Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

Band: 76 (2022)

Heft: 2

Artikel: Mull adr on free will and freedom

Autor: Azadani, Zakieh

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1035027

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Mehr erfahren

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. En savoir plus

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. Find out more

Download PDF: 03.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, https://www.e-periodica.ch

Zakieh Azadani*

Mullā Ṣadrā on free will and freedom

https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2021-0015
Received June 17, 2021; accepted May 6, 2022; published online August 29, 2022

Abstract: Although even before the coming of Islam, a "predestinarian view" could be identified in the Arabic tradition, and so apparently Arabs were not unfamiliar with the conflict between human free will (*iḫtiyār*) and predestination, after the emergence of Islam and the emphasis of Qurʾān on God's omnipotence, this question arose more seriously in different forms in the Islamic world. It was during the Umayyad period of Islamic history that the problem of destiny became the subject of discussion between two groups of thought, the so-called Qadariyya and Ǧabriyya, and some questions raised explicitly: If human will is entirely determined by God, how would God's justice be justified? What would happen to human responsibility for his sins? Adherents of Qadariyya believed that man is free and the agent of his own actions, and so is responsible for his deeds. In contrary, according to Ǧabriyya, man is determined by God in all his actions.

Keywords: evil; free will; freedom; Mulla Sadra

1 Introduction

Although even before the coming of Islam, a "predestinarian view" could be identified in the Arabic tradition[1], and so apparently Arabs were not unfamiliar with the conflict between human free will (*iḫtiyār*) and predestination, after the emergence of Islam and the emphasis of Qurʾān on God's omnipotence, this question arose more seriously in different forms in the Islamic world. It was during the Umayyad period of Islamic history that the problem of destiny became the subject of discussion between two groups of thought, the so-called Qadariyya and Ǧabriyya, and some questions raised explicitly: If human will is entirely determined by God, how would God's justice be justified? What would happen to human responsibility for his sins? Adherents of Qadariyya believed that man is free and

1 Watt (1948: 19).

***Corresponding author: Zakieh Azadani**, University of Tehran, Enqelab Ave., 1417935840 Tehran, Iran (the Islamic Republic of); and Universität Zürich, Asien-Orient-Institut, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zürich, Switzerland, E-mail: zakieh.azadani@uzh.ch

the agent of his own actions, and so is responsible for his deeds. In contrary, according to the Ǧabriyya, man is determined by God in all his actions.[2]

By gradual forming of Islamic scholastic theology, particularly the Muʿtazilites and the Ašʿarites, during the age of Abbasids, the problem of free will became clearer and more coherent. The Muʿtazilites believed that "God almighty's justice necessitates that man should be the author of his own acts", and if it is not so, then he cannot be held as responsible for his sins.[3] ʿAbd al-ǧabbār, a famous Muʿtazilite theologian, believed that according to Qurʾān the theory of compulsion of man is totally wrong, since in many verses it is repeated again and again that sinful people will be punished and virtuous ones will be awarded. So, these verses would be meaningless if the real performer of our acts is God.[4]

However, the Ašʿarites made a distinction between creation (*ḫalq*) and acquisition (*kasb*), and claimed that God is the creator of actions and human being is just the acquisitor of them. It means that God creates in man the power and the will to perform an act, but this acquisite power and will are not effective in producing the action, and so, the real creator is God.[5] In response, the Muʿtazilites claimed that *Kasb* is an inconceivable concept presented by the Ašʿarites just to pretend that they were not following the Ǧabriyya, though in fact there was no meaningful difference between the theory of acquisition and the theory of compulsion.[6]

Mullā Ṣadrā, the famous Safavid era philosopher, doesn't accept any of these two opposite traditional attitudes toward the problem of human free will. He believes that if we accept the stance taken by the Muʿtazilites and consider our free will as separate from God's will, two independent creators for human actions have been acknowledged. On the other hand, the Ašʿarites' solution would lead to determinism. But according to Ṣadrā, if we want to consider the problem from the right viewpoint, we have to confirm human beings influence in their actions, which is of course not independent of God. So, he intends to suggest a solution which is between those two extreme poles.

Furthermore, seemingly, the answers to the question of humaıı free will, provided by various Islamic Kalam schools, mostly consider the concept of freedom in its negative meaning. In other words, they tried to prove or reject human will from the will of God. And, when it came to proving human free will, the main point was justification of human responsibility for his sins, and keeping God pure from defects and from being the creator of evil and injustice.

