucas, he writes:

God does not have just one plan for the world, but an infinity of plans and with the changing course of events selects those that are applicable to the actual circumstances that obtain (Lucas, 1967, 39-40).

One plan may fail, but there are always others. As fast as we torpedo his best designs for us, he produces out of his agonized reappraisal a second best (Lucas, 1967, 30-33).

Brümmer, then, refers to an important separation in this respect quoting from John Sanders. He argues that the destined acts of God should not be understood as realization of an immutable divine constructive plan, rather it must be understood as a divine “plan” which God develops it in companionship with free will human participants:

God resourcefully tries out different paths in his efforts to bring his project towards a successful completion. God’s activity does not unfold according to some heavenly blueprint whereby all goes

according to plan. God is involved in an historical project, not an eternal plan. The project does not proceed in a smooth, monolithic way but takes surprising twists and turns because the divine-human relationship involves a genuine give-and-take dynamic for both humanity and God (Sanders, 2007, 71).

Then, Brümmer adds:

We can conclude that it is coherent to claim that God is able to act within the natural order, and through the free actions of human persons, without violating the natural order or our personal agency, and without exhausting his infinite ability to respond adequately to us—even when we fail to give him our cooperation. This being the case, it is also possible that a specific event or human action within the natural order could occur as answer to impetratory prayer to God. God answers prayer by bringing about contingent events within the order of nature and by enlightening, enabling and motivating human agents to realize his intentions (Brümmer, 2008, 82).

However, the views of Lucas and Sanders and other Christians advocating the open theology are in great part close to the views of Islamic mystics and interpretation of prayer and desire in the Holy Quran, not that they are quite the same. Here we can refer to some special characteristics of Islamic view:

1. Realization of divine will by the context of creation system including nature, non-material and supernatural beings (angels and the imaginal world and...) and the order of voluntary actions of man are all uniformed and intervowen and are considered as the different stages of causal order.
2. The more important point is that the role of God as a personal agent and quite distinct within the whole causal chain is totally preserved and has no inconsistency “And you do not please except that Allah please” (The Man, 29, 30). The very existential desire of beings is based on existential effusion and bounty of God given to them. Regarding the humans, since their existential desire is expressed and manifested through the mental system and agents of knowledge, so the role of conceptual prayer is highlighted and becomes the case. 4. Since the conceptual desire of prayer can be considered as something artificial and unreal or some kind of mental or fictional game, so the true prayer is there where it is actually needed and desired and is really considered as his existential desire. That is why the element of supplication which is further referred to later, is deemed as the determining factor for a real prayer. In the other verses of the Holy Quran, the true prayer of a believer is distinguished from the superficial prayers with the term of “being sincere to Him in obedience” in “And when a wave like mountains covers them they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience...” (Luqman, 32). Although in this case, due to the lack of mental and scientific

element from the origin of being, applying the title of invocation in a common sense is not acceptable, but thanks to the fact that the beneficent creator of being, regarding his own attribute and absolute compassionateness does not leave any existential desire and request without any response, so even the atheists are also allowed to enjoy the natural gifts in compliance with the causal order of the world.

God considers the special invocation of the believers as a concession for their faith asking them intimately to enjoy such special concession. In the most beautiful way, the verses of the Holy Quran indicate that God precedes in encouraging the humans in establishing such relation:

1. "And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way". (The Cow, 186)
2. "And your Lord says: call upon Me, I will answer you; surely those who are too proud for my service shall soon enter hell abased". (The Believer, 60). The point, which should be considered in this verse, is that it is first God who commands to pray and ask Him, and that it is He who gives an absolute and strict promise to respond. The verse continues that those who abstain from establishing an obeying relationship and desiring God due to their self-hoodness and pride, they are promised to put in the hell and to stay there forever, It means that the reality of invocation and establishing a relationship with God is the very reality of faith, and if anybody avoids it intentionally and due to selfhoodness and egoism, he will be deprived of divine forgiveness and compassionate ness in the hereafter.
3. God also says: "Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me" (The Cow, 152) which shows the climax of compassionateness, affection and attention of God to man asking him to remember God so that by means of which, loving the beloved in form of a lovely causal order causes the loving and affection of the beloved to the lover, and He asks man, in an ultimately affectionate tone to be thankful of God and not be indulged in negligence.

Philosophical and Gnostic Explanation of the Formal Place of Invocation (du'a)

The first question, which will be asked concerning du'a or invocation, is that in a coherent system based on causality, which is to say on the necessary relation between a cause and its effect, how may *du'a* be justified from an ontological point of view? In other words, *du'a* is not a passive act but an active and voluntary one, which is made based on a particular request and demand (*talab*). On this basis, how may an intellectual act such as *du'a* have an influence in a system based on the necessary relation between a cause and its effect?

