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## A Functionalist Analysis of Free Will and Its Role in Lifestyle from the Perspective of Imam Ali

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT	
<p><b>Article History:</b> Received: 25 April 2024 Revised: 20 June 2024 Accepted: 15 July 2024</p>	<p><b>SUBJECT &amp; OBJECTIVES:</b> The paper provides a functionalist analysis of human free will and its impact on lifestyle from the perspective of Imam Ali . The discussion of free will and human influence over one's actions is a significant issue in the fields of anthropology and theology, and it is interconnected with many topics in Islamic sciences and disciplines. Human beings possess various dimensions and characteristics, among which free will is a key feature. Imam Ali , in opposition to the prevalent deterministic interpretation, emphasized human free will and its impact on one's actions. The belief in free will manifests in individuals' lifestyles.</p>	
<p><b>Key Words:</b></p> <p>Determinism</p> <p>Free Will</p> <p>Delegation</p> <p>Intermediate Position</p> <p>Imam Ali</p> <p>Lifestyle</p> <p>Effort and Endeavor</p>	<p><b>METHOD &amp; FINDING:</b> In an analytical-descriptive method, this paper aims to examine the statements of Imam Ali regarding human free will and its role in human lifestyle and progress. An active lifestyle or a passive lifestyle is considered a result of the belief in or denial of this free will. Progress and advancement in life, as well as divine happiness and reward, are achieved through free will, effort, and endeavor.</p>	
<p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2024.9969">10.22034/imjpl.2024.9969</a></p>	<p><b>CONCLUSION:</b> Reward and punishment would be meaningless without free will. Effort and endeavor are fundamental aspects of lifestyle that arise from the belief in human free will. "An attempt to change undesirable conditions" and "Governance of belief" are among the manifestations of free will in individuals' lifestyles. Man must strive to preserve freedom and not allow beliefs and values to be controlled by emotions.</p>	
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## Introduction

The discussion of human free will is one of the significant issues in the field of anthropology, which is also related to theological debates and interconnected with many topics in Islamic sciences and disciplines. Human existence has various dimensions, some of which pertain to knowledge and others to abilities and inclinations; human intellect and free will fall within the domain of abilities.

The analysis of the issues of divine power, free will, and divine will, and consequently human power and free will, has been among the first theological disputes among different Islamic sects. Determinists emphasized that God's power and will are intrinsic, eternal, and not motivated by any purpose and that the actions performed by humans originate from God and are brought about by His power and will. In contrast, the *Mu'tazilites* considered divine will to be contingent and explained God's actions as purposeful, defending and explaining divine justice by attributing human actions to human will and power.

This paper aims to provide a functionalist analysis of free will in lifestyle from the perspective of Imam Ali and addresses two subsidiary questions:

- How does Imam Ali depict and explain the relationship between determinism and free will?
- What impact does Imam Ali's explanation of free will have on human lifestyle?

Therefore, the innovation of this research lies in presenting a functionalist analysis of Imam Ali's theory of free will in human lifestyle and progress.

## Theoretical Foundations

The first step in explaining and analyzing human free will is to clarify its concept and other related terms. Therefore, we explain the main and related concepts as follows:

### ***Jabr* (Determinism)**

In linguistic terms, '*Jabr*' refers to compelling a person to act as a force and threat (*Fayūmī, 1993, Vol. 1, p. 89*).

In technical terms, various approaches to the meaning of '*Jabr*' have been presented, but the common and general definition can be considered the same as the linguistic meaning. This means that a compelled person is someone who is forced to act by another agent. Sheikh Mufid defines '*Jabr*' as, "*Jabr* is the compulsion to act and the necessity to do so through coercion and dominance, and its reality is the creation of the act in the creature without them having the ability to prevent it or avoid its existence in them" (*Mufid, 1992, p. 46*).

This agent can be an external factor, such as compelling a weak person to act by a dominant person through threats and coercion, or it can be related to internal factors. Jurjani also defines '*Jabr*' as the negation of action from humans and attributing it to God (*Jurjānī, 1991, p. 33*).

### ***Ikhtiyar* (Free Will)**

The term *Ikhtiyar* (free will) is used in several meanings, which are as follows:

1. The influence of the agent's will on his own action.
2. Choice in the presence of conflicting inclinations (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, p. 174*).
3. The influence of the agent's will on his own action without external pressure (*Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, 2014, p. 490*).