---

2 Bhat (2006: 9 f).
3 Sharif (1963: vol. 1, 200).
4 ʿAbd al-ǧabbār (2001: 241).
5 Sharif (1963: vol. 1, 229 f).
6 Cheikh Bouamran (1382: 88 f).

Although Mullā Ṣadrā's attitude to this topic has been certainly influenced by Islamic theological, philosophical and mystical tradition[7], it seems that there would be a possibility to consider the concept of freedom in his thought in its positive meaning from an ontological viewpoint. In this article, I'll examine the issue from two perspectives. On the one hand, I will trace the meaning of human free will on the basis of human's willing movement. On the other hand, I'll try to explain the relation between human free will and freedom in a possible interpretation as manifestation of Being.

Although Ṣadrā mentions the word of "*ḥurriyya*" (freedom) in some of his works, such as al-Asfār, the meaning it suggests there is different from what is meant in this article. According to al-Asfār, freedom and wisdom (*ḥikma*) are two virtues which all other ethical virtues are due to them. Influenced by Plato and Aristotle, Ṣadrā defines freedom as not being obedient to "corporeal affairs and pleasures of animate faculties". This situation is called freedom, because "freedom" is terminologically opposite to "slavery", and bodily desires take the soul within their bounds and cause the soul to obey all its commands without demur (al-Asfār, 9, 87–8). However, it seems that there would be a possible interpretation of freedom as "manifestation" which is not explicitly stated by Ṣadrā, but its extraction from his philosophy may be fruitful for our discussion. In this meaning, freedom -in difference with free will- is not defined as the capability to perform an act when we will and to cease it when we want, but as letting pure Being manifest in us. Since human being has free will, hence he is free *for* deciding on his grade in the hierarchy of Being and determining the level of his freedom, so that he is as free as he lets pure Being manifest in him.

2 Substantial motion and willing movement

Mullā Ṣadrā understands the relationship between God, world and human on the basis of his main theory, that is, the primacy of Being. According to this principle,

7 Ṣadrā takes into consideration the related ideas on human free will presented by his predecessors. Particularly, he accepts the interpretation suggested by Tūsī and Mīrdāmād as an average solution for the problem of human free will, but he intends to give an account of the relation between God's will and human will based upon the principle of unity of Being, and he assumes that just from such a point of view, we can achieve the right interpretation of a way in between absolute determinism and absolute freedom. It also must be noted that he is deeply influenced by Ibn ʿArabī, the famous Andalusian Sufi, especially in his notion of the unity of Being which is the basis of his innovative attitude toward the question of freedom.

the truth of every existent is due to its grade of Being, not its essence. And, among all the existents, human being has a distinctive status. In his major work, *al-Hikma al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqlīyya al-arbaʿa*, Ṣadrā says:

> There is no established position in identity, nor a determinate grade in Being for human being -unlike the other natural existents, the soul, and the intellects. Human soul has different grades and levels (*maqāmāt wa-darağāt mutafāwita*).[8]

In other words, human being is the only existent who doesn't have a predetermined identity, and so he can achieve his proper status by his wills. This unique situation is based upon the fact that:

> There is a substantial motion for everything, but besides that, there is another movement which belongs to human being, and it is the willing movement toward what he regards as good and perfection.[9]

So, human being is under the effect of two movements. The first one is the "substantial motion" (*al-ḥaraka al-ğawhariyya*) which lies at the heart of Ṣadrā's philosophy, and is justified by the theory of issuance of Being (*fayḍ al-wuğūd*). According to this principle -which shows the "dynamic and fluid nature" of the world of creation[10] – the flow of Being gives every existent its share of Being. Therefore, everything that emanates from God has its proper portion of Being, which is appropriate for it. The greatest level of Being on the vertical hierarchy of existents belongs to intellects. Then Being descends to the next degree, and continues its descent until it reaches the lowest grade which is prime matter or pure potentiality.

Like the descending series, the ascending one follows an arranged way, from the weakest grade of prime matter through minerals, vegetative and animal souls, until the level of human soul which can achieve the highest grades of Being, namely the active intellects.[11] So, substantial change runs through the entire natural world. The material substance in natural existents accepts new forms continually, and the series of forms constantly occurs to it in a contiguous way. This ascending process always continues, and as a result, every natural existent is always in motion, and its formal substance, that is, nature, is essentially changing.

