

Balancing between Obligation and Freedom: Mullā Şadrā on Gradation of Will

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Abstract

Are conceptions about Omnipotent God and of Free agency of human incompatible? This puzzle almost as old as religions, has triggered a large literature in Islamic lands with various approaches that try to find a balance between omnipotence and freedom without leaving out the notions of an Omnipotent God and free agency of human. This research will present Mullā Şadrā's theory as a fresh approach to the puzzle that tries to create an answer through primacy of existence and a monist philosophy that unite the concepts of will, tendency, action, agency and knowledge in the same pot as existence and the very being of the agent. Beginning of the article will present Şadrā's evaluation, classification and elimination of the previous approaches in Islamic thought. And the later sections will discuss how in harmony with his general project of primacy of existence and gradational ontology places his own position on the issue.

Keywords

Freedom, Obligation, Gradational Ontology, Mullā Şadrā, Freewill.

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Izdırar ve Özgürlük arasında Denge: Molla Sadra ve İradenin Teşkiki

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Özet

Kadir-i Mutlak Tanrı anlayışı ile İnsanın eylemlerinde özgür bir özne olması düşüncesi bir arada yer alabilir mi? bulmacamsı sorusu, İslam coğrafyasında da bir dizi birbirinden farklı yaklaşımın ortaya çıkmasına sebep olmuştur ve genelde bir tarafta Kadir-i Mutlak Tanrı diğer tarafta eylemlerinden sorumlu ve tercihlerinde özne olan insan kavramlarını muhafaza ederek, mutlak kudret ile özgürlük kavramları arasında bir denge bulma çabası hakim olmuştur. Bu çalışma Molla Sadra'nın monist bir felsefe ve varlığın önceliği ilkesi sayesinde irade, meyil, eylem, fail oluş, ve bilgi kavramlarını birleştirdiği cevabı ile bu dengeyi nasıl sağladığı incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Özgürlük, Izdırar, Teşvik, Molla Sadra, İrade.

الموازنة بين الالتزام والاختيار: ملا صدرا عن تدرج الإرادة

سمية بارلدار

الخلاصة

هل مفاهيم كمال قدرة الله و الفاعل المختار متضاربة؟ أثار هذا اللغز القديم كقدم الأديان أدبا واسعا في الأراضي الإسلامية بأساليب مختلفة تحاول إيجاد توازن بين القدرة المطلقة و الحرية دون استبعاد مفاهيم إله قادر و حرية إرادة الإنسان. سيقدم هذا البحث نظرية ملا صدرا كمقاربة جديدة لهذا اللغز, يحاول فيها خلق إجابة من خلال أولوية الوجود و الفلسفة الأحادية التي توحد مفاهيم الإرادة و الميل و الفعل و الفاعلية و العلم في نفس الوعاء مع الوجود

و ذات الفاعل. في بداية البحث سيعرض تقييم صدرا و تصنيفه و استبعاده للمناهج السابقة في الفكر الإسلامي. و في الأقسام اللاحقة سنناقش وضعه لموقفه الخاص حول القضية منسجما مع مشروعه العام في أسبقية الوجود و الانطولوجيا التدريجية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الحرية, الالتزام, الانطولوجيا التدريجية, ملا صدرا, المشيئة.

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.'

Charles Dickens, A tale of Two Cities

The Puzzle

When God is Omnipotent, and all action in the universe is attributed only to God, can we conceive of beings other than God with any kind of freedom? If there is no other free agent in the universe, how can we base any conception of responsibility? Are conceptions about Omnipotence of God and Free agency of human incompatible? This puzzle almost as old as religions, has triggered a large literature in Islamic lands with various approaches that try to find a balance between omnipotence and freedom without leaving out the notions of an Omnipotent God and free agency of human.

This research will present Mullā Ṣadrā's theory as a fresh approach to the puzzle that tries to create an answer through primacy of existence and a monist philosophy that melt the concepts of will, tendency, action, agency and knowledge in the same pot as existence and the very being of the agent.