Among these meanings, only the first one stands in opposition to philosophical determinism. Thus, determinism means the lack of influence of the agent on his own actions. Therefore, free will is the power of choice and freedom in action, contrary to determinism, where there is no choice.

### ***Tafwīd* (Delegation)**

The term *Tafwīd* (delegation), derived from the root 'fa-wa-da,' meaning 'to entrust,' is a verbal noun in the form of 'Tafīl.' This term has various meanings and is sometimes used to denote legislative or existential delegation. However, in this context, *Tafwīd* is used in opposition to *Jabr* (compulsion), signifying that humans are independent in their actions and that God has no direct involvement in their deeds (*Zanūzī, 1992, p. 111*).

### **The Concept of 'Intermediate Position'**

This expressive term is derived from the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt. It is sometimes referred to as a position between two positions. The concept of 'intermediate position' implies that humans act with their own will and

choice, but their actions are still within God's will and decree. Humans perform actions using a power granted by God, which persists only through God's continuous support.

According to Shiite beliefs, humans have free will and influential power, but they are not independent in their influence. The power to act is at human discretion, but its foundation is divine. Thus, human actions stem from both divine and human power and will, not in a participatory or composite manner, nor a parallel manner, but sequentially (*Ruknī Lamūkī, 2008, p. 46; Moṭaharī, 1989, Vol. 6, pp. 629-633*). Thus, based on this explanation, there is neither compulsion nor delegation, because although humans are free in their actions, it is not in such a way that God cannot prevent them from these actions (*Jazā'irī, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 300*).

### **Literature Review**

In reviewing the topic, no specific work was found except for a few articles titled 'Foundations of Anthropological Ethics in *Nahj al-Balagha*', (*Nazari & Bayani, 2018*), 'An Examination of Theoretical Philosophy of History in *Nahj al-Balagha*', (*Shirvani et al, 2017*), 'Determinism, Free Will, and Divine Justice', (*Biabani, 2001*) and 'An Analysis of the Impacts of Religious Ethics Principles on the Individual Lifestyle in the Contemporary Era', (*Askarinejad et al, 2024*). These articles differ from our paper in the following ways:

- These articles did not analyze the functionalist aspect of free will in lifestyle and focused on other dimensions of the issue.
- Considering the breadth of research, they need to be supplemented as the statements of Imam Ali in *Nahj al-Balagha* are not exhaustive, and it is necessary to refer to other books as well.
- In the analysis of the content, they also need to be supplemented as it is necessary to examine conflicting narrations in the analysis of the narrations.

Given the above points and the observed deficiencies in these articles, as well as the importance of a functionalist perspective on this topic, the necessity of addressing this discussion becomes clearer.

### **Proof of Human Free Will**

As previously mentioned, the principle of free will is a reality that is intuitively understood and does not require proof. Ayatollah Miṣbāḥ Yazdi writes on this subject, emphasizing that human beings naturally recognize their own free will and ability to choose, as it is an intrinsic part of their experience. In dangerous situations, no one doubts their capacity to act to save themselves. Confusion arises when individuals cannot reconcile free will with certain truths, such as God's omnipotence. Some mistakenly believe that divine power negates human free will, rendering humans as mere instruments of God's will.

However, this belief is flawed because divine justice holds humans accountable

for their actions, indicating they do possess free will. Theologians, supported by rational thought and teachings of the infallible Imams, assert that humans are neither compelled without will nor entirely independent, as God has not forsaken them (*Ref: Rūdgār, 2016, p. 24; Miṣbāḥ Yazdi, 2010, Vol. 1, p. 44*).

Therefore, it can be said that the existence of free will is intuitively perceived. However, human free will does not mean independence, which will be discussed further.

### **Human Free Will from the Perspective of Imam Ali and Other Imams**

Various narrations from the Imams have been reported regarding determinism and free will. Some of these narrations support human free will, while others, at first glance, might be interpreted as supporting determinism. There are also numerous narrations from Imam Ali on this subject, some of which are mentioned as follows:

- It is narrated that He was asked about fate and destiny, and He said, “Do not say that God has left people to themselves and has entrusted matters to them, for this would weaken Him. And do not say that He has compelled them to sin, for this would be an injustice to Him. Rather, say that good is by God’s guidance and evil is by God’s abandonment, and all is foreknown by God” (*Ṭabarsī, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 209; Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 5, p. 95*).

