



## The Relation of Causal Necessity and Free Will in The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence “When our pen reached this point, it shattered to pieces”

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### Abstract

The relation of causal necessity with free will has been a source of great debate in the history of philosophy and theology. However, in recent years, it has also been discussed in the science of Usul al-Fiqh. After explaining the compatibility of causal necessity with free will, Ākhūnd Khurāsānī speaks of the 'shattering of his pen.' Two interpretations have been given for this statement. Muḥaqqiq Iṣfahānī considers the theory of compatibility that Khurāsānī presented as being correct. However, he interprets the 'shattering of the pen' to be a reference to another matter, i.e., the problem of the recompense of an agent in the case where causal necessity is accepted. His explanation of the aforementioned compatibility and the permissibility of the recompense of sinners has been evaluated in this article. On the contrary, Muḥaqqiq Na'ini considers the 'shattering of the pen' to be a reference to the problem of the conflict between causal necessity and free will. He says that aside from the popular preliminaries of free will, such as knowledge and intention (which are the products of causal necessity), there is a need for something that he calls 'talab'-a noetic action that stems from the governance of the soul. He considers this talab to fall outside the scope of causal necessity. This paper seeks to examine the views of these two illustrious students of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī so that the various Usuli dimensions of this discussion can be clarified.

Research Article



### Keywords

free will, causal necessity, free will, Islamic jurisprudence, free will, Islamic jurisprudence

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## Introduction

It has often been claimed that it is self-evident that man is, in some way, free and he is not compelled in all of his actions. Aside from this, it has been claimed that the negation of free will from man, especially from the believers, leads to many problems for the Abrahamic religions. The reason for this is that it would be challenging to explain the commands, prohibitions, promises and threats of religion if we negated free will from the human being. It would also be challenging to explain moral responsibility and related concepts such as blame and approval. However, contrary to this claim, many Muslim theologians and some philosophers have objected to free will.

In his explanation of the problem of free will in philosophy and theology,<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Baqir Sadr says the following: (Hāshimī Shāhrūdī, 2012, p.28)

The theological (*kalāmī*) problem of free will can be stated as follows: Who is the real agent of the actions that apparently emanate from man? Or to state it as Fakhr al-Rāzī did: To whom does the power that is instrumental in the production of the action really belong? (Al-Rāzī, 1987, vol.9, pp.9-13) Sadr alludes to three responses to this question. The first is the compulsion of the Asharites, who say that the agent and cause of the existence of the action is no one but God. These theologians say that man is simply the recipient who accepts the divine action. The second is the relegation (*tafwīd*) of the Mutazilites. These theologians say that independently, man is sufficient for the acquisition of the action. The third theory is somewhere between the two aforementioned theories. It is what the Shi'ites adhere to. In reality, this theory attempts to find a middle way between the compulsion of the Asharites and the relegation of the Mutazilites.

The philosophical problem of compulsion and free will is different. In contrast to the previous problem, in this way of looking at this problem, the question is not whether the real agent of the action that emanates from man is man or God. The philosophical problem also investigates the divine action and speaks about the manner of God's agency. It is possible to ask about the

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1. By 'theology,' what is intended is a science that is meant to explain and defend the teachings of a religion, such as Islam. Of course, it is possible for philosophical arguments to be used in the science of theology. However, the theological take on such problems is distinct from the philosophical take on them from two points of view. First of all, theology is bound to the religious teachings it seeks to defend and that are explicitly mentioned in the religious texts. Secondly, the premises of the arguments used in theology, in contrast to philosophy, are more general than the necessary propositions that philosophy is bound to. Rather, theological arguments may also use popular and accepted premises. In other words, the methodology of theological argumentation also includes rhetoric.

manner in which an action emanates from an agent, regardless of whether the agent is God or man. If the action necessarily emanates from its agent, as the philosophers generally say, then how can the agent have free will? And if it does not necessarily emanate from its agent, then how can the agency of that agent] be possible? In reality, the philosophical problem seeks to illustrate the compatibility between causal necessity and free will.

Muhammad Baqir Sadr considers this philosophical question to stem from two principles that are generally accepted by the philosophers. The first is the belief that free will is contrary to necessity. This is because necessity causes the action to lose its property of being free and gives it the property of being compelled. The example of this is the trembling of the hand of the person afflicted with Parkinson's disease. The second is the generally accepted philosophical truth that an action always emanates from man necessarily. This is because the action that emanates from man is one of the contingent beings and in its essence, it is equally capable of existence and non-existence. So, until it does not acquire necessity by means of something else, it cannot come into existence. Following this explanation, Muhammad Baqir Sadr investigates the different ways of solving this problem (Hāshimī Shāhrūdī, 2012, p.30).

Of course, we are not attempting to present all of the possible resolutions to this problem of the incompatibility. Rather, we will concentrate on the views of two of the most prominent Usuli scholars here, i.e., Muḥaqqiq 'Iṣfahānī and Muḥaqqiq Nā'inī. However, it is first necessary to explain the principle of causal necessity which seems to be the main cause of the problem of human free will.

### Causal Necessity

The principle of causal necessity is based on the philosophical idea that the possible existent, which is called the 'quiddity', cannot become existent until it acquires necessity from something else and exits its state of equality (*'istiwā'*) with respect to existence and non-existence. In other words, in order to come into existence, the possible existent should be affected by something else to the extent that it no longer becomes possible for it to not come into existence. The following is the proof of the philosophers for the idea that an action should attain the level of the necessity of existence and that its likelihood (*'awlawīyyat*) is not sufficient (Ṭabātabā'i, 1428, pp.98-100).

When we assume that it is simply likely for the thing to occur, it is still possible to ask the following question: Why did this thing come into existence when it was possible for it to not come into existence? This is the discussion that is known as the sufficiency of likelihood (*kifayat 'awlawīyyat*)

in the acquisition of the action. Philosophers staunchly deny this. However, many theologians, especially Asharite theologians, accept it (Ṭabātabā'i, 1428, pp.100-103).