---

8 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 8, 343).

9 Mullā Ṣadrā (1346: 290).

10 Kalin (2014: Ch. 4, 1).

11 It must be mentioned here that according to Ṣadrā, for achieving this grade, there must be a perfect relationship (*al-monāsibah al-tāmmah*) between God and human being. The issuance of Being from God is full and there is no barrier to the complete emanation of God except human being's shortcoming to receive it. Then, the stronger the relationship to God, the greater human's share of issuance of Being (Mullā Ṣadrā 1302: 220).

This constant movement is toward the creatures' final aims, namely their perfections. So, every natural entity is ascending toward its perfection via an intensifying movement. Human being like the others, follows this procedure: from mineral form, to vegetative soul (when it is a fetus in the uterus), and to animal soul (since his birth until the puberty), and finally to human soul which begins from the first years of puberty.

However, for human beings, besides this substantial motion in which no deviation may occur, there is another way to achieve the perfection, which is based upon their free wills:

> Among all creatures, it is just human being whom God leads by two guidances: existential guidance and positional guidance (*hidāya al-kawniyya wa-l-waḍʿiyya*) on the basis of necessary movement and voluntary movement, [...], and obeying of two rules which are indispensable for him: the creational ruling (*ḥukm takwīnī*) and the preparational ruling (*ḥukm tadwīnī*) which are the origins of the essential movement and the willing movement.[12]

Thus, human soul which initially occurs corporally (*ǧismānī al-hudūṯ*), and like the other entities moves toward its perfection via the substantial movement, can also choose its way to travel through different worlds by means of its free will. It can transit from the material world to the intellectual world, or it can descend toward the lowest grades of Being. It is important to note that in this continuous change, human soul is always *consciously present* before itself. Conscious presence lets human soul experience *its being*, and thus, maintains its identity during the upward movement toward perfection or the downward movement toward inferiority. So, Ṣadrā can say:

> Human being's distinctive feature which sets him apart from the other species is that he is the only existent which can ascend from the lowest grades of Being to its greatest levels, and yet preserves his personal, unified, constant identity (*huwiyya*).[13]

That is to say, human soul can become that grade of Being he wills in a willing movement, and in all these changes remains himself.

3 The levels of human's willing movement

Now, one may ask how this willing movement happens? In *Rīsāla fī l-qaḍā wa-l-qadar*, Ṣadrā defines human will (*irāda*) as:

---

12 Mullā Ṣadrā (1366: 1, 111 f).
13 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 9, 96).

> a certain eagerness and a determined decision which causes action and composition. It occurs after the inclination, that is, the conception (*taṣwīr*) of something suitable, whether it be presumptive, imaginative or based on knowledge. So, when we perceive something, and we find it immediately by illusion or the self-evidence of reason as suitable or unsuitable for us, then an eagerness to attracting it or repulsing it arises in us. And the certainty of this eagerness is the assertive decision which is called *īrāda*.[14]

However, Will in animate beings is different from lust (*šahwa*). Because, for example, a person may will something he hates or does not will something he desires. So, in spite of the theologians' claim, according to Ṣadrā, will is not a strong eagerness for achieving a goal, because will is the consensus and determination of the decision. Therefore, will is a voluntary desire while eagerness is a natural desire.[15]

A voluntary action occurs in five steps: having a notion of something, belief in its benefit or detriment, eagerness, will, and driving power.[16] When a particular thing is confirmed as good or bad by practical intellect, the human will is determined, and the willing action occurs. Therefore, the origin of human will is the practical intellect.[17] It is called a kind of intellect because it operates by propositions, which are employed by the soul as principles for concrete activity.[18] The duty of practical intellect is to *prepare* the soul for its final aim by voluntary actions. This preparation has four levels: (1) Exterior refinement by doing religious rituals (*tahḏīb al-ẓāhir*). (2) Interior refinement by removing bad attributes from the heart (*tahḏīb al-bāṭin*). (3) Illuminating the heart with admirable attributes (*tanwīr al-qalb*). (4) The immersion of human soul in God (*fanā' al-nafs*).[19]