At first sight, based on a common scientific and philosophical point of view, this question remains unanswered: if God has created the world based on a system of causality, there remains no

place in it for the exercise of man's independent influence through acts such as invocation. Not only is this influence impossible on a logical point of view and entails the influence of an inferior degree of existence on a higher one, but it is also incompatible with the principles of divine philosophy and the determination of things through God's divine essence and wisdom. On this basis, some mystics did not make invocations because according to them, not wanting and not expressing one's desires is the condition for being God's servant. Moreover, on a social point of view, the resorting to invocation to attain one's desires would entail disorders in the social system and encourage idleness.

In order to answer to this difficulty and explain what *du'a* is on an Islamic, Gnostic and philosophical basis, we should mention a few introductory issues.

The first one is that the creation is essentially based on demand (*talab*) and takes place after it. On the basis of the Gnostics' point of view, at the stage of the second determination (*vahediyat*) (which comes after the first determination or divine unity (*ahadiyyat*)), the different divine realities and perfections become distinguished from each other - of course under the form of a cognitive distinction (and not a real distinction which would entail the presence of plurality in the very divine essence). These divine realities are called immutable entities (*a'yan thabete*) and manifest divine names and attributes. At this stage, these divine forms demand to be endowed with external existence and wish to manifest concretely their own perfections in the external world. Gnostics have called this state "existential request" (*taqaza-ye takvini*), as well as "the expression of status" (*zaban-e hal*) or "the expression of capacity" (*zaban-e este'dad*) (Gheisari 1416: 47m).

Moreover, God is absolutely generous, that's why when a request for existence is made, it is impossible for Him not to answer it. In other words, creation takes place on the basis of love on the one hand, and on demand on the other, and this request for existence of the different immutable entities entails the appearance of the world of multiplicity and concrete realities.

The Quran evokes the fact that God fulfils the existential needs and requests of all creatures sometimes through genetic and existential guidance (*hedayat*) and sometimes through revelation (*vahi*).

For instance, in sura "Ta-Ha", verse 50, God says:

¹ Abdolrahman Jami, among the celebrated poets and mystics of 15th century who has written exegesis on the books of the great Islamic mystic, Mohyeddin Ibn Arabi including his *fusus al-Hekam*, while enumerating all types of desires (*talab*) for the sacred divine essence and dividing in into the literal request and existential request, points to the fact that there is a group of saints who avoid any demand and request, because in their mystical journey they have reached to a point who consider any free-will and request of a desired thing as opposed to pure servitude which requires no free will. He, then, says that among such pure servants, some seek request and demand for the divine essence only for the purpose of following and obeying His command, which is asked by God in the Quran to state demand and request. Accordingly, he mentions other categories as well. (*The critique of al-Nosus fi Sharh al-Fusus*, Abdolrahman Jami, corrected and introduced by William Chittick, Tehran Printing, 1356).

«قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى»

Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further gave (it) guidance.

Which means that God provides means to all creatures, which enable them to reach their own existential perfections. Of course, this guidance does not take place through exhortation and conceptual meanings like in legislative guidance, but through the existential means and capacities, that God has endowed them with.

This reality is mentioned is Sura "The Bee" (Nahl), verse 68 that says:

«وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ»

In addition, you are Lord revealed to the bees: "Take your habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect.

Of course, it is clear that the word "revelation" (*wahi*) refers to an existential instinct present in the nature of bees. In other words, thanks to the creatures' request for existence, God fulfils all their existential needs, from the higher stages of existence like in immutable entities to the lower ones, like insects.

This reality has been expressed in a beautiful way by Molla Sadra through the issue of transsubstantial movement (*harakat-e johari*): according to this theory, all creatures are situated in an evolutionary chain in space and time and, from the lowest degree of existence, they continuously manifest new perfections until the apparition of man's immaterial soul from the heart of this evolutionary process which has all the capacities and possibilities of the *a priori* existential system in itself. Gnostics have called this degree of existence "all inclusive-being" (*kon-e djame'*) and the essence of creation.

In this system, man's situation is unique since contrary to other creatures, he has the possibility to go through different existential degrees until he reaches the divine stage. In Molla Sadra's words, man's quiddity is not a determined and stable reality and in addition to the fact that it has all the perfections and the capacities of the precedent existential degrees, it may free himself from any limits and reach the realm of divine absoluteness as well as become the subject of essential divine manifestations (Sadreddin Shirazi 1967: v.9, p. 96, v.7, p. 184, v.3, p. 338). This infinite capacity is mentioned in Sura "The Fig" (Tin), verses 4 to 6:

«لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ / ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ / إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ»

Surely, We created man of the best stature/Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low/Except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and they shall have a reward without end.