- Imam Ali was asked about the meaning of ‘There is no power nor strength except with God,’ and then He replied, “We are not master of anything alone with Allah, and we are not master of anything save what He makes us master of. So, when He makes us master of anything of which He is a superior Master over us, He also assigns some duties to us; and when He takes it away He will take away those duties as well” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 404*).
- Imam Ali responded to a man from Sham who asked about the Battle of Şiffīn and its relation to divine decree and destiny, “Woe to you! You take it as a final and unavoidable destiny (according to which we are bound to act). If it were so, there would have been no question of reward or chastisement and there would have been no sense in Allah's promises or warnings. On the other hand) Allah, the Glorified, has ordered His people to act by free will and has cautioned them and refrained them (from evil). He has placed easy obligations on them and has not put heavy obligations. He gives them much (reward) in return for little (action). He is disobeyed, not because He is overpowered. He is obeyed but not under force. He did not send prophets just for fun. He did not send down the Book for the people without purpose. He did not create the skies, the earth,

and all that is in between them in vain. That is the imagination of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve because of the fire” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 78; Kulaynī, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 155*).

#### **Analysis and Interpretation of Narrations**

Attention to various components is necessary to analyze and interpret the above narrations. Considering the collection of the above narrations, we explain some of the components as follows:

#### **Denial of Determinism and Delegation**

In the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt, the two views of determinism and delegation are initially invalidated. According to narration ‘A’, in addition to the denial of determinism, delegation is also negated from God because each of these views entails implications that do not befit the dignity and status of God. These implications include ‘inability’ and ‘injustice’ towards the Almighty God.

The explanation is that attributing sins to the Almighty God is one of the instances of determinism, because determinism, according to one term, means denying the act from humans and attributing it to God. In this statement by Imam Ali, ‘determinism’ refers to this meaning. According to this explanation, it becomes clear that such an attribution would result in considering God as unjust. Similarly, believing that God has delegated matters to His servants and has no role

in their actions implies weakness and inability attributed to God, which is incompatible with His majesty.

The above-mentioned narrations all indicate human free will and the right to choose, but this choice is not such that God's hands are tied. Rather, the Almighty God can intervene in the preliminaries of this choice and even in the realization of its effects. This is a reality that we experience in our daily lives. Someone asked Imam Ali how he recognized God and by what means. He replied, "I came to know Allah, the Glorified, through the breaking of determinations, change of intentions and losing of courage" (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 250*)

Given the aforementioned points, it is appropriate to clarify the relationship between human free will and certain matters. In this regard, we will explain and interpret the relationship between human free will and divine decree and also its relationship with God's prior knowledge.

### **Fate, Destiny, and Human Free Will**

The discussion of divine decree and predestination holds a very important place in understanding the system of divine actions. However, a misunderstanding of this concept can lead to significant doctrinal deviations. Some scholars have considered it in analyzing the factors behind the decline and degeneration of Muslim nations. One such doctrinal deviation is the belief that divine decree and predestination are incompatible with human free will. They perceive predestination as something

beyond the system of causes and effects, thereby associating divine decree and predestination with the negation of the world's laws and human free will.

Attention to the divisions between divine decree and predestination can be effective in explaining the relationship between divine decree and predestination with the lawfulness of the world and human free will. One of the well-known divisions of divine decree and predestination is its division into scientific and existential, which is based on God's knowledge and will.

Sheikh Moḥammad 'Abduh, in his commentary on one of the sayings of Imam Ali, interprets divine decree and predestination based on divine knowledge and defines them as follows: "Qadā (divine decree) is God's prior knowledge of the occurrence of things according to their conditions and circumstances. Qadar (predestination) is the creation of things at the time of the realization of their causes and reasons; 'His creation of them at the time of the realization of their causes'" (*'Abdoh, 1995, Vol. 3, p. 167*).

According to this interpretation, the role of humans in the creation of things can be sought in the very term 'causes,' since one of the causes of creation is the servant's own will and choice. Therefore, one who believes in human free will provides a free-will-based definition of divine decree and predestination, making 'free will' itself one of the manifestations of divine decree and predestination.