Action or more specifically voluntary actions (*af'āl al-irādī*) of human are at the centre of research. For this research, two of Mullā Ṣadrā's writings will be most beneficial: one is his magnum opus, *Asfār*, where he discusses God's will in his discussion on

divine attributes -especially in the sixth volume of *Asfār*² and the other is his treatise on creation of human actions (*Risala-i Khalq al-a'mal (RKA)*).³

Let's rephrase our puzzle in the form of a question: 'How free is the human in her choice of actions?' Possibility of responsibility as well as of freedom is dependent on the answer which concerns both ontology and causality. The simplest versions of answers would be either she is free or she is not free (jabriyya⁴ and qadariyya⁵). At the second stage each stance would need to explain how she is free or she is not. At this level the school that totally discard freedom of the human (that is jabriyya) is also marginalized and has most times played role of a rhetoric stance in the classical books. In terms of accounts that attribute some sort of responsibility to human beings in their actions,

2 Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Hikma al-muta'āliya fī-l-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* (referred in the text as: *Asfār*), (ed.s) G. A'vani, N. abībī, M. Muhammađī, R. Akhbaryān, 'A. Rashad, A. Ahmađī and R. Muhammađzada (Tehran: SIPRI, (1380-1383)); Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Risala-i Khalq al-a'mal*. In *Majmaa-i Rasail al-falsafi-yi Sadr al-muta'allihin* (referred to in the text as: *RKA*), (Tahran: Intisharat-i al-Hikma, 1375), 271-283.

3 There are a number of works that describe the discussions on freewill in late period of Islamic thought. Most relevant to our research here are the ones about Ibn Arabi, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and of course, Mullā Şadrā himself. For Razi, see Gündoğar, Hamdi, "Fahređdin er-Razi'de İrade-Fiil İlişkisi" *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. III, no. 6, (2012):55-70/2, and Cengiz Yunus, "Eş'arî Düşüncede Niyetin Soykötüğü: İrâdenin Sorunsallaştırılmasında Fahređdin Râzî'nin Katkısı" *Dini ve Felsefi Düşüncede Niyet*, (Nobel Academic Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 2017), 207-244.

For Ibn Arabi see Hacıbayram Başer, 'Mutlak ve Sınırlı İrade Arasında Ahlâk: İbnü'l-Arabî Düşüncesinde Niyetin Kapsamı ve Eylemle İlişkisi', *Dini ve Felsefi Düşüncede Niyet*, (Nobel Academic Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 2017), 165-206. This book chapter exhibits various usages of intention spread through Ibn Arabi's writings and importantly features one of the cases where human agency is defined in relation to God's Omnipotence.

As studies on Mullā Şadrā two articles shall be mentioned. Sedat Baran's important article summarizes the alternative approaches to the freewill problem as well as the criticism against Sadrian approach. However, the article does not focus on the problematic case of Sadrian identification of obligation and freedom and it does not centralize the principle of tashkik as a solution. (Sedat Baran, 'Molla Sadra da Cebr ve ihtiyar Problemi', *Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2(2): 93-113). Hussein Behravan has a shorter piece on God's power which also very briefly touches the topic of power which is directly connected to will (both derived from the same root in Arabic). Yet the article is very brief and falls short of providing important details of the related principles to the concept, besides lacking philosophical problematization of the issue (Hussein Behravan, 'The Power and Will of the Almighty God from Mullā Şadrā's Perspective', *Cumhuriyet University Faculty of Science. Science Journal (CSJ) Vol. 36 No.3 Special Issue* (2015): 30128-3134.

4 Wolfson translates jabriyya as predestinarians, Jahm b. Safwan is the prominent figure of this approach and the most dramatic statement 'human actions are no different from natural events' showcase their view in favor of God's power implying that God compels man to do what God wills (Wolfson, Harry Austrian, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Harvard University Press: Massachusetts, 1976), 601-612.

5 This is the group Wolfson refers to as libertarians (Wolfson, *The Philosophy*, 613). The first statements of the approach are historically referred to Ma'bad al-Juhani and Gaylan al-Dimashqi in which evil doings of human are considered totally independent of the power of God. There is also dispute about the relation between this group with the mutazilites in both classical and modern literature as some (Baghdadi, Matured and so on) identify them with the mutazilite school İlyas Üzüm, 'Kaderiyye' *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, volume: 24, 64-65.

