



The Viewpoints of Some Great Islamic Philosophers and Theologians Regarding the Nature of Practical Reason Propositions

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Abstract

Philosophical inquiry into practical matters, similar to theoretical views, has been a subject of investigation by Islamic thinkers. The viewpoints of Muslim wise men (hakims) regarding the nature of practical reason and propositions based on it have varied. Some of them, like Avicenna, Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, and Allameh Tabataba'i, consider practical reason propositions to be of the type of "mashhurat" (common opinions) and "e'tebariyat" (Conventionalities) among humankind, positing no reality beyond them. Therefore, they deem practical rational insights unusable in demonstrative arguments. Others, such as Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, Lahiji, and Mohammad Baqir Sadr, emphasize the certainty and reality of these propositions and believe that practical reason propositions can be used in demonstration. This article, using a descriptive-analytical method, re-examines the views of some hakims and theologians to contribute to the understanding of the identity of

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practical reason and the philosophy of ethics among Islamic thinkers.

Keywords

Practical Reason, Rational Good and Evil (Husn va Qubh Aqli), Conventionalities (E'tebariyat), Common Opinions (Mashhurat), Ethics.



Introduction

Are propositions such as "justice is good," "injustice is wrong," "unjustly seizing or stealing another's property is reprehensible," "keeping promises is praiseworthy," "betraying a trust is blameworthy and wrong," and similar statements, certain (Yaqini) propositions, or are they merely well-known (Mashhurat) propositions (meaning those types of Mashhurat that are not self-evident)? In other words, are all our judgments of practical reason, and specifically those concerning good and evil (Husn va Qubh), based on Mashhurat? Do they lack a reality separate from the conventional agreements of the rational (bana-ye uqala')?

In response to the above questions, it can be said that Islamic thinkers and philosophers are generally divided into two main categories regarding the nature of Good and Evil propositions, and consequently, the possibility of providing demonstration and using Good and Evil propositions in the premises of a demonstration:

1. Rational Good and Evil Propositions are of the Type of Mashhurat

Many scholars and great philosophers, such as Avicenna and Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, hold that these propositions are Mashhurat rather than Yaqiniyat (certainties).

2. Avicenna's View

Avicenna explicitly states in some of his works that good and evil (Husn va Qubh) are derived from "tā'dībāt-e salāhīyah" (disciplinary principles for well-being) and "ārā'-e mashhūrah" (well-known opinions), and are not self-evident.

In his *An-Najat*, he explains:

"As for hearsay (shāyi'āt), these are premises and well-known and commendable opinions whose affirmation is due either to the testimony of all human groups, like 'justice is good,' or the testimony of the majority of people, or the testimony and acceptance of scholars, or the majority of scholars, or their prominent figures in cases where scholars' opinions do not contradict the general public. These well-known propositions are never innate (fitriyāt). This is because well-known propositions are not among the primary intellectual principles (awvaliyyāt-e aqlīyah). Rather, the reason for their affirmation and their establishment in the human soul is either that people have become accustomed to them since childhood, or it might be due to human expediency (maslahat andīshī); or some psychological traits like modesty, familiarity, and affection towards others lead to their affirmation; or that the well-known proposition is from the customs and traditions of ancestors (or religious commands of past faiths) that have not been abrogated; and finally, their affirmation might be due to widespread agreement."

He further states:

"If you wish to distinguish between a well-known proposition (qadīyah mashhūrah) and an innate [self-evident rational] proposition, then present the two propositions 'justice is good' and 'lying is reprehensible' to your innate faculty, and resolve to doubt them. You will find that doubt can enter them. Whereas if you do this with the proposition 'the whole is greater than its part,' you will see that doubt cannot enter it" (Avicenna, 1991, p. 80; Tusi, 1994, vol. 1, pp. 213-220; Avicenna, 1984, p. 65).

3. Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi's View

Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, in his explanation of Shaykh al-Ra'is Avicenna's statements, says that the criterion for truth and falsity in well-known (Mashhurat) propositions is not correspondence or non-correspondence with objective reality (unlike necessary, certain propositions). Instead, the criterion for their correctness or incorrectness is their agreement or disagreement with the opinions of the rational (uqala') (Tusi, 1994, Vol. 1, pp. 221). Furthermore, in his *Manṭiq al-Tajrīd*, he explicitly states that Mashhurat propositions, including commendable opinions such as "Justice is good", are in contrast to the self-evident truths of theoretical reason. Therefore, propositions concerning rational good and evil (Husn va Qubh Aqli) should not be considered among the primary principles (awvaliyat), intuitions (wijdaniyat), or innate dispositions (fitriyat) (Hilli, 1994, pp. 198 & 233).

4. Muhaqqiq Isfahani's View

Muhaqqiq Isfahani states that one of the human faculties is the rational faculty (quwva-ye 'āqli). Its actuality lies in its function of rationality, and there is no "sending" or "detering" for the rational faculty itself. Rather, its role is to conceptualize what is established by something other than the rational substance.

He then proceeds to explain the difference between theoretical reason and practical reason, writing:

"Indeed, the difference between theoretical reason and practical reason lies in the difference of their percepts; for a percept can be 'what ought to be known' or 'what ought to be done'. Among the rational percepts that fall under the judgments of practical reason and are derived from the agreement of the rational—sometimes referred to as well-known propositions and sometimes as

commendable opinions—are the propositions of the good of justice and benevolence, and the evil of injustice and aggression..."

(Isfahani, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 312).

From the various meanings discussed concerning good and evil, Muhaqqiq Isfahani chooses the meaning of "the validity of praise and blame" for rational good and evil. He considers Good and evil to be a rational conventional matter ('amr-e 'uqalā'i)—meaning it has no reality or truth beyond the opinions of the rational, and real truth and falsehood are meaningless in it. Instead, its truth and falsehood signify its correspondence with the opinions of the rational.

5. Allameh Tabataba'i's View

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that the percepts of practical reason do not possess a reality beyond convention (i'tibār). Therefore, they are not suitable for demonstrative proof and cannot be inferred or produced as real truths through argumentation and demonstration. However, he does accept the universality of these propositions. This is because the criterion for the validity of such propositions is based on human needs, desires, and inner feelings. These inner feelings are of two types:

1. General feelings that are necessary for human nature as a species.
2. Specific feelings that are subject to change and alteration.

Based on general feelings, it's possible to have general and universal conventionalities. His statement on this matter is as follows:

"Since practical conventionalities (i'tibāriyāt-e 'amali) are either born from or contingent upon feelings that are appropriate to the active faculties, and in terms of stability, change, permanence, and

disappearance, they are dependent on those inner feelings. And feelings are also of two kinds: general feelings that are necessary for the species' nature and are dependent on its natural structure, such as absolute will and aversion, and absolute love and hate; and specific feelings that are subject to change and alteration. For this reason, it must be said that practical conventionalities are also of two types:

1. Fixed, unchangeable general conventionalities, such as the conventionality of following knowledge and the conventionality of association and specificity.
2. Changeable specific conventionalities, such as particular notions of ugliness and beauty and various forms of societies.

A person might consider a social style good one day and bad another, but they cannot disregard the principle of society itself or forget the very principle of good and evil.

Thus, practical conventionalities are of two types: fixed conventionalities that humans are compelled to construct, and variable conventionalities" (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 429).

Allameh Tabataba'i, in his *Usul-e Falsafeh va Ravesh-e Realism* (The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism), discusses the concept of goodness (husn) in objective affairs (umūr-e takvīnī), such as beauty. He explains that it's a sense and relative matter. For example, we might enjoy a certain sound or smell and describe it as "good." In this sense, good and evil (husn va qubh) in sense matters are ultimately about liking and disliking, making them relative and relational. Other people, for instance, might dislike the same sound or smell, or other sense experiences (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 431). After discussing sense good and evil, Allameh Tabataba'i states: "In previous discussions about actions, we said that every action

issues from its agent with a certain relationship, so naturally, the agent finds this action agreeable to itself. In this way, good and evil will be two conventional attributes (vasf-e i'tibari)" (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 431). He further asserts that one cannot expect demonstrative proof (burhan) in the realm of conventionalities (i'tibariyāt), "because the subject matter of demonstration is realities, and nothing else" (Mutahhari, 1997, Vol. 6, p. 429).