However, the main constituent of human being's identity is the theoretical intellect, and practical intellect just prepares the intellectual part of soul for its final aim which is connecting to the active intellect and observing the unity of Being. So, theoretical intellect "realizes the human's potential as a microcosm and manifestation of the divine [...], and as the means whereby the realized person can return to her origin in God".[20] According to Ṣadrā -who is following Ibn Sīna in this case- like the practical intellect, the theoretical intellect has four grades. At first, it is the material intellect, and just has the potentiality of accepting intelligible forms. Human beings in their first years of puberty are in this level of intellect. The second grade is the habitual intellect (*al-'aql bi-l-malaka*) which is the level of

14 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 198).
15 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 4, 113).
16 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 4, 114)
17 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 6, 354)
18 Kaukua (2017: 167).
19 Mullā Ṣadrā (1346: 207).
20 Rizvi, Sajjad (2018: 162)

comprehending the axioms or first principles. After being able to think about these principles, the capacity of transmitting to the next level, namely, to the actual intellect (*al-ʿaql bi-l-fiʿl*) is achieved by human soul. In this grade, human being can comprehend the theoretical knowledge by using the axioms in arguments. But the highest level of theoretical intellect is the acquired intellect (*al-ʿaql al-mustafād*), in which all the intelligible forms are present before the soul via the bestowing of the active intellect. The aim of human's existence is to achieve through knowledge the state of the acquired intellect which provides for them the vision of the link that connects things which are dissimilar from one another. Now, the soul has an intuition of the unity which is penetrated all over the universe.[21]

4 Human free will and God's will

All considered so far is just one side of the question. We have not still examined the relation between human free will and God's will which includes everything and every action. However, before looking into this issue, we should consider another principle in Ṣadrā's philosophy, that is, the Modulation of Being (*taškīk al-wuǧūd*). It was mentioned before that the ceaseless flow of Being or the necessary issuance of the world from God puts everything in a grade of Being. Therefore, Being is the same in all things, but each existent is different from the other, depending upon its degree, i.e., its share of Being:

> The whole Being, from its highest [degree] to its lowest and from its lowest [degree] to its highest is in a single relationship by which some [parts] of it are related to some others and some [parts] of it are connected to some others. And, the totality is united in spite of its external multiplicity, while its unity is not like the conjunction of bodies, so that their ends are conjoined and their surfaces are converged. The whole universe is one single animate being like a single soul.[22]

Thus, there is a hierarchy of Being from the lowest grades to the highest grades. And, in this hierarchy, Being is the source of commonality, and at the same time, is also the basis of distinction, because Being is the same in all entities, and they are just differentiated by degrees of intensification of Being. In this way, Ṣadrā tries to describe "a reality that is at once One and many".[23]

Now, according to this principle, all the things which have a share of Being, even inanimate objects, have some degree of knowledge and will.[24]

---

21 Mullā Ṣadrā (1354: 306).
22 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 5, 349).
23 Rizvi (2013: 132).
24 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 6, 335 f).

> Everything is set in motion, each thing is striving to attain the perfections of what is higher, desiring to make up the lacks and deficiencies that it has with respect to what has the greater share of existence. If everything is motivated by yearning and desire for that which is higher, everything must have some kind of consciousness of its own lack and imperfection. Ṣadrā's doctrine of gradation makes it possible to view all the modes of existence as separate, individual entities, each with its own knowledge-will-power complex.[25]

However, it must be mentioned that these attributes in God, man, animals, and inanimate things are different, in terms of their levels of Being. Therefore, the lower grades in the chain of Being (e.g., inanimate bodies) have the least benefit of knowledge-will-power, and the higher grades (e.g., plants and animals) have more benefits of them. In other words, will, knowledge and power are based upon Being, so they are gradational like Being, and every existent has some shares of them, and thus, has some capacity to reflect the light of truth and let God manifests in it. If existents did not have these shares of knowledge, will and power, they would not have any desire toward higher levels. However, for having free will, these attributes would only actualize sufficiently in a specific level of Being, namely, human being, and it constitutes Ṣadrā's basis for arguing that humans' actions are their own, since they have the necessary conditions for doing an act.