four classes are considered by Mullā Şadrā⁶. Among these Mutazilites consider human beings as creators of their own actions due to the principle of justice. In order human be regarded responsible for their actions, they were supposed to be wholly independent and free in their choices. Thus, not only the capacity to act or the choice for a specific act but also the very creation of the act is attributed to human beings. Moreover, problem of evil would be solved as the existence of evil is disconnected from the will of God. This view is considered as extreme by Mullā Şadrā, who shows his discomfort about the notion of two distinct actors -both original and absolute; since here, human are considered real agents beside God (Mullā Şadrā, *RKA*, 272). The second group, Asharites, can be considered at the other extreme stance as they denied all power to human beings. All powerful God is the creator of all beings and human, her will and her actions are directly created by God (Mullā Şadrā, *RKA*, 273). Mullā Şadrā separates his stance clearly from the Asharite position (Mullā Şadrā, *Mazāhir*, 53); However, when details of Mullā Şadrā's approach is considered, I think his position manifest some Asharite influence (and strong influence of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, whose ethics is not strictly Asharite), especially with regards to the emphasis on God's omnipotence. A stronger similarity is found between Akhbarian notion of will as the manifestation of God's power. The third group, philosophers built their notion on causal possibility maintained by Neoplatonist theory of emanation. In this approach, all existence flows from God through media of secondary agents. The approach is considered more advantageous by Şadrā, yet he is aware of the hidden determinism in the peripatetic system where strong causality required necessity in many events in the universe and animate beings are also bound with their *nature* (Mullā Şadrā, *RKA*, 273-4).

A fourth approach built on the notion of unity is listed at the end and appear to be Şadrā position (Mullā Şadrā, *RKA*, 274-5.). According to him, the inspired and rare philosophers view the unity in the multiplicity of the universe and they observe that every existence is only present through the existence of God.⁷

Mullā Şadrā's human is defined neither under ultimate obligation (*jabr*) or ultimate freedom (*mukhtar*). According to him, it is only God that is truly defined as owner of power (*qudra*). However, act (*fi'l*) and instauration (*ijad*) can still be attributed to human beings. Human power and creation in this account, is possible through God's providence (*ināya*) and thus is regarded as manifestation of God's power.

The first proposition in this approach is that i) all power and action belongs to God as he is the only real possessor of power. The conclusive claim is that human are able to choose and act and ii) *in human, obligation and freedom are identical*. If any freedom for human is claimed, there should be a gap in the determined universe for human action and I will claim the this gap is created by the notion of gradational ontology.

6 Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī, *Risala-i Khalq al-a'mal*. In *Majmaa-i Rasail al-falsafi-yi Sadr al-muta'allihin* (referred to in the text as: *RKA*), (Tahran: Intisharat-i al-Hikma, 1375): 271-283; 272-275.

7 One cannot help but be reminded of Ibn Arabi at this stage.

Thus, soundness, if any can be attributed to Şadrā's approach is when his monist system is brought into the picture; in which various realities are devised as different aspects of the same reality: The sameness of obligation and freedom are possible because obligation is related to the divine aspect of action as God is all-powerful (possessor of power *lqudra*) and freedom is related to the human aspect as she is capable of acting as she wills. Our understanding of human being's possession of 'will' is key to understanding how humans are capable of free agency.

Şadrā defines will among psychological qualities (*kayfiyyat al-nafsaniyya*).⁸ In his system, human being is no different from her faculties, cognitions, actions as knowledge, action and being are one and the same. Thus any quality related to the soul is also not separate from the soul, indeed it is identical to the soul. This is a reflection of Sadrian idea of simplicity of existence at the psychological level.⁹

The cause of any movement in the universe in the Sadrian system is the love for one's perfection and proximity to God. In this sense, the cause of movement is similar to love (*ishq* and *mahabba*). In this context we can talk about a uniformed cause in the universe for all movement. Human being's journey is to be understood in this frame and all her actions are to achieve the perfection. The word journey is not only a metaphoric usage in the Sadrian system.