6. Ayatollah Motahhari's View

Ayatollah Motahhari, similar to his esteemed teacher Allameh Tabataba'i, considers good and evil to be conventional (i'tibari), holding that there's no reality beyond the conventions agreed upon by rational beings. However, this doesn't imply the relativity of "oughts" and "ought-nots," especially ethical ones.

He states on this matter:

"From the perspective of philosophers, the idea of good and evil in human actions, which forms the basis of human moral conscience, is a conventional idea, not a real one. The value of a conventional idea is practical, not epistemic or revelatory. Its entire value lies in being an intermediary and a tool. The potential agent, to reach their ultimate goal in voluntary actions, is compelled to create and employ such ideas as a means to an end" (Mutahhari, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 77).

In response to the objection regarding the relativity of "oughts" and "ought-nots," he introduces the concept of the "lower self" (man-e sufla) and the "higher self" (man-e ulawi), explaining:

"We accept the principle of good and evil just as figures like Mr. Tabataba'i and Russell have stated, that the meaning of 'being good or not good,' 'ought and ought not,' is about liking and

disliking. But which 'self' should like it? The lower self or the higher self? Where the higher self of a person likes something, that becomes morality and value. And the reason a person feels a sublimity in morality stems from this very point. The fact that a person sees one aspect of their existence and the actions related to that aspect as possessing sublimity and elevation is not a convention or a contract, but because they perceive that aspect as stronger and more perfect in their being. All perfections also revert to that existence and its intensification, and all deficiencies revert to its absence."

According to Motahhari's view, truthfulness, righteousness, benevolence, mercy, doing good, and similar matters are a series of meanings that are analogous and suitable to the human "higher self" (man-e ulawi). Philosophers have also stated that practical wisdom relates to voluntary actions from the perspective of what is most excellent and perfect, ultimately aiming to return the matter to the soul itself (Motahhari, 2008, Vol. 13, pp. 739-740). Martyr Motahhari believes that this theory—which aligns with the words of Islamic ethicists and philosophers in their discussions of the soul—can validate the eternality of good and evil (and ethics. This is achieved by understanding that the "lower self" (man-e sufla) has its own set of conventionalities (conventional good and evil, oughts and ought-nots, virtues and vices), which arise from its egoism and animalistic desires. These are subject to change and relativity. However, the true human self is the "higher self", in which all human beings share a commonality, unlike the "lower self" and its distinct desires. For example, "all humans seek perfection," or "all humans love altruism," and "all humans love justice and shun oppression." Perhaps the "fitra" (innate disposition) that the Quran speaks of refers to this very innate nature (Motahhari, 2008, Vol. 13, pp. 739-740).

7. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's View

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli discusses good and evil in the introduction to his book *Philosophy of Human Rights*. He posits that Good and evil are considered in two distinct realms: Theological (Kalami) Good and evil: This pertains to reason (aql) and refers back to objective realities (wujud va adam - existence and non-existence), such as good and evil. This type of Good and evil is not conventional (i'tibari). Whatever is said about good and evil concerning God in theology (Kalam) falls into this category and represents realities. Conventional (I'tibari) Good and evil: This is found in the realms of jurisprudence (fiqh) and ethics (akhlaq) (Amoli, 1998, p. 46).

8. Rational Good and Evil Propositions are of the Type of Certainties and Realities

A large number of Islamic thinkers believe that propositions concerning rational good and evil are objective (ainiyāt) and certain (yaqīniyāt). Therefore, they can be used as premises in demonstrative syllogisms (qiyāsāt-e burhānī).

9. Muhaqqiq Lahiji's View

Muhaqqiq Lahiji, the renowned student of Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi, asserts that good and evil are inherent (dhātī) and a necessary judgment of reason ('aql). He considers opposition to this view to be mere obstinacy and animosity. In his book *Sarmāyeh-e Īmān* (The Capital of Faith), he writes about this:

"Know that the truth is the first doctrine (that of the 'Adliyyah), because the goodness of some actions is necessary, such as justice and truthfulness; and similarly, the evil of some actions,

such as injustice and falsehood, is necessary; and reason does not need divine law (shar') in these two judgments."