On this basis, the essence of man's creation has an unlimited extent: he has been created in the best stature possible in the world order on the one hand, and he is situated in the lowest and inferior degree of existence on the other.

The capacity of decadence and falling into the inferior degrees of perfection in the human soul is caused by evolutionary existential journey of creatures from the lowest degree of inanimate and physical existence to the higher stage of plants and then higher than it, that is to say, the animal world, all of which through absorbing their existential materials on the process of life and death, are transformed into the existential material of man which is the highest degree of materials, and then in the scientific and intellectual system which, in the human mind, is the premise of all his voluntary action, by selecting any way of life appropriate with the above-mentioned materials, is realized as a secondary essence in the human existence, (the principle of identity of subject and object). Regarding the capacity of achieving the highest degree of existence which is beyond the horizon of the material world and naturally cannot be transmitted to his soul through transfer of the material of beings lower than man, the existential origin of such capacity is situated into most internal existential layer of human soul which has been incorporated into the depths of human soul from the beginning of creation. This is what is stated in the Holy Quran as blowing the divine spirit into the human soul in the last stage of his creation “So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of my spirit, the falldown making obeisance to him” (Saad, 72). Naturally, such divine breathing entails all beauties and spiritual perfection of the world of existence, and man with his concentration and conceptual request-invocation-and then supplication and insisting on it, will be succeeded in developing such Final stage from his being from the depth upto the surface and from inside to outside. In this way, the process of transsubstantial movement goes beyond the horizon of the material world enabling man to have journey into the depths of divine world and then divine sovereignty.

Of course, what may prevent him from falling in this terrible abyss and reach the highest degree of existence are faith and good deeds.

This passing through different degrees of existence and then going beyond one's own existential limits and determinations which leads to the reaching of the realm of divine absoluteness has been evoked in a beautiful *hadith* attributed to Imam Sadegh (peace be upon him) in the book *Misbah al-Sharia* (The lamp of the Shari'a) which is the following:

«العبودية جوهرة كنهها الربوبية» (Gilani 1998: Sec. 100).

"Servitude is a substance and a kind of treasure in which depth lies lordship."

This process is based on the existence of an immaterial soul in man's existence, which has potentially the capacity to manifest all the realities of existence. In other words, man's nature has been endowed with means that enable him to reach the highest existential perfections. Based on the rule we mentioned concerning immutable entities, we might deduce that if man expresses a demand, God will necessarily respond to it.

Of course, at the beginning, man's requirements are based on the satisfaction of natural and corporal needs; however, his existential needs widen progressively to include immaterial needs. In other words, there is always a possibility for the apparition of new needs and requests in man's existence. Here we should stress upon the deep relation between mind and objectness, since the more man pays attention to a thing, the more he will feel a need for it and this thing will be present in his soul. In other words, if man thinks about a thing, he will "become" this thing. In Sadrian Islamic philosophy, the issue of unity of the intellect and the intelligible (*ettehad-e aghel o ma'ghoul*) expresses this reality (Sadreddin Shirazi 1967, v. 3, 38) since according to this theory, the process of thinking in man is not only conceptual but all his concepts have a certain degree of existence and that's why in Islamic philosophy, the issues concerning philosophy of mind are called "mental existence" (*vojoud-e zehni*). On this basis, when he reflects on a subject, man becomes united with it and the more he becomes familiar with it, the more the effects of this subject will appear in him (the philosophy of *zeker* or remembrance of God mentioned in religious texts and practical gnosis in islam is based on the same process: the repetition of a divine name in a specific way and under some conditions entails the appearance of the effects of that name in man's soul).

We have presented a general Gnostic and philosophical overview of the importance of existential demand and its role in the creation of the world.

Now in a second introduction, I will shortly mention some Qurānic verses, which confirm the importance of man's active and voluntary request in his own destiny.

«مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا» (٤: ١٣٤)

Whoever desires a reward in this life of the world, then with Allah (alone and none else) is the reward of this worldly life and of the Hereafter. In addition, Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Seeing (Sura "Women" (Nisa'), verse 134).

«مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ» (٤٢: ٢٠)

Whoever desires (by his deeds) the harvest (reward) of the Hereafter, We give increase his reward, and whoever desires the reward of this world, we give it to him, and he has no portion in the Hereafter (Sura "Consultation" (Shoura), verse 20).

«مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ» (١١: ١٥-١٦)

Whoever desires the life of the world and its glitter; to them we shall pay in full (the wages of) their deeds therein, and they will have no diminution therein. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but Fire; and vain are the deeds they did therein. And of no effect is that which they used to do" (Sura "Houd", verses 15 and 16).

For instance, in sura "The night journey" (Isra'), verses 18 to 20, God says:

«مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلِيهَا مَدْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا ۗ وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا ۗ كَلَّا نُمَدُّ هَؤُلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا» (١٧: ١٨-٢٠)

Whoever desires the quick-passing (enjoyment of this world), We readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then, afterwards, we have appointed for him Hell; he will burn therein disgraced and rejected, in addition, whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it, with the necessary effort due for it while he is a believer, then such are the ones whose striving shall be appreciated (rewarded by Allah). Of the bounties of your Lord, we bestow freely on all these as well as those: the bounties of your Lord are not closed (to anyone).

These verses mention a fundamental law concerning the relations between man and his acts. Thus, God fulfils the demands of the two groups, which is to say men without faith who seek the pleasures of this world as well as believers striving for the Hereafter. As a result, no need remains unfulfilled. As God says: "*the bounties of your Lord are not closed (to anyone)*". However, in the first verse, God insists on the fact that these people will pay the price of their unidirectional view in the Hereafter and their only gain then will be Hell's fire.

These verses insist on the importance of man's personal request since on this basis, God gives him what he wants. However, both these requests and God's bestowal take place in the frame of the system of causality and on the condition that the demand is real and that man strives to fulfill

it by using the means that have been given to him. These verses also show that God does not oppose to men's requests even if they entail spiritual loss. Thus, the world is not based on a predetermined system and things are not decided before they happen but on the contrary, man's will plays an important role in it. As a result, and from an ontological point of view, the existence and making of *du'a* become justified.

To sum up quickly these two introductory points, the actual existence of beings has been given to them by God thanks to their demand at the different stages of existence. These different stages are present in a unique and hidden way in divine essence as its concomitants and then thanks to God's favor, they manifest themselves gradually in the world order.

This issue corresponds to the content of a *hadith*, which has been attributed to the prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), and in which God says:

«كنت كنزاً مخفياً، فأحببت أن أعرف، فخلقت الخلق لكي أعرف»¹.

I was a hidden treasure and I wished to be known, so I created a creation (mankind), then I made myself known to them so that they know me.'

Man's corporal needs are of course real and clear, and he usually strives most of his life to fulfill them, that is why it is not hard for him to express them in an invocation.

However, the issue concerning spiritual requests and the ways to attain them through *du'a* needs one more explanation that we are now presenting in a third introductory point.

This third point is based on brief commentary of the verse 77 of sura "The criterion" (Forqan) in which God says to Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family):

«قُلْ مَا يَعْجَبُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا» (٢٥: ٧٧).

Say: "My Lord pays attention to you only - here there are two possible translations: "because of your invocation to Him" or "because He invokes you". Now you have indeed denied (Him). Therefore, the torment will be yours forever.

This verse has been interpreted in several ways, especially the expression "لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ" which means, "If there is not your invocation".

The first and simplest interpretation is to say that in this verse, the agent (*fa'el*) and the person who makes invocation is man, meaning that if man did not invoke God, God would not pay

¹ This Hadith in most of Islamic mystical books is attributed to the holy prophet (P.B.U.H) without mentioning the references from the narrative books, e. g, in *Manazel al-Saaerin*, khajeh Abdollah Ansari, or the *exposition of kamal al-Din Abdolrazegh Kashani*, Ps. 85 and 210 corrected by Mohsen Bidarfar, Bidarfar Pub., Qum, 1372.

attention to him. In other words, men pay attention to God and as a result, God pays attention to them. We do not accept this interpretation since it is not compatible with the second and third part of this verse. Another interpretation has been given through commentators such as the late Allameh Tabataba'i (Tabataba'i 1973: v. 15, 245), according to which man is considered the object of du'a, and not his subject. It means that in reality, it is God who invokes man and if God did not call man to Him, no human being would have paid attention to Him. In Allameh Tabataba'i's view, God's call to man took place through the sending of prophets and holy books, which is to say through legislative (*tashri'i*) ways. However, we think that this interpretation appears somehow illogical since if we accept it, the meaning of the verse would be that if God had not sent prophets and called men towards Him through these ways, He would never have paid attention to them. On a logical point of view and on the contrary, if God had not sent prophets to men, then it would be more necessary for Him to pay attention to them. Therefore, we think that the meaning of God's call to man here is not legislative but existential (*takwini*), which corresponds more to the idea of man as the object of du'a. In other words, God calls man to Him but not through legislative and external rules, but through man's own existence and nature based on his divine reality. Many other verses confirm this interpretation. For example, in sura "Sad", verses 71 and 72 concerning men creation, God says to the angels:

«إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن طِينٍ ۖ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتَهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ»

Truly, I am going to create man from clay and when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall you down, bowing before him

The fact that God has breathed His spirit in man's nature is the highest wonder and favour that God has ever given to a creature and it underlines the deep presence of God's divine reality in man.