Muslim philosophers call the necessity that is required for the existence of the contingent being 'prior necessity'. Of course, they do not wish to say that it is temporally prior to the existence of the contingent being. This is because a complete cause and its effect are temporally simultaneous. Rather, what is intended is a priority in ontological rank and theoretical analysis. It shows that without the cause, there is no suitable explanation for the existence of the contingent entity. Philosophers call this necessary dependency to something else: 'necessity by something else' (*ḍarūrat bi al-ghayr*) (Ṭabātabā'i, 1428, p.82). They are of the belief that this ontological necessity is implied in the principle of causation.

In this sense, the principle of the necessity of causation can be considered something self-evident and intuitive. And from this point of view, no proof is presented for it. Rather, some say that the consideration of argumentation is actually dependent upon the acceptance of this principle. This is because the idea that the premises of a syllogism necessitate the conclusion is itself one of the instances of the principle of causal necessity, which is subconsciously contained in the depths of the soul and mind of man.<sup>1</sup>

## The Free Will and Intention of Man

Voluntary action is action that is preceded by intention ('Irādah)<sup>2</sup> and comes into being because it is affected by it. However, we may ask the following question: What exactly is intention? Some understand it to be an intense yearning. For example, in his, *Manzumah* and its commentary, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari says the following: "In man, the intention is nothing but an intense yearning. It is acquired after the knowledge of something compatible with the soul, regardless of whether it is certain, probable or even imaginary. This intention is something that encourages the soul to act according to it. And it

1. For a look at the discussion on whether the principle of causation is self-evident or not refer to: (1325AH), vol.8, p.3; Rāzī, 1373SH, vol.3, pp.92-97; Also, for a look at the discussion on the idea that argumentation itself depends on the belief in causation refer to: Sadr, 2009, pp.355-357.

2. Keeping in mind the various technical terms that exist in the discussion on free will and the fact that the meanings of these terms are very close to one another, we will use the term 'intention' (which completes the free will of a human being in the view of Khurāsānī and Iṣfahānī) in place of the Arabic term 'iradah.' Also, in place of the word 'talab' (which is different from the word 'iradah' according to Na'ini and completes the free will of a human being), we will use the word 'desire.'

leads to the stimulation (*taḥrik*) of the limbs for the acquisition of the compatible thing” (Sabzawāri, 1999, vol.3, p.54).

In his *Kifayat al-Usul*, Ākhūnd Al-Khurāsānī adopts such a view. He considers the intention to be nothing but the intense yearning, subsequent to which the movement of the limbs for the performance of the action occurs (Khurāsānī, 1389, p.95). However, Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra consider it to be something other than the intense yearning (Ibn Sina, 2014, vol.2, p.411). Mulla Sadra presents an argument for this distinction. He says that sometimes, an intense yearning for something exists in the soul but it does not intend to perform it. For example, a person may have an intense yearning for something because his passion has overcome him; nevertheless, he may not intend that thing because he has chosen to prevent his soul from doing so. According to him, the intention is nothing but the decision (*ijma*) and resolution (*tasmīm*) to do something. It is possible to name this the ‘free-inclination’ (*mayl ikhtiyari*) and it is for this reason that a human being can be reprimanded for the having the intention to perform a task. However, he will not be reprimanded for having the intense yearning to do so (Shirāzi, 1981, vol.6, pp.337-338).

In any case, regardless of the definition of the intention that we accept, we may ask the following question about it: If the intention also has a cause, then what is its cause? It is possible to consider the intention a noetic quality (Shirāzi, 1981, vol.6, p.336) and therefore, an effect of natural causes, such as the comprehension of that which is compatible with the soul. It is also possible to consider it to be dependent upon non-natural factors and to ultimately be rooted in the eternal will of God. However, regardless of which of these opinions we choose, the following question may be asked regarding it: How can the existence and non-existence of such an intention, which is itself dependent upon other things, make an action a voluntary one?

In reality, the problem of free will and causation turns into a paradox of the freedom of the intention and causation. This problem seems to be a paradox. The reason for this is that the acceptance of the principle of causal necessity turns the intention into something involuntary. As a result, the action that emanates from that intention also becomes something involuntary. On the other hand, the negation of causal necessity leads to the negation of the agency of the human being and as a result, the negation of his free will. It would render the action that apparently emanates from him to actually be related to chance.

## **The Problem of Free will in the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence**

The discussion on free will has a long history in philosophical and theological

texts. Even today, many heated debates are conducted about it.<sup>1</sup> However, it is interesting to note that in the last ten decades, this subject has changed into one of the most challenging discussions of the science of *Usul al-fiqh* (i.e., the Principles of Jurisprudence). Usul al-Fiqh is sometimes called ‘the Logic of the jurisprudential Deduction’ and is one of the most important and ancient Islamic sciences. As a scientific discipline, it discusses principles that assist a scholar in the deduction of religious laws (Hilli, 2001, p.48).

In other words, the science of the Principles of Jurisprudence discusses rules the conclusions of which are used in the deduction of religious laws. For example, in the Glorious Qur’an, which is the most fundamental of Islamic texts, the following command exists: “O my son! Maintain the prayer and bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and be patient through whatever may befall you. What is indeed the steadiest of courses” (31:17). In order to be able to derive the obligation of the prayer from this verse, it is necessary to first accept the idea that the form of the command (*sigah amr*) indicates an obligation (*wujub*). Secondly, it is necessary to accept the idea that the apparent meanings of the Qur’an are binding upon us. These two problems, and others like them, are discussed in the science of Usul. Undoubtedly, the Science of Usul is not an independent science that is unrelated to others. Of course, today, many of its problems resemble the problems of analytical or linguistic philosophy and can be independently studied.<sup>2</sup>

Although this discipline was founded for the deduction of the practical religious rules, many of its sections have been used for the understanding and deduction of the views of religion regarding matters of belief or morals.

The first section of the science of Usul is related to the discussions on words and its purpose is the discovery of their meanings. The most prevalent of words used in the religious texts are commands and prohibitions. One of the problems that are presented regarding the meanings of the command is this: Does the command indicate the intention of the performance of the action that has been commanded? In other words, when God says: ‘Pray!’ does this mean that God *intends* for us to pray?