According to Mullā Şadrā, the soul is all its faculties and soul is a unity.¹⁰ Besides, soul is in constant change in its substance. Thus human soul begins its journey as a material reality and becomes immaterial in progress. Şadrā accordingly admits that human have an immaterial soul (*mujarrad*) that is perfected in time but that there is nothing to the soul other than its faculties. The immateriality of the soul is gained through the process of substantial change. And substantial change in human is achieved through all actions, feelings, experiences, cognitions, refinements and, so on of the soul. The beginning in any of these is for him, the intentionality (*iltifat*) of the soul (Mullā Şadrā, *Asfār*, v.8, 274-275). Thus the internal and external processes build up each other and the approach treats intention and result of its action in a circular manner. The tendency towards an action is eventually related to one's will. And one's will is eventually related to the very reception of life for the entity. Yet the very beginning of human will still found

8 'Rather, they (conception and assent) are simple qualities that have their being in the soul and which belong to those qualities of the soul whose being consists in fact in their being a state of the soul as capacity, desire, appetite, anger, grief, fear and the like' (Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Risala al-tasawwur wa al-tasdiq* (referred in the text as: *RTT*). In *Majmū'at rasā'il falsafiyah*. 41-81, (Bayrūt: Dār i yā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001), 46; Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Risāla al-tasawwur wa al-tasdiq*, *Conception and Belief*. tr. Lameer, Joep . (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2006), 109).

9 Simplicity is the idea that neither existence nor existents are compounds of any kind. See Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Risalah fi ittihad al-'aql wa 'l-ma'qul*, tr. Ibrahim Kalin. In *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281-2.

10 *Asfār*, v. 8, p.261ff; see also: Sümeyye Parıldar, 'Mulla Sadra on the Mental: A Monist Approach to Mental Existence', *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook*, Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura, 2015, 160-181.

its source in God. Accordingly God creates in human a will and a passion (*mashiyya*). Thanks to this creation, human becomes capable of eyes that see and ears that hear, etc. Thus besides the will God creates knowledge in human. With this human beings know things (*idrak*) and develop attitudes towards events/things (*tudrik ve tatasarrif fi'l-umur*) (Mullā Şadrā, *RKA*, 279).

The mechanism of knowledge and intending to an object are on one hand the same as the very existence of human and also related to the development of the human who possesses these qualities. This is indeed a circular description in which the agent and the intention are connected closely to the action. For example, the inclinations of a baby is different from the inclination of a teenager, due to the latter's higher level in existence. But also, the results of inclinations define the baby or the teenager when a second time the agent is inclined towards an action. The inclination is defined by the subject and it defines the subject, and moreover with the totality of inclinations, the inclinations and the subject are one and the same.

Şadrā connects actions and will and claims the individuation of will is through actualization of actions.

'The relation of will to its object is similar to the relation of knowledge to the object of knowledge.... Will is individuated with the individuation of its object (*murad*) and it becomes personified by the personification of its object (*tashakkkhus*). and willing any action is like knowing it. the individuation and personification takes place by attaching (*taalluq*) to the very act (*fi'l*)' (Mullā Şadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 316-8)

Human Will In relation to Sadrian Monist Psychology and Ontology

Şadrā describes existence as the sole reality that plays the role of being the source of all reality¹¹. Every being instantiates the very existence at different level and intensity with which that very being gains its individuation. Thus, existence is a homogenous reality shared by all that there is and it is the principle behind individuation of each being. Individuation of will, similarly requires no external and separate principle. The discussion so far explains will as part of reality of the soul, indeed that soul and will is identical and that will is, like all other realities, a manifestation of existence. In Sadrian theory, reality of existence is manifested at different level thanks to the principle of *tashkik* that can be translated as gradual ontology.¹²

11 Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *al-Shawāhid al-rububiyya* (ed.) Jalal al-Din Ashtiyānī. (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1967), 6; Mullā Şadrā, Şadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Mashāir*, ed. Dr. F. M. Halil al-Bun, (Tehran: Anjuman-i Iran-i Shinasi-i Fransa, 2000), 6-8.

12 'Verily the reality of everything is its *wujūd*, which is that from which its effects and [existential] conditions result. *Wujūd* is therefore the most appropriate of all things to possess reality because that which is other than it [*wujūd*] becomes the possessor of reality through it, and it [*wujūd*] is the reality of all that possesses reality, and it does not need, in its possessing reality, another reality. It is in itself in the objective world, and other than it by which I mean that the quiddities exist objectively through

When describing human actions, when they are related to choice, they are described in relation to attraction and disinclination at the lowest level and in relation to will at higher levels. Eventually all states of soul including will is called identical to the being of human and described as a manifestation of existence.