He then raises an objection to this theory, stating:

"Objection: Philosophers have considered 'Justice is good' and 'Injustice is evil' to be among the generally accepted propositions (maqbulāt-e 'āmmah), which serve as the material for dialectical syllogisms, and they have based agreement on these on public interest and public harm. Therefore, the claim of necessity, which is essential for certainties (yaqiniyyat) that serve as the material for demonstration, is not admissible for these propositions; and the agreement of the majority of rational people does not indicate it" (Lahiji, 1993, p. 60).

In response, Lahiji states:

"The necessity of the two aforementioned judgments and their non-dependence on contemplation and thought, is so evident that their denial is pure obstinacy and cannot be answered... And the consideration of public interest (maṣlaḥat) and public harm (mafsadah) in the mentioned judgments cannot contradict their necessity. For it is possible that a single proposition, from one aspect, falls within the certainties and from another aspect, falls within the accepted propositions (maqbulāt) [or well-known propositions (mashhūrāt)]. And such a premise can be considered in both demonstration and dialectic (jadal), in each case from a different aspect... And the acceptance of these propositions by the general rational public is not due to public interest or harm, but rather due to their necessity. For anyone who reflects upon themselves will know that, irrespective of considering public interest or harm, they judge by the aforementioned judgments;

therefore, these judgments are inevitably issued even by groups who are not aware of public interests and harms, or are oblivious to them" (Lahiji, 1993, p. 60).

10. Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari's View

Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, like Muhaqqiq Lahiji, believes that propositions of rational good and evil are self-evident (*badīhīyāt*), and the judgment concerning them is also self-evident. The fact that philosophers have categorized them among generally accepted propositions (*maqbulāt-e āmmah*), which serve as material for dialectic (*jadāl*), does not contradict their self-evident nature. This is because the latter refers to an example for the general common good and evil (*maslahat va mafsadah-e ammah*), where the acceptance of all people, not just a specific group, is considered valid. He states: well-known propositions can be self-evident even while being well-known, and propositions of rational good and evil are of this kind (Sabzevari, 1994, p.341).

11. Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr's View

Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr believes that propositions of rational good and evil are self-evident (*badīhī*) and primary (*awvalī*). Therefore, they can be used as premises in demonstrative syllogisms (*qiyās-hā-ye burhānī*). He states:

"There is no dispute regarding the perceptions of practical reason in themselves; that is, there is no disagreement on how reason perceives their requirements, whether they are worthy of being done or not. For example, if lying is considered in itself, reason dictates its non-commission, while concerning truth-telling,

reason dictates its commission. However, sometimes these requirements conflict, such as when not lying would necessitate betrayal. In such cases, there is a conflict between the requirement for truth's 'goodness' and falsehood's 'ugliness.' Thus, in these instances, disagreements arise among rational people regarding the preference of one requirement over another." (Sadr, 1996, Vol. 4, p. 138).

Ustad Ammar Abu Ragheef derives the following conclusions from Shahid Sadr's statements:

1. Perceptions of practical reason are not absolutely necessary judgments. Rather, they are self-evident judgments conditioned (on the absence of conflict and sufficient knowledge regarding conflicting requirements).
2. Perceptions of practical reason are propositions that reason grasps self-evidently and clearly. Any disagreements stem from rational individuals' differing diagnoses of these requirements, which does not harm their primary (awvalī) nature. (Abu Ragheef, 1997, p. 146).

In another objection, Shahid Sadr states that the School of I'tibār considers mashhūrāt (well-known propositions) to be of the nature of inshā'īyyāt (performative/declarative statements). Apparently, their interpretation is that mashhūrāt are performative matters conventionally established by rational people. This is inconsistent with the apparent meaning of the logicians' statements. For logicians, mashhūrāt are firm assents (tasdīq-e jāzim). However, they are firm assents that lack a demonstrative epistemological foundation; instead, their foundation might be common fame or public opinion, and so on.

In other words, mashhūrāt and non-mashhūrāt do not differ in being firm assents; their only issue lies in the proposition's epistemological foundation, not in them being performative. (Sadr, 1996, Vol. 4, p. 45).