Of course, this is an ancient discussion and it has a long history in the science of the Principles of jurisprudence (Rāzī, 1418 A. H. vol.2, pp.39-44). In recent times however, this discussion has gone beyond the simple discussion regarding the meaning of the command. This is because the following question has also been presented here: What is the nature of the intention of the

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1. For a newer example of the same refer to: rrr Jā’ farī yyy ādihi, 1395.

2. For an example of the possibility of a comparative study of Usul and Analytical Philosophy independently of the logic of jurisprudential analysis, refer to: oo rvārīd, 1384.

performance of an action and what is its relation to free will?

For the sake of brevity and order, we will first mention the explanation of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī (1255-1329 AH). It is possible to consider him as the person who initiated this discussion in recent centuries.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the sub-title of our article points to a statement of his in the discussion on desire (ṭalab) and intention ('irādah). After a very profound, yet concise, discussion, he says: "When our pen reached this point, it shattered to pieces" (Khurāsānī, 1389, vol.1, p.99).

The expression 'the pen shattered to pieces' indicates the fact that the discussion he conducted was incomplete. However, it is possible to explain this *incompleteness* in two ways:

One is to say that he explains the intention as being essential to man and in this way, the problem of free will, i.e., its compatibility with the principle of causal necessity, is resolved. Nevertheless, another question remains: How is it possible for someone whose free will is rooted in an essential intention to still be religiously responsible (*mukallaf*) and liable to be rewarded and punished for his actions? But in the other way, however, the 'pen' of the Ākhūnd did not further assist him in the aforementioned discussion and it 'broke.'

It seems that some of his students who also had an inclination to philosophy, such as Muḥaqqiq 'Iṣfahānī (1296-1361 AH), believed that the problem of incompatibility of free will and causal necessity was resolved,<sup>2</sup> but some of his other students, such as Muḥaqqiq Nā'inī (1276-1355 AH), say that the 'shattering of the pen' shows that the principal problem was not completely resolved.<sup>3</sup>

In order to explain the view of Nā'inī here, we have benefited greatly from his two principal commentators, i.e., his two direct and most exemplary

1. Ākhūnd Khurāsānī studied under great scholars such as Sheikh Ansari and rrr za Shīrāzi. After the death of his teacher, rrr za Shīrāzi, he accepted the responsibility of the most prominent jurisprudential religious authority. He was also the most prominent of leaders of the Mashrutah movement.
2. He was uhammad Husain 'Iṣfahānī, also known as Kompany. His most valuable work is his commentary on the *Kifayah al-Usul*, *Nihayah al-Dirayah*. It is has been related that he was also well versed in Philosophy and Mysticism. Some of his students, such as Allamah Tāāātabāie, continued his theoretical-practical methodology.
3. He first attended the lectures of great scholars such as rrr za Shīrāzi in Samara. Following this, he went to Najaf and took part in the lessons of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī. Even though he was not in Iran at the time of the Mashrutah movement, his book, *Tanbih al-Millat wa Tanzih al-Millat* had a great effect upon the fortification of this revolution. He also had many illustrious students, who propagated his ideas after him in the Islamic seminaries.

students, Ayatullah Khoie<sup>1</sup> (1317-1413) and Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1353-1400), who was also a student of Khoie.<sup>2</sup>

### **Ākhūnd Khurāsānī and the Problem of Free will**

Even though it is difficult to understand, the book *Kifayat al-Usul* is still one of the principal text books of the higher grades of the Islamic seminary. After presenting some preliminary discussions, in the first main discussion, the book begins to examine the meaning of the matter (*maddah*) and the form (*sigah*) of the command (*amr*). In the beginning, the author first explains that lexically and in the minds of ordinary people, the word ‘*amr*’ refers to a desire. Of course, every act of desiring something is not considered an ‘*amr*’. A desire is only an ‘*amr*’ in the case where the person commanding has a higher position than the person who is being commanded. In any case, the thing that pulls this discussion into the discussion on compulsion and free will is the following question: Is the command, which based upon the abovementioned explanation indicates the desire for the thing commanded, something different from the intention for that thing or is the same as it?

In other words, the problem is whether intending something and desiring it are the same or different from one another. This discussion, which is known as the discussion on the unity between the desire and the intention, in turn leads to the problem of compulsion and free will. Indeed, the discussion on free will entered the science of Usul as a marginal discussion. Nevertheless, it was meticulously examined there. In the beginning, Ākhūnd Khurāsānī categorically rejects the existence of something by the name of desire that would be different from the act of intention during the emanation of the act from the agent. He says that self-introspection affirms the fact that at the time of the emanation of the act from its agent, there is nothing besides the intention and its preliminaries.

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1. Ayatullah Khoie'i was one of the greatest disciples of Na'ini. He had a very articulate way of teaching. Due to the depth of the material he taught and the simplicity of the way he expressed it, many students from all over the world came to learn under him. This is true to the extent that many of the most learned scholars today consider themselves as his students.
  2. He was one of the most illustrious students of Ayatullah Khoie and had become quite popular in his youth. In fact, news of his learning began to spread throughout the world even while he was still young. Aside from the sciences usually studied in the Islamic seminaries, he also wrote valuable works on other sciences, such as philosophy, logic and economics. However, aside from his scientific activities, he also participated in the protests against the tyrannical regime of Saddam. He was martyred for this reason slightly before he had reached sixty years of age.

In the case where the person is directly the agent, the intention leads to the movement of the muscles. In the case where the person is not the direct agent of the action intended, then it manifests itself as a command and an order. The preliminaries of the intention are the conception of the action and the affirmation of its benefit. The intention is itself a yearning that follows those two. In the direct act, it is followed by the act of moving the muscles and in the indirect act, it is followed by the command and order for the other person to perform it (Khurāsānī, 1389, p.95).

Ākhūnd . hurāsānī says that the intention of man is affected by preliminary causes that are outside of his intention. Rather, these preliminary causes are rooted in the eternal intention of God. In this way, the problem of an infinite regress of intentions is eliminated.