Existence's being the sole reality and manifesting itself at different levels, thanks to its simplicity, necessitates that every manifestation also reflect properties of existence. Will and knowledge are two of these and this results in an important consequence: in Sadrian universe, not only human but all existents possess all characteristics of the existence and reality, such as awareness, knowledge and will.¹³ Yet at different levels. (I. Gradation and Simplicity principle applied to the concept of will)

The level of the being will define the way that being possess will. Şadrā expresses this situation as that meaning of will is not the same in all beings. The meaning depends on the level of the being (II. Gradation and individuation principle applied to the concept of will)

Connecting the reader to the beginning of the article, Şadrā called for attention to the omnipotence of God at the issue of human action. Just as that only God is the Ultimate reality, and has the perfection in existence, only God is said to be Agent. Şadrā indeed brings this to an extreme position and claims that there is no real action other than God's creation. It should be easily claimed that no voluntary act is possible in this kind of a universe. Şadrā eases the conditions for our claim and says that: All beings are at the servitude to God. All beings that possess will are under obligation as well (Mullā Şadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 301).

'All beings that are capable of choosing their actions (*mukhtar*) other than God are under obligation (*mudhthir*) in their choices and obliged in their actions (*majbur fi af'ali*). The power (*qudra*) in our soul is the same as the power (*qudra*) for action, and

it and not through their own essence' Mullā Şadrā, *Masha'ir*, 10-11, tr. Nasr, 11.

13 See his comparison of animate beings with inanimates: '[A]nd you should say: we do not know that animals perceive the sensible and that they are aware apart from their moving towards the things they want and avoid those they do not want. So much so that the deficient animals like spongy ones and pearl oyster do move with closing and opening voluntarily. If we did not observe this movement from them, we would not know that they have faculty of touch. If the situation were like this, we definitely found similar things to this in elements and in plants as well. The earth moves away from high into the low in one direction. Fire moves away from low to high in one direction.

And when the flowing fire is put a hindrance on its direction of movement, it turns away from the hindrance to another direction. But it does not go lower and it carries on climbing from other directions which have no hindrance. Plants are likewise, when there is a hindrance before their growing or moving, they deviate from the hindrance and tend to another direction from the shadowy to the sunny side...

All these are proof for their awareness of wanted and unwanted things' (Mullā Şadrā, *Asfār*, v.8, 191, tr. mine); Mullā Şadrā, 'Varidat al-Qalbiyya fi Ma'rifat al-rububiyya', in *Majmuat al-Rasail*, vol.3, Seyyid Mahmud Yusuf Sani, Hamid Naci İsfahani, (Tahran: Bunyad-i Hikmat-i Islami Sadra, 1389):pp. 333-396; p.344; and see also Sümeyye Parıldar, 'Intentionality in Mulla Sadra', PhD dissertation, Exeter University, UK, 2014, 119.

preparation for the action as there is no real possessor of choice other than God.’ (Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, v. 6, 303-10)

These lines tell us that human power and will are carefully defined in the lines of potency and the general story of human journey from material to immaterial and to its perfection. At the beginning of the article, I mentioned how the universe is uniformly defined in movement to love of perfection in Sadra’s theory. The notion of the human in this picture as the journey to its immateriality and will plays the role of preparation in this journey. Here one should read the implication that will is described in same lines as inclination, love, intention and so on.

As Ṣadrā’s universe is uniformly defined, the lines between the voluntary and involuntary (natural) action is blurred. Of course, in the commonsense view, we tend to exclude inanimate beings from will, because we are not accustomed to referring these qualities to inanimate beings, for example speaking about will of fire. Additionally, many effects related to these qualities are not observed in these entities.

The weak border in this unified universe between human and an inanimate object is by consciousness: that human is aware of her actions and the reasons behind the action. The cause of movement is similar to love (*ishq* and *mahabba*), will (*irada*), inclination (*mayl*) (Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 339.) and they are shared by all existents. Both voluntary and natural actions find their source in God and both are created under obligation, with the exception that in the voluntary action, the agent is aware of its own motives (*da’awi*) (Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 304-5). It should be noted that they are only different at their levels but one’s higher level in being enables it manifest extra feature of awareness and classifies the action as voluntary.¹⁴

All existents manifest the same reality at different levels, and thus only animate existents (beings with soul) manifest the quality of will. In a way, lower levels of will can be considered to be possessed by inanimate beings (Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 334-335). Ṣadrā applies emanation theory and its identification of existence with knowledge in God, to the concept of will. Existence, knowledge and will are identical and flow from God¹⁵. The gradation of beings, thus, is also will coming into existence by the very being of things in degrees. The will has no separate being other than the existent itself.