On this matter, we may allude to another quranic verse concerning quranic anthropology. In sura "The Heights" (A'raf), verse 172, God says:

«وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ» (١٧٢: ٧).

In addition, (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam from their reins, their seed, and made them testify on themselves (saying): "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: "Verily, we have been unaware of this.

This verse contains very deep meanings which we may not explain now, but what we should mention here is that God reminds man that in the first day of Adam's creation, He made all Adam's descendants until the Day of Resurrection testify on their soul (in which lies divine's reality) that

God is their Lord. This shows again the divine presence and truth in man's divine nature (*fitra*) which leads him to acknowledge naturally that God is his Lord.

In other words, the essence of man's soul is pure dependence to God and if somebody knows his soul, he will necessarily know the Divine Reality. This issue is based on numerous and reliable sources in the Sadrian philosophy as well as in Islamic narrations.

Moreover, we may also mention a section of a Shia invocation called "Abou Hamzeh Thumali" from the fourth Imam Hazrat 'Ali ibn al-Hussein also known as Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him):

«بك عرفتك و انت دللتني عليك و دعوتني اليك و لولا انت لم ادر ما انت» (*al-Mafatih al-Jenan*)

By You, I have known you; you guided me to you, and you called me to you,
In addition, if it were not by You, I would not have known who you are.

This sentence means that we know God through God since He is the proof and guide to His own existence, and if God had not called us to Him, we would never have known Him or gone towards Him. To sum up, divine reality is a part of man's existence and lies in its depth.

Here again the meaning of the expression “لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ” as a divine and existential invocation to man becomes clearer: if God had not called us to Him through our own divine nature, we would not have addressed ourselves to Him.

We may now draw conclusions from these introductory points:

1. We have said that the effusion of existence in the world comes from the request and existential needs of creatures.
2. Since all man's voluntary acts are based on his own consciousness of things, he expresses his different needs in the frame of conceptual requests.
3. In the world system, all man's real needs are fulfilled provided he makes the appropriate efforts to reach them.
4. Man's spiritual needs also have a place in the depth and hidden part of his being.
5. Demands and requests concerning man's spiritual needs are also fulfilled in the world system.
6. Since spiritual requests do not depend on material means and therefore do not entail conflicts between their means and causes, their realization will be wider and more witnessed.
7. Since the basis of the effusion of existence is request and existential need, invocation – which is a conceptual reality – will be effective only if it concerns a concrete and existential reality and not an imaginary and superficial request, and on the condition that it is expressed with one is whole being. Therefore, if *du'a* usually starts with words, mere sayings are not sufficient to make it become a real invocation effective in the world order.

This reality is mentioned in the Quran through the word "tazarro" which refers to a state in which man has become hopeless of the utility of external means to fulfill his need and expresses a request with his whole being, with intense emotion and cry, and places all his hopes in God. God answers the invocation of a person or of a group when this state reaches its climax.

In sura "Cattle", verses 42 and 43, God says:

«وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَا هُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ / فَلَوْلَا إِذِ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ» (٤٣، ٤٢: ٤).

Verily, we sent (Messengers) too many nations before you (Muhammad). In addition, we afflicted them with suffering and adversity so that they might learn humility. When Our Torment reached them, why then did they not humble themselves? However, their hearts became hardened, and Satan made all that they used to do seem fair to them!

If the members of a society have a feeling of misery and powerlessness and at the same time feel their complete dependence on God, He will answer their request.

This reality also applies to individuals, as the verse 62 of sura "Ant" (Naml) tells us:

«أَمَّن يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ أَإِلَهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ» (٦٢: ٢٧).

Is not He who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there any ilah (god) with Allah? Little is that you remember!

This verse clearly shows that if somebody makes an invocation while he deeply feels distressed and powerless and considers God to be his only refuge, God will respond to his supplication.

As a conclusion, it clearly appears that the reality of *du'a* and a real *du'a* not only is not incompatible with the system of causality, but it also shows the real way and process of causality from the origin of existence in the creation.

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