12. Dr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi's View

Dr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi extensively discusses Good and evil in his book *Kāvesh-hā-ye Aql-e Amali* (Investigations of Practical Reason). In summary, he contends that Good and evil are two simple concepts, and thus, they lack a real or nominal definition. From this, he also asserts that they cannot be grasped in their essence. (This point pertains to conceptual analysis.) He then states that propositions of Good and evil are factual propositions. (His statements largely refer to the remarks of the late Allameh Tabataba'i.) In one instance, he explicitly says that one should fundamentally not discuss conventionalities (e'tibāriyāt) concerning propositions of Good and evil, because these propositions are objective and factual.

In analyzing "objectivity" (‘aynīyat), Dr. Ha'iri Yazdi states that his analysis is that Good and evil are derived from correspondence or non-correspondence with pre-ordained laws, as both God and humans legislate laws. Now, if an action corresponds to the law, we say it is Husn (good); if it does not correspond to the law, we say it is Qabīh (evil). He explicitly states that this resembles the discussion of "correctness" (ṣiḥḥat) and "invalidity" (fasād) that jurists (fuqahā') address. When we say an action is Husn, it means it conforms to those pre-ordained laws. When we say it is Qabīh, it means it does not conform. In this sense, he asserts that Good and evil are objective and real matters. He also draws attention to the point that one should not argue that legislation itself is conventional, and

therefore, how can correspondence or non-correspondence with legislation be an objective reality? This is because it is entirely reasonable to abstract concepts from conventional matters based on different relationships and additions, such as the correspondence of an external action with what is commanded (ma'mūr bih), and this is a real matter (Ha'iri Yazdi, 2005, p. 148).

In summary, Dr. Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi believes that the assertion of conventionality (e'tibārīyat) for Good and evil (goodness and badness) is entirely incorrect. Instead, from a conceptual standpoint, Good and evil are simple concepts. Furthermore, in terms of analyzing the propositions themselves, they are among the objective and real propositions. Their root lies in the fact that Good and evil are abstracted based on their correspondence or non-correspondence with pre-ordained laws.

13. Ayatollah Sobhani's View

Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani believes that just as logicians and philosophers, with evidence, consider theoretical reason to possess self-evident truths and theoretical propositions (nazariyāt), by the same token, they also consider practical wisdom to possess self-evident truths and theoretical propositions. He considers the goodness of justice (ḥusn al-'adl) and the badness of oppression (qubḥ al-ẓulm) to be among those propositions where the mere conception of the subject and predicate is sufficient for assenting to "Justice is good " and "Oppression is bad."

Ayatollah Sobhani elaborates on this point, stating:

"Our argument is that what has been said regarding the issues

and propositions of theoretical wisdom also applies to the issues and propositions of practical wisdom. This is because practical wisdom is also a category of knowledge and perception. If our perceptions and knowledge did not ultimately lead to a series of self-evident matters, then thought and argumentation would have to proceed indefinitely, and not even a single issue would become clear to humanity. This contradicts our intuition, as we possess a great deal of knowledge within the domain of practical wisdom.

Fundamentally, when logicians divide knowledge and perception into self-evident and theoretical, they recall a reason that encompasses both perceptions related to theoretical wisdom and perceptions related to practical wisdom. The reason for this division lies in two points:"

1. The self-evident nature of division.
2. The necessity of infinite regress (tasalsul) or circularity (dawr) if there were no self-evident principles.

These two reasons, just as they necessitate that the propositions of theoretical wisdom must ultimately lead to self-evident truths, likewise necessitate that the propositions of practical wisdom also lead to them.

The essence of the argument is that, just as in theoretical wisdom there must be a series of self-evident and self-validating propositions by which theoretical thoughts are acquired, similarly, in practical wisdom, there must be a series of self-validating propositions that are considered the key to solving other issues of practical wisdom. This is a truth that intellectual demonstration, as alluded to, dictates for this division. Whether we call these types of propositions in

practical wisdom "self-evident" and "theoretical" or reserve these two terms for theoretical wisdom and call this category in practical wisdom "self-validating" and "non-self-validating" propositions, there is no escape from this two-part division, both in theoretical and practical wisdom (Sobhani, 2003, pp. 78-79).