Consider how he thought existence of everything depended to the existence of God, in terms of the commonality of will in this context, Mullā Ṣadrā claims similarity in voluntary and natural actions instaurated by God and both are created under obligation with the difference of one’s awareness of its own motives (*da’awi*) in the voluntary action (Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 304-5). In Ṣadrā’s system, all existents are real and actualized by themselves on the one hand, and any existent is only possible because of

14 This is important for the case of human actions and more importantly for the larger project in *Asfār al-arbaa*, ie. evolution and perfection of the human soul. The *awareness* is equivalent to human being’s *preparedness* for the journey and reception from higher levels.

15 ‘*fa nizam al-akmal al-kawni al-imkani tabi’un li al-nizam al-ashrafi al-Vajibiyyu al-Hakki wa huwa ‘aynu al-ilmi wa al-iradati*’, Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, v.6, 309.

the perfect ultimate existence. Existence is common and also individual reality for each existent. It also is manifested at different levels.¹⁶

In a similar manner, will is ultimate in God and comes in lesser degrees in other beings. And the meaning of will itself even is differentiated in relation to the being that possess the will. Will is also no separate from the existence of the thing. Will has different levels, each of which are named as different stages of action.

The gradation in will is observable in two considerations. One is that the degree of will is identical to the individual and thus dependent on the individual ‘possessing’ will. In this sense, all existents are accepted to possess will, but at a level suitable for their level of existence. The will is becomes observable at the level of animal with possessing capacity to cause affects.

The second one is that will itself is manifested as stages of action. The stage from intention, power to the action itself are indeed related to levels of will. The individual at a lower level of existence will have these stages separate and more observable. Thus the process between intention and action itself are longer in lower beings and the action and the will are identical at the highest being.

The gradation of will at the second stage, is described in detail when Sadra discusses the psychological qualities. Psychological qualities are qualities such as power, will, knowledge, health, sickness, ethics (Mullā Ṣadrā, Asfār, v.4, 198-199).

Power (qudra) is a psychological quality of animal with which it becomes possible that the act emerges from the animal when it wants to act (Mullā Ṣadrā, Asfār, v.4, 199.). At the lower level, this power is only ultimate possibility for the act, but once this is attached to will (irada or mash’iyya), then the act becomes necessary. At the high level of identity, the power, the will, and the knowledge are identical.

God is the only existent who acts as He wishes, and wills, thus it is impossible to think about the process between intention, power to action for God (Mullā Ṣadrā, Asfār, v.4, 200-202).

Ṣadrā’s summary at the end of *Risalat al-Khalq al-A’mal (RKA)* is thus explanatory of the connection of the dependence of human to God’s power for her freedom: For

16 Sadra’s conceptualization of munbasith existence explains how existence is englobing reality for all its existents: ‘This wujūd is in reality the first emanated among contingent beings (al- sādīr al-awwal) from the First Cause (al-‘illa al-ūlā), and called “the Truth by which creation is created (al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihī).” And this wujūd is the source and principle of the existence of the universe, and its life and its light which penetrates into all that there is in the heavens and the earths. It exists in all things according to that thing in such a way that in the intellect it is intellect, in the soul it is soul, in nature it is nature, in the body it is body, in substance it is substance, and in accident it is accident’ (Mullā Ṣadrā, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Mashāir*, ed. Dr. F. M. Halil al-Bun, (Tehran: Anjuman-i Iran-i Shinasi-i Fransa, 2000), 40-41; Mullā Ṣadrā, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. *Metaphysical Penetrations: A Parallel English-Arabic Text* (referred in the text as: *Mashāir*, tr.), tr. S. H. Nasr, (ed. Ibrahim Kalin), (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2014), 44-45.)

him, soul is beyond the material constructions of the body and the powers related to the body. Yet the actions of the body is in reality actions of the soul. Will of human is also related to the Divine. Human actions and freewill is only possible because of God's bestowing a creative power to human beings. This is the very point that can be a basis for a Sadrian ethics because this is the point that triggered the journey to the perfection of the human parallel to the awareness of human about the mechanisms of the actions such as motives, tendencies and will.