This truth is observable in the practical conduct of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali . He was sitting with a group of his companions in the shade of a wall. He noticed the wall was crooked and unstable. To prevent the wall from collapsing on them, He stood up and sat under the shade of another wall. One of His companions told him, “O Commander of the Faithful, are you fleeing from divine decree?” The Imam replied, “I seek refuge in divine predestination from divine decree.” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019*)

The misguided interpretation of that individual was that if the divine decree has destined a person’s death, whether they sit under a crooked and unstable wall or a sturdy one, the wall will collapse, and death will come. Thus, moving and making decisions based on rational judgment is futile. However, Imam Ali through His actions and words, demonstrated the correct understanding of divine decree and predestination, teaching that belief in divine decree not only does not hinder human movement and action but also facilitates and grounds it.

The collapse of a crooked wall is a divine law and decree, corresponding to the specific condition and predestination of that wall, namely its crookedness. However, if the wall has a different characteristic, i.e., if it is sturdy, it will follow a different law and decree. A person who understands these two

predestinations and decrees will make decisions and choose more appropriately.

Imam Ali , fled from divine decree i.e., the death or injury of a person by the wall, towards divine predestination which depends on not fleeing and taking precautions. Therefore, we should not remain indifferent regarding our health or other matters, as fleeing and taking precautions are also among divine predestination. Hence, we must strive for all good deeds and exercise caution in dangerous situations.

Other infallible Imams have also narrated traditions that indicate the close relationship between divine predestination and human free will, describing this relationship as that of the soul and the body. In this respect, Ibn Bābawayh said, “Predestination and action are like the soul and the body. The soul without the body does not move and is not seen, and the body without the soul is a lifeless image. When they come together, they become strong, sound, beautiful, and pleasant. Similarly, if predestination does not align with action, the Creator would not be distinguished from the creation, and if an action does not conform to predestination, it would not proceed and be completed. But through union, they become strong and sound, and God aids His righteous servants in this.” Then he recited the following verse, “... *but Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it seemly in your hearts...*” (*The Qur’an, 49: 7*).

Then he said, “I found the son of Adam between God and Satan. If God loves him, He purifies and selects him, otherwise, He leaves him to his enemy” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019, p. 366*).

This tradition emphasizes that divine decree and predestination in no way cause laziness; rather, action is the executor of predestination, similar to the relationship between the soul and the body. The soul without the body has no movement or perfection, and the body without the soul is dry and perishes. Another point is that just as in the relationship between the soul and the body, the soul is primary, here too, it seems that action is primary, and predestination revolves around action.

In explaining the phrase ‘and God aids His righteous servants in this,’ we can refer to the words of Lady Fatimah al-Zahra , who said, “Whoever sends up to God the purest of his worship, God will send down to him the best of his benefit” (*Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 67, p. 249*).

It is worth mentioning that the Umayyads, including Muawiyah and his son, imposed the ideology of determinism on the people of Sham to expand their power and rule. According to this ideology, they instilled in the people the belief that whatever happens to you is the inevitable will and decree of God, which cannot be contested, and that it is God’s will for us to rule over you!

However, the Commander of the Faithful , in the previously mentioned narration (the fourth narration), provides a clear response to the ideology of determinism and explicitly rejects the deterministic interpretation of divine decree and predestination. In part of this same narration, the Commander of the Faithful, Ali , refers to the Qadariyyah as the Magians of the Ummah and describes the belief in the absolute and necessary divine decree regarding human actions as the words of the brothers of idolaters, the army of Satan, and the enemies of God (*Ṭabarsī, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 209; Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 5, p. 95*).

Thus, divine decree and predestination, and human action are like the soul and the body; without accepting divine decree and predestination, no order is established, and no ground for voluntary action is created.

### **Resolving the Conflict**

In studying these narrations, it is necessary to consider some verses of the Holy Quran. The Quran states, “... *and cast not yourselves to perdition with your own hands...*” (*The Qur’an, 2: 195*).

- Here, some questions arise as follows:
- Are the mentioned cases, such as fighting without proper attire, examples of ‘throwing oneself into destruction?’
  - Does the infallible Imam use knowledge of the unseen in ordinary circumstances, or only in specific cases?
  - Are the instances mentioned in the above narrations examples of ordinary situations?



Some scholars have provided answers to resolve this conflict. The late Majlisī has an interesting explanation. In summary, he suggests that these actions and behaviors might be specific to Ahl al-Bayt since they had prior knowledge that they would not be harmed in such incidents. Eventually, Imam Ali fled from one wall but not from another because He knew the first would collapse and the second would not. Another explanation is that the message of these narrations might negate excessive avoidance of calamities and abandoning obligations due to imaginary or potential harm.