Nevertheless, another serious question remains and that is how actions such as the disbelief and sin of a human being could be punishable, when in the end they terminate at the eternal intention and choice (*mashiyyat*) of God (Khurāsānī, 1389, p.98). Ākhūnd Khurāsānī's response to this question raises certain challenges.

This is because he says that the reward or punishment given is for the voluntary act, i.e., the act that stems from the intention of the agent. However, the idea that this intention or yearning is rooted in the predetermined essence of man does not lead to a problem in the justification of the punishment given.

Here, he refers to a tradition related to this subject. That tradition states that the felicity or wretchedness of people is determined before their birth in this world. He also refers to the famous tradition that states that the essence and essential properties of individuals are different from one another, as is true for gold and silver. In the justification of these distinctions, the essential differences of individuals are sufficient. Since essential distinctions, such as felicity and wretchedness (i.e., faith and disbelief), are essential to individuals, they do not need causes.

Indeed, those essential distinctions are sufficient for the justification of the distinction of the effects that emanate from various individuals. To be more precise, God simply creates the felicitous person. He does not first create him and then make him felicitous or wretched. In this matter, Ākhūnd Khurāsānī is alluding to the simple act of creation (*j'al basit*) mentioned in philosophy. This is the same thing that Ibn Sina alludes to when he says that for a peach to be a peach there is no need for a cause. Rather, the cause of the existence of the peach is sufficient as a cause for its being a peach. This is because God has created the peach. He did not create an unspecified thing and then give it the form of a peach (Khurāsānī, 1389, p.99).

Here, Ākhūnd Khur. sānī does not continue his discussion and simply

allude to the fact that his pen ‘shattered’ upon reaching this point (Khurāsānī, 1389, p.99).

### **Muḥaqqiq Ṣṣfahānī’s explanation of the Problem of Free will as an interpretation of the view of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī**

Muḥaqqiq Ṣṣfahānī was aware that there were ambiguities in the theory of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī.

For this reason, he made an attempt to explain and defend it. He says the following in this regard:

The principle that states that every contingent being should stem from the Necessary Being leads us to conclude that the intention of a human being should also be from the Necessary Being. This is because it is also a contingent being. However, if the intention stems from another contingent intention and this continues ad infinitum, an infinite regress would necessitate. Therefore, it is necessary that the contingent intention ultimately terminates at the eternal intention of God (Ṣṣfahānī, 2008, p.287). However, if we resolve the problem of the infinite regress of intentions in this way, then the following question arises: How is it possible to object to the disbelief of the disbelievers or the sins of the sinners? It is true that their actions were performed by them with the yearning and intention to do so; nevertheless, they ultimately go back to the eternal intention of God.

In the exposition of Muḥaqqiq Ṣṣfahānī, it is clear that the proof that the contingent intentions ultimately terminate at the eternal intention of God is the principle of causal necessity. For this reason, it seems difficult to put this principle aside. Like many other philosophers, Muḥaqqiq Ṣṣfahānī was well aware of the dangers of casting the principle of causal necessity aside.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, he strives to preserve it, at the cost of accepting what many theologians and some philosophers believe to be compulsion. However, he tries to show that such a thing is not compulsion.

Rather, the principle of causal necessity is a presupposition upon which the acceptance of free will is based. This is because man cannot be an agent without the principle of causal necessity. However, it seems that - contrary to what is apparent from the explanation of the problem - the main problem does not lie in the infinite regress of intentions and then the principle of causal

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1. In order to get better acquainted with the consequences of the denial of causal necessity refer to: Javadi, Mohsen, *Dar Amadi bar Khuda Shinasi Falsafi*, aa Ṣṣarif Umur Asatid, Qum, 1st edition, 1375, pp.83-89.

necessity. Rather, as can be seen in the answer of Muḥaqqiq 'Iṣfahānī, the main problem lies in the definition of the voluntary action. This is because they have defined it as the action that is preceded by an intention.

According to this definition, since the intention is also a voluntary action of the soul, it should be preceded by an intention. Otherwise, it would not be voluntary. And in this case, it would not be possible to say that the thing that is itself involuntary has caused the action that emanates from man to be voluntary. This problem arises even if we assume that there is no causal necessity at work.

In any case, after he criticizes some of the answers that have been given to this problem, such as the answer of Mir Damad, he explains his own resolution of the problem. According to him, the infinite regress of intentions does not necessitate from the voluntary nature of an action. This is because for an action to be voluntary it is only necessary that it stem from the agent with an intention. However, it is not necessary for its intention to emanate from another intention. The agent with power and free will is simply the agent who performs its action when the agent wants to. It is not the agent who wants to want when it wants to perform its action.

According to 'Iṣfahānī, if this were the condition for an action to be voluntary, then it would even be impossible for the actions of God to be voluntary. This is because the assumption is that the divine action is voluntary because it stems from knowledge and intention. However, if it were necessary for the intention of God to be preceded by another intention, then the intention of God would not be identical with His essence, which is unacceptable (Iṣfahānī, 2008, p.288). In any case, if the intention is imagined as being intentional, then this is so that the preliminaries of the action exit the state of being involuntary. This is so that no one may imagine that something involuntary has caused an action to become voluntary.

According to Muḥaqqiq 'Iṣfahānī however, making this a condition of free will increases its problem. The reason for this is that if we make this a condition for intention, which is one of the preliminaries of the voluntary action, then why should it not be a condition of the rest of its preliminaries, such as knowledge and power? Could it be said that the knowledge and power of man are also intentional, i.e., that they emanate from a prior intention? It is clear that the answer to this question is negative. What is more, this condition would lead to the divine action becoming involuntary. This is because its preliminaries - such as the divine attributes and essence - are not intentional, i.e., they do not emanate from a prior intention (Iṣfahānī, 2008, p.288).

In any case, in the explanation of his view, he says the following: (Iṣfahānī, 'Iṣfahānī, *Nihayah al-Dirayah*) There are two types of efficient causes (i.e.,

agents). The first is that from which existence emanates (*ma minhu al-wujud*). This is the agent that grants existence to the effect. The other is that by means of which existence occurs (*ma bihi al-wujud*). This is the agent that is directly instrumental in the occurrence of something, without granting it existence.