He then refers to two types of self-evident truths (*badīhīyāt*):

- a. Primary self-evident truths (*badīhīyāt-e awvaliyyah*), where the mere conception of the subject and predicate is sufficient for assent.
- b. Innate self-evident truths (*badīhīyāt-e fiṭrī*) [propositions whose syllogism is always accompanying them].

He believes that the self-evident truths of practical reason belong to the first type (Sobhani, 2003, p. 80).

14. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's View

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi believes that ethical and legal propositions (the "oughts" and "ought-nots" of practical reason, which are based on rational good and evil) are philosophical propositions and are philosophically provable. While presenting some preliminary points on this matter, he states:

1. Ethical and legal propositions (practical reason) relate to voluntary human behavior – behaviors that are means to achieve desired goals. Their value stems from this instrumental and preliminary desirability.
2. The goals that humans strive to achieve are either:
Fulfilling natural and worldly needs and satisfying animal

instincts. Securing social interests and benefits and preventing corruption and chaos. Attaining eternal happiness and spiritual and moral perfection. However, natural and animal goals do not inherently create value for their preliminary actions and do not automatically connect with ethics and law. But securing social interests, which inevitably conflicts with individual interests and pleasures, is considered one of the sources of value. Similarly, considering eternal happiness, which necessitates overlooking some material and worldly desires and objectives, is another source of value. And above all, the ultimate motive for behavior should be reaching human's true perfection, the manifestation of which, from an Islamic perspective, is proximity to God Almighty (qurb-e Khodā-ye Muta'āl). Therefore, it can be said that value in all cases arises from foregoing a desire to achieve a higher desire.

3. Various goals have been stated for rights (ḥuqūq), the most general and comprehensive of which is securing social interests, and it branches into various sub-categories. On the other hand, various ideals have been mentioned for ethics (akhlāq), above all of which is ultimate perfection in the shadow of proximity to God Almighty. Whenever this goal becomes the motive for human behavior, whether individual or social, it will acquire ethical value. Therefore, behaviors related to rights can also fall under the umbrella of ethics, provided they are performed with an ethical motive.

4. The aforementioned goals have two aspects: Their desirability for humans in such a way that it leads to foregoing lower desires. From this perspective, it connects with the innate human desire for happiness and perfection. This is a psychological aspect, dependent on knowledge and scientific and perceptual principles. Their ontological aspect, which is completely objective and independent of individual desires, inclinations, diagnoses, and knowledge. Whenever an action is considered in relation to a desired goal from the perspective of its desirability, the concept of value is abstracted from it. And whenever it is considered from the perspective of its existential relationship with the consequent result, the concept of obligation (*wujūb*), worthiness, or necessity is derived from it, which in philosophical terminology is expressed as contingent necessity.

Conclusion on the Truth and Falsity of Ethical and Legal Propositions. Given these premises, we can conclude that the criterion for the truth and falsity (*ṣidq va kadhb*), and correctness and error in ethical and legal propositions is their impact on achieving desired goals. This impact is not subject to anyone's desire, inclination, taste, or opinion. Rather, like other cause-and-effect relationships, it is a reality in itself. Of course, the diagnosis of the ultimate goal and intermediate goals may be subject to error, just as some, based on their materialistic worldview, have confined human goals to worldly well-being. Similarly, errors may occur in identifying the paths that lead humans to real goals. However, all these errors do not harm the reality of the cause-and-effect relationship between voluntary actions and

their consequent results. They do not cause these propositions to exit the domain of rational discussions and demonstrably provable arguments. This is just as philosophers' errors do not mean denying rational realities independent of opinions and thoughts, and just as scientists' disagreements on empirical laws do not negate those laws.

The conclusion, then, is that the principles of ethics and law are philosophical propositions, provable by rational demonstrations. However, the ordinary human intellect may be insufficient in their branches and details due to the complexity of formulas, the multitude of factors and variables, and a lack of comprehensive understanding. It might not be able to deduce the ruling of every specific proposition from general principles. In such cases, there is no alternative but to rely on divine revelation (Mesbah Yazdi, 2001, p. 81).