This explanation seems good, but the first possibility is debatable. As previously mentioned, it might be argued that in this ordinary situation, what need is there to use knowledge of the unseen? Does fleeing from a collapsing wall not require the use of knowledge of the unseen? In explaining Imam Hussain's movement towards Kufa, it is usually mentioned that He did not use knowledge of the unseen in this matter but acted according to his duty to fight corruption and oppression.

Hence, if the use of knowledge of the unseen is not mentioned here, it would not apply to the case of the collapsing wall either, and thus not fleeing from such a wall would be an example of 'throwing oneself into destruction,' which is against God's command and not befitting the status of an infallible Imam. However, the second possibility is valid because one

of the teachings of Islam is Jihad and sacrifice, and to create and strengthen such a motive, steps need to be taken, one of which seems to be positive thinking and reducing excessive worry.

Another point that can be included is that perhaps the characteristics of the addressee were also influential in these narrations, as the addressees of these narrations might have been people who had such a trait i.e., being overly fearful to an extreme degree, and the Imam wanted to correct them with this statement and behavior. In summary, a person can escape and find solutions from divine decree, but one cannot escape from divine judgment.

### **Analysis of the Functions of Human Free Will in Lifestyle**

In previous discussions, several of the following questions were raised:

- What is the view of the Ahl al-Bayt on free will?
- How does this theory relate to the concept of free will proposed by some scholars?
- What are the criteria and components of the theory of the 'Middle Path'?
- What role does this theory play in human lifestyle?

In this section, we seek to answer this last question.

Anthropological issues, in addition to their direct impact on Islamic knowledge, also reflect on other matters, highlighting the importance

and necessity of the topic under discussion. Thus, the theory of 'The Middle Path' and the discussion of human free will are no exceptions; they also have significant implications, which have been partially addressed in this writing. However, due to their importance, it is appropriate to reiterate them to clarify their role in lifestyle.

### **Human Free Will and the Meaning of Life**

If humans do not possess free will, the discussion about the meaning of life would be futile and meaningless. A being without free will might have non-volitional perfection and value, but volitional perfection, ethics, and worldly and otherworldly rewards and punishments only make sense for a being that possesses free will.

Through voluntary actions, traits, and dispositions, a person can achieve perfections that make their life valuable. Conversely, an individual who lacks free will whether concerning internal or external actions cannot lead a meaningful life; thus, discussing the meaning of life in such a context would be pointless and absurd. With the futility of life's purpose and meaning, lifestyle also becomes futile because purpose is a fundamental element of lifestyle.

One of the theorists of lifestyle, Adler, writes in this regard, "Human life is guided by specific goals. These goals are not necessarily indicative of reality. They may be imaginary.

Nevertheless, they exert an irresistible force on human actions" (*Mahdavi Kanī, 2008, p. 115*). Therefore, a person with free will can choose a path that makes their life meaningful or meaningless. Thus, the meaning of life and lifestyle find their significance in the light of free will.

### **The Impact of Human Will and Free Will on Human Happiness**

One of the main concerns of humans is to escape from an undesirable current state and reach a desirable yet non-existent state. Based on this inner desire, we realize that Islam, as a natural religion, considers one of the philosophies of human creation to be achieving perfection so that one may attain happiness in both this world and the hereafter.

With the introduction of the issue of free will, one of the questions that arises is whether happiness is voluntary or compulsory. If it is voluntary, why are there narrations from the Infallibles that seem incompatible with the voluntary nature of happiness?

Replying to this question, it should be said that at first glance, some narrations may appear contradictory, but it is necessary to determine whether this contradiction is apparent or established. In some narrations, such an apparent contradiction is observed. For instance, it is narrated by The Prophet, "The wretched is wretched in his mother's womb, and the happy is happy in his mother's womb" (*Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 5, p. 9*).

The meaning of the above narration is not that God creates humans as happy or wretched without free will, but rather the interpretation is that God knows in advance who will become happy through their own free will and who will become wretched.

To interpret it, we refer to the words of Imam Ali, in which He said, “God Almighty knows what is in the wombs - whether male or female, ugly or beautiful, generous or stingy, wretched or happy. This is the knowledge of the unseen that no one knows except God” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 128*).