The first type of efficient cause is only true of God, who gives existence to quiddities. However, the second type of efficient cause, whose agency is directly influential in the occurrence of the action and which necessitates immediacy of action, motion and the completion of potentialities (*isti'dadha*), is not true of God. From another point of view, the efficient cause is capable of being divided into three categories. One of these is the efficient cause by nature. In this category, the efficient cause acts without awareness and intention; rather, its action simply emanates from its nature. An example of this is the burning of fire. The second is the efficient cause that acts by compulsion. In this category, the relation of the efficient cause to its effect is the relation of a subject to the accident that inheres in it. This means that the performance of the action does not emanate from the essence of that being and like the accident, it is added to it from the outside. In these cases, in reality something else is the agent. The third is the agent by free will. This agent produces the act by means of power, knowledge and intention.

Indeed, these three distinctions are what justify the attribution of free will to the agent. The argument of 'Iṣfahānī is that if the termination of human intention at the eternal intention of God is based upon the necessity of the dependency of every contingent being upon the Necessary Being, then the entire universe, including the essence, the attribute and the actions of man are also such. In reality, this type of dependency does not negate the direct agency of man and therefore, it is not contrary to his free will. Free will implies that the immediate agent of the action is man and that the action is performed by means of the power, knowledge and intention of man. However, its occurrence and existence, like the universe as a whole, is from God.

Subsequently, he alludes to the distinction between the natural agent and the agent by free will. In the explanation of this distinction, he mentions two points. The first point is that in the first, the agent acts by means of its nature.

In the second however, the action is not necessitated by the essence of the agent. Aside from this, in the agent by free will, the action is related to the agent, not the conditions of its agency.<sup>1</sup> In continuation, he answers those who say that even though these two types of agents are not exactly the same, they

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1. It seems that this is contrary to the view of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī, who believes in the essential nature of felicity and wretchedness for man.

are nonetheless very similar to one another. This similarity is because in the agent by free will, the agent (i.e., the human being) is not free with respect to the conditions of his agency, i.e., his power, knowledge and intention. Therefore, in the end, the agency of man is necessitated by his nature (*tab'*) and is not necessitated by his intention. Therefore, it seems that his free will is only superficial and that he is really a natural agent.

'Iṣfahānī responds by saying that it is impossible for man to possess complete free will with respect to the conditions of his agency and its preliminaries. Thus, he cannot acquire them by means of his intention. Even if one says that his knowledge, power and intention fall under a series of intentional agents, they must ultimately terminate at the nature of man so that an infinite regress does not necessitate (Iṣfahānī, 2008, p.294) It is for this reason that Mulla Sadra says that the foundations of the voluntary actions of man are not from him and that they are forced upon his self from outside of him (Shīrāzi, 1981, vol.1, p.313).

When Mulla Sadra says that in reality, man does not possess really free will, perhaps what he means is that ultimately, the foundations of the free will of man stem from outside of his being and that even his motives for the performance of an action, which play the role of the final cause of those actions, are forced upon him from outside of his being.

Mulla Sadra says that the soul in us is like the nature, which is under the control of something else in its behavior and its movements. The only difference between the soul and the nature is that the soul is aware of its motives and goals. This is while the nature is not conscious of its goals. So, the voluntary action in the real sense only emanates from the Necessary Being and other beings are actually compelled but appear to be free (*mukhtar*) (Shīrāzi, 1981, vol.1, p.312). Is such an interpretation of the free will of man satisfactory?

Is it able to resolve the problem of ethical responsibility and man's susceptibility of being punished for his actions? In the beginning, 'Iṣfahānī says that this is not compulsion. This is because God does not play a direct role in the preliminaries of the agency of man, such as his knowledge, power and intention. So, the role He plays does not negate man's free will. His agency is simply in the form of something from which existence emanates (Iṣfahānī, 2008, p.290). In his opinion, it is true that the belief in compulsion is a type of veneration of God's power. Nevertheless, it is a great act of tyranny to directly relate the act of man to God. This is because the performance of human actions necessitates spatial movement and is related to the location of a thing. In reality, these movements emanate from the faculties present in the muscles of a human being. These are the same muscles that move by means of

the instigation of the soul. If the act of instigation that the soul performs is not by means of the intention of the human being and we relate it to the divine intention, then it becomes necessary for God to be one with the human soul. However, such a thing is impossible for God, who is a simple being. Therefore, the immediate agent of the human actions is man and his intention (İşfahānī, 2008, pp.290-293).<sup>1</sup> İşfahānī says that this is the limit and jurisdiction of the free-agency of a human being.

It is distinguished from the natural agency simply by means of the existence of knowledge, power and intention. Of course, those preliminaries are not intentional; rather, they are ultimately natural. However, even if we do not accept this interpretation of free will and its distinction from the natural agent-which is something very difficult to do of course - then the following problem still remains: How is it possible to punish man for actions, such as disbelief and sin, when they ultimately go back to his nature?

In his own words, how can someone punish someone else for the performance of an action that ultimately stems from himself? (İşfahānī, 2008, p.297) In his response to this question, İşfahānī strives to take the discussion outside of the scope of the theoretical intellect. It is for this reason that he explicitly says that there is no room for demonstration in this discussion.

The reason for this is that the idea that it is proper to punish someone for a voluntary action and not proper to punish someone for a natural action is not capable of being proven by demonstration. He adds that actually, the only distinction between the free-agent and the natural agent that is important for us is that it is proper for one to be punished for its actions in contrast to the other. However, it is not important to make a precise ontological distinction between them. It is very clear for him that this is not one of the rulings of the theoretical intellect.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, he feels that there is no way to demonstrate it [logically and rationally]. Rather, this is one of the rulings of the practical intellect.

The criterion for the propriety of punishing the agent for the sane people is that the agent possesses awareness, power and intention. However, this criterion does not exist in the other two types of agents, i.e. the compelled agent and the natural agent, which performs its act *simply* by means of its nature and the action of which is *simply* natural.<sup>2</sup> He also adds that the sane people of the world say that the attributes that are necessary as the conditions

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1. Apparently, he means to say that this is a justification of the propriety of punishment to the extent that is necessary in the science of Usul. However, it is not meant to be a philosophical analysis or the affirmation of the compatibility of causal compulsion and free will.