Conclusion

In summarizing the theories regarding the conceptual nature of Good and evil (goodness and badness) and their relationship with reality, four views can be identified:

1. This view posits that Good and evil are true objective matters, and the role of humans concerning them is purely one of perception, reflected in our intellect without any specific intellectual activity. In other words, Good and evil belong to the category of first intelligibles or essential concepts. In this perspective, Good and evil are external realities that are reflected in our minds, and our role here is merely to "photograph" them. However, our sense faculties do not perceive these objective matters; rather, it is the intellect that

grasps them. Our good actions, like justice, possess an objective quality and have an external correlate, but this correlate is not something to be seen, heard, or the like; it is rather something to be intellectually comprehended. By observing objective human actions and their sense perception, the intellect grasps other objective qualities that are not sense, meaning it becomes aware of the Good and evil of actions. To make it more understandable, consider this example: The existence of substance externally is an objective matter, but our senses do not perceive substance directly. However, the intellect, with the help of the senses, understands that there is something present that holds other visible or perceptible qualities. When we see an apple, we perceive its color, smell, taste, etc., and at the same time, the intellect comprehends that there is also a substance that carries these sense attributes. The Good and evil of actions belong to this same category; that is, they are of the nature of essential concepts and possess an objective and determinate correlate externally.

2. This view holds that Good and evil are objective matters related to the relationship between an action and human desires, in that our desire is directed towards that action. They do not have a determinate correlate like essential concepts. In other words, humans are constructed in such a way that they have specific desires. There are specific emotions and feelings within human existence, and these desires, in turn, necessitate specific actions. There is a

congruence between human wants and a certain set of actions. Actions that are in congruence with our desires are characterized as *Husn*, and actions that are not in congruence with our desires are characterized as *Qabīh*. In essence, Good and evil are the product of comparing our desires with our actions. In this case, it must be said that Good and evil are akin to philosophical concepts (*mafāhīm-e falsafī*) and refer to the relationship between specific human desires and actions congruent with them.

3. In this view, Good and evil are purely conventional matters. Here, *Husn* means what is conventionally established in a society and what people consider good, and *Qabīh* means what is not customary or agreed upon. An example is the custom of removing one's hat as a sign of greeting and respect, which is customary in some societies. In this sense, Good and evil have neither an objective correlate, nor does an innate human inclination relate to them, nor do they arise from specific human desires. Thus, in this context, Good and evil are purely conventional concepts that do not refer to any kind of reality.
4. view states that Good and evil are objective matters pertaining to the relationship between voluntary human actions and a specific desired outcome. The concepts of Good and evil do not have objective correlates like essential concepts; however, external matters, i.e., external actions, are characterized by them. Whenever an action, irrespective of its relationship with the perceiving person and their desires, is

compared with a specific result and it becomes clear that this action has a positive impact on achieving that result and is related to it, it is characterized as Husn. Otherwise, it will be characterized as Qabīh.

The difference between this view and the second theory is that in this theory, we compare the relationship between two real external entities irrespective of human desire and evaluate their relationship, meaning they are considered as two real and objective entities, not in terms of whether our desire relates to them or not. Whereas in the second theory, the relationship between one's own desire and an external entity (action) is evaluated; that is, "Is this action in agreement with my desire or not?" In other words, in this theory (number four), we are comparing two entities. Although one of these two entities might be a human action, it is not considered from the perspective that a human has a specific taste, desire, or inclination, but rather from the perspective that a perfection exists for humanity and has been realized externally. In this case, we say that a particular voluntary human action has a positive relationship with the perfection achieved for humanity. This relationship is also a cause-and-effect relationship, and since this action leads to that desired perfection, it is characterized as good, meaning it has an objective aspect and is independent of the perceiving person. However, in the second theory, the focus is on the relationship between two things, one of which is human desires, and it has a subjective aspect, meaning it relates to

the perceiving person. Based on the fourth theory, the concepts of Good and evil are among the second philosophical intelligibles (ma'qūlāt-e thānī falsafī) and refer to the objective positive or negative relationship between an action and a desired goal.



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