Additionally, it is narrated by Imam Kazim, “The wretched is one whom God, while still in his mother’s womb, knows will commit the deeds of the wretched. Similarly, the happy is one whom God, while still in his mother’s womb, knows will commit the deeds of the happy and prosperous” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019, p. 356*).

Thus, God Almighty is aware of what is in the wombs, whether it is a boy or a girl, ugly or beautiful, generous or stingy, happy or wretched, and this is the knowledge of the unseen that no one knows but God.

Therefore, God’s eternal knowledge cannot be used as evidence for determinism; knowledge follows the known. Additionally, if we pay attention, we see that the expression in the narration is ‘one who becomes happy,’ indicating human agency in this

matter. This is further explained by Muhammad ‘Abdoh in his commentary on Imam Ali’s statement, “The servant and what he finds within himself as an impetus towards good or evil, and no person finds anything except that his choice drives him to what he does, and God knows him as an agent by his choice: either wretched by it or happy” (*Abdoh, 1995, Vol. 3, p.167*).

#### **Freedom and Self-Respect in Lifestyle**

One of the functions of human free will in lifestyle is freedom. In other words, one of the necessities of human free will is ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty.’

The Almighty God created humans free and independent. Based on the conformity of creation and legislation, humans must maintain this freedom and independence in their behavior. In other words, considering the relationship between ‘is’ and ‘ought,’ a free-willed human must act freely. This is one of the truths observed in the words of Imam Ali. He addressed all humans, saying, “Do not be the slave of others for Allah had made you free” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Letter 31*).

This independence and freedom concern other creatures, not God. Therefore, if someone considers themselves free and independent, they should not become a servant to other creatures in their behavior and decision-making.

Of course, this freedom must be observed throughout one’s lifestyle, not just in relation to other humans but

also in matters concerning oneself. For example, in a lifestyle that consists of a system of behavioral preferences, a person must be able to maintain their freedom and independence in decision-making against emotions and not allow religious beliefs and values to be managed by desires and emotions. In ‘decision-making,’ we calculate benefits and harms. But the question that arises here is whether this calculation is always done correctly. In other words, is it possible that in such a calculation, the place of benefits and harms is swapped?

Given that human behavior is based on thoughts and emotions, the answer to this question seems to be positive because it is possible that due to incorrect thoughts, a person may not correctly identify benefits and harms, or the calculation of benefits and harms may be based on emotions and feelings, not on real and rational benefits and harms. Therefore, the issue of realistic choice arises here. Lifestyle is a type of choice that each person makes based on internal and external conditions or accepts under social pressure. Thus, as it can be created, it can also be changed, and the possibility of creativity always exists (*Kāwiyānī et al, 2019, p. 19*).

By ‘realistic choice,’ we mean a choice and free will based on truths, not on subjective or arbitrary considerations. In other words, it is

based on real benefits and harms or true perfection and deficiency, not on instinctual pleasure or blind social approval. In decision-making, if a person’s criterion is personal taste and desire, such a person acts emotionally, and their choice is not realistic. This person does what they want, and nothing other than this personal desire influences their decision. In contrast, another person bases their decision-making on reason and truths, not on personal taste and desires, which are valid only by their own standards.

Imam Ali said in this regard, “Indeed, God Almighty has endowed angels with intellect without desire, animals with desire without intellect, and humans with both intellect and desire. Therefore, whoever’s intellect prevails over their desire is better than the angels, and whoever’s desire prevails over their intellect is worse than the animals” (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 4*).

In another saying, He stated, “Is there no freeman who can leave this chewed morsel (of the world) to those who like it? Certainly, the only price for yourselves is Paradise. Therefore, do not sell yourself except for Paradise” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 456*).

Thus, based on the principle of freedom, our choice must be realistic. Therefore, one of the outcomes of believing in human free will is freedom and self-respect. In contrast, determinism

leads to a weakened personality. One of the commentators on Nahj al-Balagha writes that the belief in ‘determinism’ leads believers to feel deeply powerless in the presence of God, as they see their fate and actions as entirely predestined. This perception also influences their interactions with others, as determinism essentially denies individual agency and selfhood (*Ref: Bahī, 1991: 119*).

### **Reform Movement in Society**

One of the reflections that can be presented for the theory of human free will and the concept of ‘*al-Amr Bayn al-Amrayn*’ (lit; a theory between the two theories: intermediate position) is the creation of an Islamic society movement to integrate it into the global civilization after centuries of decline. One of the factors of the decline and fall of Islamic society was the incorrect interpretation of *Qadha* and *Qadar* (divine decree) and human free will.