2. The expression: 'pure nature' is probably an allusion to the fact that ultimately, in free will, the nature is instrumental; nevertheless, knowledge, power and intention are also instrumental.

and preliminaries of the performance of an action are natural, even if the beings of this world did not have a creator and man was independent in his actions. Nevertheless, they consider it proper to punish the person for the action that emanates from knowledge, power and intention.

To the contrary, those actions that emanate without these preliminaries are compelled or natural and it is not proper to punish their agents. It is for this reason that with respect to the actions of the soul, he makes a distinction between those actions that simply emanate from man's nature for the purpose of the preservation of the temperament and those that emanate from knowledge, power and intention (Iṣfahānī, 2008, P.291). He explains himself further by stating that there are two types of rewards and punishments: The first are the ones that are the necessary concomitants of the actions themselves. The example of this type of reward or punishment is the sickness that occurs after over-eating and the resolution of which is to be treated by a doctor. Bodily ailments are cured using physical medicine and spiritual ones using intellectual medicine. However, the second type of reward or punishment, which seems to be alluded to by the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, is not the necessary concomitants of the action itself. Rather, it is given by someone else and [ontologically] unrelated to the action itself. Here, 'Iṣfahānī takes recourse to common people.

He says that a human master (i.e., the owner of a slave) may punish his slave for disobeying his order even though the action ultimately emanates from God. However, this does not prevent the permissibility of the master punishing him.

The relation between the real master, i.e., God, and his servant is also such. According to 'Iṣfahānī, it is essentially good to punish a voluntary sin that emanates from the knowledge and the inclination of the individual. And in this respect, there is no distinction between the real master and the human one (Iṣfahānī, 2008, p.298). Right now, we do not wish to discuss whether the propriety of punishment is rational and is founded upon a rational demonstration or it is reasonable and founded upon common sense. Of course, 'Iṣfahānī believes in the second theory. In reality, he considers the rules of the practical intellect to be *itibari*, (metaphorical, non-factual). Consequently, he says that they fall outside of the scope of the problems that can be proven by logical demonstration.

Right now, we do not wish to criticize his theory.

However, in passing, we may say that the proof that he uses to affirm that it is possible for the behavior of the common people with their slaves and servants to be similar to that of God with His servants is incompatible with the beliefs upon which his belief in practical laws are founded.

Amongst people, it is considered proper for a master to punish his slave for his disobedience. From this, 'Iṣfahānī somehow concludes that disobedience to one's master is essentially punishable. Consequently, if a slave of the real master, i.e., God, disobeys Him, then it is proper for him to be punished.

If the action is essentially capable of being punished, then the idea that the punishment is from a man or from God does not lead to the changing of the attribute of the action, i.e., that it is punishable by the person who was disobeyed (Iṣfahānī, 2008, p.298).

Nevertheless, we may ask: Is it even possible to speak of the essential propriety of punishment for sin with respect to the rules of the practical intellect, which are non-factual (*i'tibārī*) according to him? It seems that to prove the propriety of punishment he relies upon its being considered non-factual by the common people (i.e., the slaves and their owners). At the same time, when he wants to show that it is proper for God to do the same, he speaks of the essential propriety of punishment of a sinner. However, aside from this objection, a more important point may be mentioned here. Is it possible to use the idea that the propriety of the punishment of disobedience is something conventional (*i'tibārī*) to resolve the problem of the propriety and permissibility of the punishment of disbelief and sin of the human being by God?

If the sane people of the world were to know that according to the intellect, the series of intentions ultimately terminates at God would they make the same ruling? Has the ruling that the sane people make in 'Iṣfahānī's opinion, i.e., that it is proper to punish a servant for his disobedience, not made by the same people who understand free will to be something intuitively confirmable and who consider it an action of the soul? If 'Iṣfahānī says that even though the sane people are aware that the series of intentions ultimately terminates at God they still make this ruling, then he is correct. However, the main point is that even though this is true, they do not see any incompatibility between the universal agency of God with respect to the realm of existence and man's independence in the performance of a specific action, such as sin or disbelief. In this way, they resemble the Mutazilites.

Right now, we are not concerned with whether their interpretation of divine omnipotence is correct or not. However, it is possible to say that the ruling of the practical intellect is made with such an interpretation in mind. Otherwise, it is possible to say that if the sane people knew that free will was only something superficial and it was actually untrue and that man was actually compelled in his actions, then they would not let such judgments pass.

It seems that he thought that it was possible for the non-religious people

who do not believe in a creator and who think that man is not dependent upon God in the performance of his actions but who are aware that man naturally and involuntarily possesses the preliminaries of intention and that he obtains his knowledge and power from nature and does not have any choice with respect to them still say that it is proper to punish man for his disobedience. The precision of his theory is laudable. However, the following question still remains: Do the sane people speak of the propriety of the punishment of a disobedient person while keeping this coercion (*iqtirar*) in mind? Or do they say this when they forget about this matter and rely upon the free will that they intuitively believe in?

In my opinion, the second alternative is correct. The awareness of free will is so strong that it serves as the foundation of the ruling of people with respect to the propriety of punishment.

### **Muḥaqqiq Naʿini and the Free will of a Human Being**

he late Naʿini believes that the principle of causal necessity is incompatible with free will. In order to solve the problem, he limits the scope of the principle of causal necessity. He does not consider it to be applicable and true for the voluntary actions of the human being. In his opinion, the acceptance of the necessity that precedes the voluntary actions of man negates his real free will. He first alludes to the preliminaries of the performance of an action.

In contrast to Ākhūnd Khurāsānī and Muḥaqqiq ʿIṣfahānī, he does not consider the intention to be sufficient in the performance of a voluntary action. Rather, he says that aside from the intention and its preliminaries, the soul desires the action by means of the implementation of something he calls ‘dominion’ (*saltana?*).