Now, we can return to our main question: if God includes everything and every will by its gathering unity, how should we understand the free will of human being? As it was mentioned before, Ṣadrā believes that willing in human being is a series of steps, beginning with a faint desire and terminates in a resolution for acting in a particular way. However, will in the case of God "is nothing but motivation itself which is the same with his knowledge of the best arrangement".[26] Will in God is nothing other than the process of unfolding of Being which is the same with God's knowledge as the cause of the best arrangement of the universe. And, in this arrangement, human being's will is considered as free will. Therefore, human beings *are compelled to choose between their possibilities*. Ṣadrā says in *Risāla fī l-qaḍā wa-l-qadar*:

> [Human being] with regard to his willing (*maši'a*) is compelled (*muḍṭarr*). [...] If you throw away the veil of ignorance from your eyes, you would understand that man, in having free will (*iḫtiyār*) is determined; hence, [he is] determined to have free will.[27]

To put it more clearly, like all the effects in the world, a particular human act also requires a necessary and sufficient set of conditions. Although some of these

25 Ede (1978: 298).
26 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 198).
27 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 200).

conditions are beyond human being's control, our free will is decisively one of the necessary factors which constitute the complete cause of occurring an action.

> [Our actions issue from us] by the mediation of causes such as human apprehensions and volition, and animal motions and rests, etc., as well as the sublime causes which are absent from our contemplation and prudence, and are beyond our power and influence.[28]

Ṣadrā emphasizes that even this free will is determined by God, and is not due to humans:

> Undoubtedly, ability and free will like the other causes such as perception, knowledge, will, contemplation, imagination, and their faculties and instruments, are all based upon God's act, and not our acts and our free will, otherwise the series of abilities and wills would be infinite or lead to a vicious circle.[29]

However, when Ṣadrā states that man's will is due to God, and not due to us, he means only that human being is determined by God to be free, and this does not mean that God's will predetermines the content of human will too. In other words, the will itself is necessary for the act to occur, but it is *contentless*, and does not contain a pre-determined formula of what exactly that act would be.[30] Thus, human being *must* choose, but this necessity does not contradict his free will:

> If one of the causes [of performing an action], specifically the proximate cause is the being of this person and his perception, knowledge, will, thought, and imagination [...], then that act is performed freely [and at the same time] is necessitated by all these things and conditions, which are called the sufficient cause [...]. So, the act's necessity does not contradict its possibility, and the act's compulsion (*iḍṭirār*) does not refute the fact that it is freely performed. And, how can it become necessary unless by free will?[31]

5 Human free will and God's knowledge

Still, there is another problem which must be examined here: How can human free will may be understood in conformity with God's omniscience? In *Risāla fī l-qaḍā wa-l-qadar*, Ṣadrā points to three levels of God's Knowledge. The highest one is God's providence (*'ināya*) which is "God's knowledge of the existence of particular and universal things which occur in a universal arrangement".[32] Providence is a simple knowledge, including all creatures, and the resource of their existence.

---

28 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 198 f).
29 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 199).
30 Ede (1978: 216).
31 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 199).
32 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 148 f).

The second level of God's knowledge is the eternal universal decree (*al-qadā*) which is "the existence of intellectual forms of all existents in the world of intellect".[33] In this degree of knowledge, the general forms of whatever God gives existence to, from the beginning of the world to its end, are imprinted. Here, the forms are imprinted in a general way and beyond any particular time.[34] They are, on the one hand, arranged according to a vertical arrangement (the series of causes and effects), and on the other hand, arranged according to a horizontal arrangement (the series of temporal events and preparatory conditions).

Finally, the third level of God's knowledge is the determination realized in time (*al-qadar*) which "signifies the fixity (*ṯubūt*) of the forms of existents in the soul world in a particular way, corresponding to their external individual materials".[35] When the time comes and the preparatory causes are realized, an actual event occurs just as it is imprinted in God's *qadar*.

It is important to be mentioned that according to Ṣadrā, all these degrees of knowledge are degrees of Being. In other words, God's knowledge of an entity is its real external existence. So, the knowledge of God is the reality of the world. However, the first two degrees of God's knowledge in which human being is considered as having free will, are beyond time. So, they can't be in contradiction to human free will and its temporal effects. About the third level, that is *qadar*, we can refer to Ṣadrā's claim in *al-Asfār*. According to it, "Change and transformation is just impossible in God and His true attributes and the world of His prior command and [universal] decree (*qadā*) and His eternal knowledge"[36], but it is permissible that change happens in the events which are imprinted in divine qadar, that is the realm of particular, temporal forms.[37] Ṣadrā emphasizes that human free will as one of the causes of realizing an event, can change those forms.