To clarify the matter, it is appropriate to refer to some of the activities of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali . In this regard, His role in reforming society and reviving human freedom and free will can serve as a model for us. One of the activities of Imam Ali in this field was combating the superstitions and excesses of Mu‘āwiyah and his followers. Imam Ali fought against superstitions and the simplistic interpretation of divine decree and believed that it should not be accepted

that humans are subject to a predetermined fate without the possibility of choice (*Ridā, 1917, Vol. 2, p.p 75, 432, & 509*).

As previously mentioned, Imam Ali opposed these ideas and introduced the *Qadariyyah* as Magians and the army of Satan (*Ibn Bābawayh, 2019, p. 380; Kulaynī, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 155*).

After attaining the caliphate, Mu‘āwiyah also used this deterministic belief and the religious perspective of these Muslims for political purposes, using it to justify his actions and respond to the objections and criticisms of the people. He instilled and emphasized that they should be content with his rule, which he claimed was the divine decree, and not complain. In other words, Mu‘āwiyah attributed his rule to the inevitable divine decree and called his actions the will of God (*Ibn Qutaybah, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 171*).

Therefore, the belief in human free will is very influential in reforming lifestyle and society.

### **Principle of Effort and Endeavor**

The theory of free will is so intertwined with the principle of effort and endeavor that it is sometimes referred to as the theory of seriousness and action. ‘*Amr Bayn al-Amrayn*’ is a doctrine of work and seriousness, in which laziness and wasting time are rejected. Imam Ali , and His descendants emphasized this important principle and considered a person’s

value to be dependent on their effort and endeavor. In one of His sayings, He said, “The worth of a man is according to his courage” (*Sharīf al-Raḍī, Wisdom 47*).

The Imams not only invited people to strive and work hard but also practiced it themselves, and this is observable in their practical conduct. For example, one day, Imam Ali was extremely hungry in Medina. He went to the upper parts of the city in search of work and encountered a woman who had gathered some clods of earth. He thought she wanted to soak them in water, so He approached her and agreed to pull water out of a well for her in exchange for one date per bucket. He pulled out sixteen buckets, and His hands blistered. Then He drank some water and went to her, saying His hands were blistered and could no longer pull water out of the well. She counted sixteen dates and gave them to Ali (*Arbalī, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 170; Ḥakīmī, 2007, Vol. 2, p. 400; Majlisī, 2012, Vol. 41, p. 33*). Therefore, He is considered a model and exemplar in work and effort for the Islamic community.

### **Human Free Will and Intellectual Independence**

One of the ways to achieve a pure life and attain happiness in this world and the hereafter is for a person to have freedom of thought and intellect. Blindly following fathers and those around us is not acceptable and may

distance a person from truth and God. Therefore, anyone who seeks happiness in this world and the hereafter must use their free will to save themselves from falling into the pit of imitation and make truth their criterion.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the previously discussed points, we can conclude that:

- Imam Ali explicitly rejects both determinism and delegation, emphasizing the role of human will in actions.
- After rejecting determinism and delegation, a moderate view called *‘Amr Bayn al-Amrayn* is proposed. This theory is a doctrine of work and seriousness, in which laziness and wasting time are rejected. In this view, humans are free but not independent. One of the manifestations of this view is the effort and endeavor to change undesirable conditions and move towards desirable ones. Of course, it is obvious that a believer should not become arrogant about their free will and freedom but should always maintain themselves between the states of fear and hope for divine assistance.
- Another manifestation of free will is the governance of beliefs. A person must strive to preserve their freedom and not allow beliefs and values to be controlled by emotions; rather, emotions and feelings should be controlled by religious beliefs.

- Worthy choices have criteria. One of these criteria is realism, meaning choices should be based on truths, not subjective or arbitrary considerations.
- Imam Ali interprets divine decree in a way that is compatible with human free will. Divine foreknowledge includes the realization of actions along with human free will, and for an action to be voluntary, the will of the agent must be part of the set of causes involved in the thing. Therefore, human free will is also one of the manifestations of divine decree and destiny.
- The relationship between destiny and action is like the relationship between the soul and the body, and without accepting divine decree and destiny, no order is established, and no context for voluntary action is created.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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