According to Naʿini, the ordinary preliminaries of an action, such as the knowledge that the action is suitable with the agent and the yearning for its accomplishment, which is called the ‘intention’, when it is intensified, are subordinate to causal compulsion. However, this causal chain breaks at the desire (*talab*). In other words, the desire becomes existent without it becoming necessary by means of something else. The existence of the desire for an action depends on free choice of the soul rather than a causal chain of preliminaries (Kaḍimi, 1374, p.130).

Nāʿinī takes some things for granted and does not even discuss them. In fact, he says that they are incapable of being denied. Those are the following:

A. He considers the idea that the voluntary action depends upon four preliminaries to be undeniable: (1) the conception of the action, (2) the affirmation of its benefit, (3) the resolution (*azm*) to perform it, and (4) the

intention to perform it.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he considers the discussion to be about whether after the intention there is something else at work called the 'desire' that moves the muscles and that is the immediate agent of the action or it is the intention that does this?<sup>2</sup>

- B. The intention is a quality of the soul that is involuntary, like the preliminaries that precede it (i.e., the conception of the action, the affirmation of its benefit and its resolution).
- C. According to Nā'īnī, aside from the intention, which is something involuntary, there is something else which is necessary for the performance of the action.

Undoubtedly, there is something else besides the intention or the intense yearning [for the performance of the action]. This is the fact that the soul takes up the responsibility of the performance of the action and moves in its direction. The criterion for free will is this very act of taking up the responsibility of the performance of the act by the soul. At the same time, the relation between it and the desire with the intention is not the relation of an effect with its cause. Therefore, the previous problem of the infinite regress of intentions does not necessarily arise. The soul independently takes up the responsibility of performing the action. No external cause encourages it to perform the action (Kaḍimi, 1374, p.130).

- D. To prove that the soul takes up the responsibility of performing the task in the case of the voluntary action (or, desires it), Nā'īnī takes resort to intuition and self-awareness.

He says that all of us find something within us that is different from the intention. This thing that we intuitively find within us is not a noetic quality, like the intention; rather, it is a type of action. Ultimately, it is what leads to

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1. In the transcripts of the lessons of Muḥaqqiq Na'ini that Ayatullah Khoie wrote, three things have been mentioned as the preliminaries of the intention. These are the conception of the action, the affirmation of its benefit and the intense yearning for its occurrence (i.e., the intention). It is possible for the difference in the explanations of the view of their teacher to be because each of these students took part in the lessons of rrr za Na'ini in different eras and in each era. Refer to: Khoie, 1388, p.139.
  2. It seems that in the discussion on free will (*ikhtiyar*), he concentrates more on the bodily actions and for this reason it has been stated that aside from the intention, which is a quality of the soul, another action, such as the desire (*talab*) is necessary for the muscles to be set into motion. We may ask however: Na'ini said that the desire, as a noetic action, does not need a necessitating cause. Did he say the same thing regarding the other actions of the soul, such as love, hate, etc.? It seems that a serious problem arises here.

the moving of the muscles of the body and the performance of the action in the external world. It is possible to refer to it with different names. For example, one might call it the 'attack of the soul' or the 'instigation of the soul' or 'the act of taking responsibility by the soul.'

Nā'inī alludes to the fact that his opponents in this debate also claim that they intuitively feel that the intention is sufficient for the performance of an act. They also claim that they intuitively know that there is nothing necessary beyond it for the occurrence of the action. However, he considers this incorrect and says that intuitive knowledge tells us of the existence of a desire that is additional to the intention (Khoie, 1388, P.135). At the same time, to prove that there is something beyond the intention called the desire he does not suffice himself with referencing intuition. Rather, he considers this something capable of being demonstrated. So, he says:

the body being put into motion (inbi'ath) is subordinate to the act of putting into motion (ba'th). At the same time, the act of putting into motion is a type of action. The intention however, is a noetic quality. Therefore, it cannot necessitate and cause the act of being put into motion. If there were no noetic action, then the existence of the act of being put into motion would exist without the act of putting into motion, [which is impossible] (Kaḍimi, 1374, p.131).

Khoie's explanation of Nai'ini's argument is a bit different [from the abovementioned one] and it is possibly more complete. Khoie says the following:

All of the attributes that exist in the soul, such as conception, affirmation and the intention, are involuntary. Keeping this in mind, we can say that if the movement of the muscles [of the body] were to stem from these preliminaries, without the soul causing them and without its free will having an effect upon them, then it would be necessary for the movement of the muscles [of the body] of the soul to not fall under the will of the soul. However, this is incorrect since the soul has complete will over the act of moving its [body's] muscles and there is nothing that would prevent the dominion of the soul from being implemented in the jurisdiction of its existence. At the same time, the serious objection of Fakhr al-Rāzī would be capable of being raised here. In such a situation, he could ask how it could be possible to punish such a person. Of course, there could be not satisfactory answer to this question based upon the aforementioned premise (Khoie, 1388, p.137).

Nā'inī explicitly states that it is impossible to defend free will without accepting the idea that the desire and the intention are distinct concepts and

have different instances (Kaḍimi, 1374, p.132).

E. In response to the opinions of Ākhūnd Khurāsānī and Muḥaqqiq 'Iṣfahānī, Nai'ini says the following: It is impossible to resolve the problem of free will just by changing the meaning of some terms and saying that the 'voluntary act' is the act that stems from the intention, which is a quality of the soul and the effect of things that precede it in his opinion and the opinion of many other scholars. This is because the discussion is about the reality of free will. To be more specific, it is about how it is possible to speak about real free will and the reward or punishment that is given for voluntary actions - the foundations of which are necessary and determined by means of a chain of necessary causes in the opinion of many great scholars (Kaḍimi, 1374, p.132).

In summarizing the view of Nai'ini, Khoie says the following:

If the intention causes the action, then free will would cease to exist. We however, deny the idea that the noetic qualities, like the intention, are causes of the voluntary action. Instead, we believe that the soul has an effect upon the movement of the muscles [of the body] without the interference of external factors. We call this the 'desire'. Consequently, no problem arises [for us] (Khoie's, 1388, p.138).