6 Human free will and God as the absolute realm of freedom

Thus, Ṣadrā tries to end the controversies among the theologians on the issue of human free will by his particular account. He says (hinting at the *Muʿtazilites*) that those who consider the proximate cause for the act, namely our free will, as separate from God's will, have acknowledged *two independent* creators for human

33 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 149).
34 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 149).
35 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 149).
36 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 6, 397).
37 Mullā Ṣadrā (1981: vol. 6, 397).

actions. And, those who consider God's will and disregards human free will (hinting at the *Aš'arites*) believe in determinism and does not distinguish human acts from the acts of inanimate beings. So, each group considers only one aspect of the truth, and none of them can see the whole reality. But the one who considers the problem from the right viewpoint, *confirms human beings influence in their actions, which is of course not independent of God.*[38] That person is the one who understands truly the meaning of this famous hadith attributed to Shiite Imams: "There is neither jabr (compulsion [of man]), nor tafwīd (delegation [of power to man]), but something in between". Ṣadrā declares in one of his short treatises, *Ḫalq al-a'māl*, that by the phrase "something in between":

> It is not intended that a mixture of being determined and having free will occur in the servant's act, nor does it mean that his act is bare of determinism and free will, nor is it that the servant has an imperfect free will and is imperfectly determined, nor does it mean that he has free will from one point of view and is determined from another point of view, nor is it that he is determined [and just] has the form of having free will as Ibn Sīnā says.[39] But what is intended is that he has free will because he is determined and he is determined because he has free will; that is, his having free will is exactly the same as his being determined.[40]

Now, by these sentences, we may transit to a more profound insight into the relation between human free will and God's will. As it was mentioned before, it seems that there is a possible interpretation of freedom as "manifestation" in Ṣadrā's philosophy, which is not explicitly asserted by him. According to the ontological primacy of Being, we can say that the true freedom in its both affirmative and negative meanings is nothing but the pure Being. In other words, if we define freedom in its negative connotation as the absence of obstacles and barriers, so pure Being, namely God, is the absolute realm of freedom, because there is nothing outside to restrict Him. On the other hand, all the essences are just determined in the flow of Being, and are nothing but the emanations of God. So, all wills and activities occur inside the Being, and hence, freedom in its positive connotation refers also to pure Being.

On the other hand, according to Ṣadrā, all things -in spite of their differences and their arrangement in the hierarchy of Being, and in spite of their differences in essences and actions- are contained in one comprehensive divine truth. It means that beings have no independent existence and are in the state of absolute

---

38 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 202).

39 Ibn Sīna in *al-Ta'līqāt*, says: "The soul is compelled (*muḍṭarr*) in the form of having free will", and the only difference of its movement to natural motion is that soul is conscious of its aims, but nature is not. According to him, it is only God whose acts are truly based upon free will (Ibn Sinā 1404: 53).

40 Mullā Ṣadrā (1340: 9).

indigence in relation to Him. The divine truth includes all of them in its simplicity and oneness.[41] For a better understanding of this "unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity", Ṣadrā refers to the concepts of transcendence (*tanzīh*) and immanence (*tašbīh*):

> God's transcendence and holiness is due to the status of unity into which everything disappears and He is the subduer one, the only dweller. And, God's immanence is due to the status of multiplicity and being effect.[42]

Therefore, it may be said that every action of an individual person is at the same time, the act of God:

> When we take this viewpoint, it becomes clear that referring act and creation to servant is correct, just as referring Being and personification (*tašaḫḫuṣ*) to him is right, [while] in a way, they are referred to God. For instance, the Being of Zayd is actually true in reality, and [yet] it is one of the modes of the first truth [God], and one of the rays of His face's light. So, he is the agent of what issues from him, in a true meaning, not metaphorically; and at the same time, his act is one of the acts of the first truth.[43]

On the basis of this expression, it may be concluded that it would be possible for us to interpret freedom as manifestation which like Being has its different grades. Every existent as a mode of the first truth has its share of freedom which is due to its capacity for manifestation of God. In other words, if God as pure Being is the absolute realm of freedom, and if all beings are nothing but the emanations of God, so they are as free as they let the first truth manifests in them.