The Solution

Human beings are in constant movement in their essences and they constantly evolve. Their decisions and acts are two ends of the same event and their acts eventually will change the way their decisions are made. Their acts become the cause of their evolution. And moreover, through their evolution, then their decisions and actions evolve. The more they evolve, the distance between decisions and actions become smaller and smaller. What makes this whole process possible is the power bestowed to human by God. Human capacity to act is a manifestation of God's power.¹⁷ The very existence of human will and the continuity of that capacity is thanks to God's providence:

'(...)every bodily sign is linked to a spiritual sign- just as the Kingdom is attached to the Sovereignty, writing to meaning, and body to spirit (...) The body becomes established through the spirit such that, when the linkage is severed, it disintegrates and falls away.'

In this picture, as the soul is the real agent, the organs are made active only by the soul's command and once they lose their functionality, they diminish:

'the ear becomes established through the potency of hearing (...) and so also others (...) So much is this so that, when the spirits and potencies are nullified and made ineffectual in their act, the organs become corrupted, rot and fall away. So also were the bodies of the celestial spheres and the elements not preserved by the fact that the spiritual things, their writing, and their preserving are attached to the Real's command and speech, no trace of existence would remain for them.'(Ṣadrā, Elixir, 28)

Sadra, on the one hand connects existence and actions in the universe- including the actions of human, necessarily to the Divine command; however, on the other hand, he attaches a similar hierarchy to his explanation of the inside-mechanism of human actions:

'In the same way, words are combined in the world of the soul only so that the forms of deeds may emerge (...)'.(Ṣadrā, Elixir, 29)

17 The idea that human power is one of the manifestations of Divine is expressed by Ibn Arabi as well. For the Akhbari notion of will is see: Hacıbayram Başer, 'Mutlak ve Sınırlı İrade Arasında Ahlāk: İbnü'l-Arabî Düşüncesinde Niyetin Kapsamı ve Eylemle İlişkisi' in *Dinî ve Felsefî Düşüncede Niyet*, (Nobel Academic Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2017), 165-206.

The history of human actions on the world as well as human being's evolution to become a better being is made possible through this:

‘Were there no rationality and speech in this world (of the soul), the forms of writing and diverse figures would not be generated in the documented earths, nor would they climb up with respect to eyesight, or rather, with respect to hearing, to their place of return, which is the perceiving, fully active intellect’ (Şadrā, Elixir, 29)

The more human evolve, the higher being they become and they become more successful in achieving proximity to God to the level that their senses perceive beyond the perceivables. By becoming the highest manifestation of the Divine power, human beings maintain a higher level of agency. This evolution exhibits the circle of human being from beginning to end which is also its origin. The human being that started her journey as a material being returns to its pure origin as an immaterial being through this evolution. The material perceptions and the life in the material world is necessary step for her to go through this journey and the external perceptions become in time part of her inward journey. In time, the material necessities start to fade for her, and she gains full power over her own body and tools of her soul in addition to her strengthened perception of the realities:

‘all the sites and locations in her world, both the high and low, are established through her, and all the tools and the means of awareness, both outward and inward, act through her (...) Her troops accept her commands and her prohibitions (...) The body and tools are all passive toward her exercise of effects. They come to life with her essential life and are illuminated by her holy light’ (Şadrā, Elixir, 31)

As the final quotations establish, Şadrā's explanation of obligation and freewill cannot be separated as the more agency is attributable to the human, the more submissive to the Divine Command she becomes. The evolution is established by the actions of human which also include the inner processes as actions and material processes are essential stages of preparation. The agency of human for her actions are achieved at the highest level when her awareness is most active and her submission to the Divine command is strongest. This is why ‘*in human, obligation and freedom are identical*’.

Acknowledgement

This text could find the chance to be turned into an article only thanks to encouraging readings of Dr. Sevcan Öztürk. Kübra Şenel's and Dr. Veysel Kaya's generous suggestions also helped develop various points in the article

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