An important point can be observed in Khoie's explanation of the theory of Nai'ini. Someone might ask: Is this desire, which is an action of the soul and a prelude to the external act, something generated (*ḥādith*) and a contingent being or not? It is clear that the answer to this question is that it is generated and a contingent being. However, the question that this in turn leads to is what the cause of this [desire] is. In response to this question, he explicitly states that if someone is searching for a necessary cause here, then he is gravely mistaken. This is because here, the agent is nothing but the soul.

He accepts the role of the intention (i.e., the intense yearning) in making the desire (i.e., the act of taking up the responsibility of the performance of the action by the soul) preponderate. At the same time, he denies the idea that it necessitates the desire and says that desire is free of compulsion and causal necessity.

The intention and the preliminaries that it is founded upon only plays the role of making the desire or the act of taking up the responsibility of performing the action by the soul preponderate. However, even after the intention, the soul may perform the action or not perform the action. The intense yearning does not play the role of a necessitating cause in the performance of the action. Contrary to what those who believe in compulsion say, even if it exists, the soul may stand against that intense yearning and not take up the responsibility of the performance of the

action. In fact, the difference between the cause that makes necessary and the preponderant that makes one thing preponderate over another is nothing but this (Kaḍimi, 1374, p.133).

However, it seems that there is some ambiguity in the word 'being preponderate' (*rujhan*). The actual problem is above and beyond terminology. The following question may be asked here: Do these involuntary preliminaries play the role of causes to some degree or not? If they do, then the question of the punishment being justified once again rears its head, albeit in a different way. Thus, the problem once again returns

In other words, in this case, the following question may be asked: If things exist in a person that make disbelief and sin preponderate, then how can he be punished like the person in which such things do not exist? It seems that the passage that we will relate from Ayatullah Khoie'i hereunder is an attempt to answer this very problem. Of course, he does not explicitly allude to the question itself. He does not understand the need of the agent for something that makes preponderate to be some ontological reason. Rather, it needs something that makes it preponderate only so that the action not end up being frivolous (*laghw*). He says the following:

Aside from the agent, the performance of the voluntary action needs something that makes it preponderate. Meaning, the soul only performs an action when it affirms its benefit and has a yearning for it. However, the important point is that the affirmation of the benefit or the existence of this yearning is not a necessary condition for the performance of the action. This is because it is still possible to perform the voluntary action without them. In fact, sometimes, even though the agent is aware of the harm of the action and has a disliking for it, it may still perform it voluntarily. In reality, the existence of the preponderant negates the frivolity of the act. However, it is not necessary for it to be voluntary. In reality, the wise person does not perform the act that has no purpose; rather, he will only do it if it is to his benefit (Khoie, 1388, p.39).

However, the problem that seems to exist in the theory of Ayatullah Khoie is this: He seems to consider the preponderant to be the final cause. If this is true, then it plays a role in the completion of the agency of the agent. In other words, it does not simply cancel the frivolity of the action. Therefore, without the existence of the motive and the preponderant, the agent cannot perform the action. Therefore, it is incorrect for Ayatullah Khoie to say that a person may perform an action even though he considers it to be harmful for himself. It is possible for him to accept its harm from a certain point of view. However, one cannot deny the fact that when he directs his intention

towards the performance of an action, then he understands it to be good and beneficial.

Nai'ini mentioned an argument to show that the intention is insufficient in the performance of the action. In that argument, he said that the external action is the body being instigated and the muscles of the body being set in motion. Therefore, it needs an act of instigation, which is the action of the soul. However, this argument is flawed. One of the objections that might be leveled against this is that the noetic action of the soul is also an act of being set in motion. If it is, then it would also require another desire (*talab*). In this way, an objection similar to the objection of the infinite regress of intentions would be implied here.

In his transcripts of the lectures of his teacher, Ayatullah Khoie strives to answer this objection by depicting the desire as an action different from the external actions. In other words, he strives to show how, in contrast to the external actions, there is no act of being set in motion at work here. Thus, there is no need for any other action or any other act of setting into motion (Khoie, 1388, p.136). In this way, the problem of the infinite regress would not arise. However, another problem arises here: In religious texts, there is mention of human beings being punished for their noetic dispositions. Also, in ethics, these dispositions are praised or reprimanded. So, we may ask the following question here: Does this not contradict the argument of Nai'ini, when he said that they are not acts of desire; rather, they are qualities of the soul? If this were true, then they should not be punishable?

In total, it seems that the most important objection to the theory of Na'ini is the following: On one hand, causal necessity is denied with respect to the action of the soul. In other words, it does not necessitate from its cause. On the other hand, however, such a necessity exists between the action of the soul and the external action (because if it did not, then the action would stem from the human being by chance). This seems to be a contradiction.

Of course, many Asharite theologians categorically deny causal necessity or deny it with respect to the actions of a human being. For this reason, they admit that these actions stem from man by chance. At the same time, they say that it is still proper to punish a human being for his disobedience [which would, based upon what we mentioned above, happen to stem from man by chance]. However, Na'ini does not accept the idea that it is proper to punish a person for the action that stems from him by chance. Therefore, he must accept the causal relation between the soul and its external action. At the same time, he denies that this relation exists between the noetic action and the cause that necessitates

## Conclusion

It seems that the view of Muḥaqqiq Iṣfahānī regarding the compatibility of causal necessity and free will is very meticulous and at the same time, defensible. To the contrary, his explanation of the permissibility of the punishment of sinners under the assumption that causal necessity is accepted (which according to Iṣfahānī is something necessary in the explanation of free will) is objectionable. Muḥaqqiq Iṣfahānī has his own personal view regarding the discussion of the goodness and evil of actions. Basing himself upon this belief, he justifies the recompense of agents not based upon rational demonstration but upon the conventions of people. Nevertheless, it seems difficult to justify and defend his ideas regarding this subject. On the other hand, the view of Na'ini regarding the incompatibility of causal necessity and free will is fundamentally problematic. This is because he cuts off the causal chain before it reaches the desire of the agent. So, he considers it to fall outside of the scope of causation. At the same time, he says that this desire is the cause of human action and what makes it necessary. This seems very problematic.<sup>1</sup>



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