Therefore, although God in its true unity encompasses everything, among them, the content of human will and his actions, this is not in contradiction to human free will. In other words, here, we are not confronted with two separable wills which are in front of each other:

> Even if we accept that there is a duality between God and His creation, this does not justify dualism [...] God is above all opposites, dualisms and binaries. His absolute unity transcends the multiplicity of the created order.[44]

God is not an existent among the other existents, nor even is the greatest existent. God is the pure Being which all things are contained in its gathering unity. Therefore, my action is really mine, just as I as an individual person have my own Being and my own personification. Nevertheless, my Being is one of the rays of

41 Mullā Ṣadrā (1340: 6).
42 Mullā Ṣadrā (1340: 7).
43 Mullā Ṣadrā (1340: 7).
44 Kalin (2014: Ch. 4, 3).

God's light, and one of the modes of His Being, and the locus of His manifestation; so, my act -in another grade- is God's act. The difference of human being with other creatures is that he is the one who can determine the realm of his freedom by willing movement, while his identity remains the same.

7 The problem of evil

In the last section of this article, we should examine another problem which is essentially connected to the question of freedom, i.e., the challenge of evil. From the beginning of Islamic theology and philosophy, Muslim philosophers and theologians who believed in God's goodness, omnipotence and justice tried to justify God's pureness from evil by their various approaches. For instance, the Aš'arites who emphasized the omnipotence of God, claimed that the whatness of good and evil is determined by God.[45] So, we should not judge events as good or evil by our standards, but whatever God does is good and whatever he does not is evil.[46] However, in the history of Islamic thought, the famous solution for the problem of evil suggested by a number of philosophers from Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) to Mirdāmād (d. 1631) was the denial of the existence of evil.[47] In other words, they believed that evils were not essentially (*bi-ḏāt*) made by God, but they were just the requisites of infinitive good, and were related to God only per accident (*bi-l-'araḍ*).[48]

Now, for Ṣadrā, the challenge of evil may be formulated in this way: if he believes that every human's act is, in another level, the act of God, how can he justify God's pureness from defects and evil. In other words, if Being is pure goodness, and God is absolutely good, and every being and every action is included in God, how may evil occurs in the world? As claimed by Ṣadrā, evil implies two meanings. On the one hand, following the famous philosophical tradition, he suggests that evil is generally non-being, that is, pure nothingness.[49] But the concept of nothingness is interpreted by him on the basis of his theory of Modulation of Being. Nothingness is the incapability of every level of Being to be the level which precedes it. But, Ṣadrā believes that essences are not made, because they are neither existent nor non-existent, and they do not have any independent status. So, if essences were not illuminated by the light of Being, they

45 Rizvi and Terrier (2021: 176).

46 In contrast, the Mu'tazilites believed that God did not do whatever we can imagine, but His freedom was restricted by his own laws.

47 Rizvi and Terrier (2021: 176).

48 Mīrdāmād (1391: 13).

49 Mullā Ṣadrā (1340: 8).

would "remain eternally in their essential hiddenness and in their original concealment".[50] When Being is given, essences arise automatically, without any additional making (*ǧa'l*). In other words, the creation of contingent beings as modes of Being is the result of the process of Being's self-unfoldment, and in this downward movement, when Being becomes further diversified into modes, these modal beings generate diverse essences.[51] Therefore, this kind of evil doesn't have any cause, because it results from the differences of essences with regard to their limitations:

> It was mentioned before that essence (*māhīyya*) is not made (*maǧ'ūla*) [...]. So, what is issued from God is good, and evil is not issued at all.[52]

In fact, if the world was bare of these deficiencies, all essences would be but one essence.[53] Therefore, the first meaning of evil as pure nothingness is the result of diversity.

However, the second meaning of evil is non-being of perfections that can be achieved. This type of evil includes ethical evil, and occurs when, for instance, someone doesn't reach its proper perfection by performing something morally bad or remaining in his ignorance, without any attempt to reach the higher grades of Being.

Therefore, if we consider evil in itself, it is nothing but privation of Being. And, if we consider evil in relation to a particular situation, then it can be said that it is evil as far as it prevents something or someone from achieving their existential perfections, and as such is not evil. Then, evil can never occur in pure Being. Human's imperfections and deficiencies are not included in pure Being, since they are non-being. And so, human act is contained in God's unity as far as it is good. Ṣadrā declares: "The ignorant soul as such is nothing".[54]

8 Conclusion

It can be finally concluded that every existent has its own grade of freedom as its capacity to let God manifests in it. It means that these entities, in conformity with their positions, let Being appear in the boundaries of their determined essences. And, among all of them, human being has a unique and complicated position in

50 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 188).
51 Rahman (1975: 30 f).
52 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 191).
53 Mullā Ṣadrā (1302: 174).
54 Mullā Ṣadrā (1346: 244).

the hierarchy of Being, since he himself *chooses* his grade of freedom. Human being can move toward the weakest grades of Being, and have the lowest capacity of emanation, or can ascend to the highest levels of Being and let the pure truth manifests in him.

It can be asked in future researches that what are the ethical implications of such an approach toward human being's free will? How can we formulate a system of ethics in according to this attitude? It seems that such a system is neither a subjective one, nor is just a series of predetermined rules. This ethics may be founded on the concept of "letting-be", and is tied profoundly to the affirmative meaning of human being's free will.

References

Primary Sources

ʿAbd al-ǧabbār (2001): *Šarḥ al-uṣūl al-ḫamsa*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāṯ al-Arabī.
Ibn Sīnā (1404 h.š.): *Al-Taʿlīqāt*, Qom: Maktab al-aʿlām al-Islāmi.
Mīrdāmād (1391 h.š.): *Risāla al-Īqāẓāt fī al-Khalq al-Aʿmāl*, Hamed Naji Isfahani (ed.), Tehran: Iranian Research Institute of Philosophy.
Mullā Ṣadrā (1302 h.š.): *Maǧmūʿa al-rasāʾil al-tisʿa*, Qom: Maktaba al-muṣṭafawi.
Mullā Ṣadrā (1340 h.š.): *Ḫalq al-aʿmāl*, ed. Sayyed Muhmmad Ali Rawḍātī, Isfahan: Ḥabl al-matīn.
Mullā Ṣadrā (1346 h.š.): *Šawāhid al-rubūbīyya fī manāhiǧ al-sulūkīyya*, ed. Sayyed Jalal-ed-Din Ashtiani, Mashhad: University of Mashhad.
Mullā Ṣadrā (1354 h.š.): *Al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, Tehran: Anǧuman Ḥikmat wa Falsafa.
Mullā Ṣadrā (1366 h.š.): *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-karīm*, Qom: Bīdār.
Mullā Ṣadrā (1981): *Al-Hikma al-mutaʿāliya fī asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāṯ al-Arabī.

Secondary Sources

Bhat, Abdur Rashid (2006): "Free Will and Determinism: An Overview of Muslim Scholars' Perspective" in *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, Volume 2, Issue 1, pp. 7–24.
Chikh Bouamrane (1382 h.š.): *Masʾaleye eḫtiyār dar tafakkore eslāmī (Persian translation of: Le Problème de la liberté humaine dans la pensée musulmane: Solution mu'tazilite)*, Esmail Saadat (trans.), Tehran: Hermes.
Ede, David (1978): *Mullā Ṣadrā and the Problem of Freedom and Determinism* [Thesis], Montreal: McGill University.
Kalin, Ibrahim (2014): *Mullā Ṣadrā*, Published in Oxford Scholarship Online.
Kaukua, Jari (2017): "The Intellect in Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary on the Uṣūl al-kāfī" in *Philosophy and the Intellectual Life in Shīʿah Islam*, Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad & Sajjad H. Rizvi (ed.), London: The Shi'ah Institute Press, pp. 158–183.
Rahman, Fazlur (1975): *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, State University of New York Press.

Rizvi, Sajjad (2013): *Mūllā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being*, Routledge.
Rizvi, Sajjad (2018): "Freedom, Compulsion and 'Esoteric Religion': Mullā Ṣadrā's exegesis on the phrase *lā ikrāha fī al-dīn*" in *The Maghreb Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 154–174.
Rizvi, Sajjad; Terrier, Mathieu (2021): "The Challenge of Evil in Islamic Thought: A Brief Survey" in *Oriens*, vol. 49, pp. 173–180.
Sharif M.M. (ed.) (1963): *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz.
Watt, W. Montgomery (1948), *Freewill and Predestination in Early Islam*, London: Luzac.