

Love And God's Will

Love And God's Will



Muhammad Legenhausen

Al-Islam.org

Article

Authors(s):

[Muhammad Legenhausen](#) [1]

Love And God's Will

Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen

Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen teaches at the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran. His blog can be accessed at:

<http://peacethroughunderstanding.blogspot.com> [2]

Theological controversy was particularly intense with respect to the Divine Will.

Willing something was interpreted as wanting it to come about and issuing a kind of mental order to this effect. But God is free from all wanting and does not undergo changes in mental state.

The theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries after the *Hijra* spoke of a number of Divine attributes. The most important that they mentioned were seven: powerful, living, knowing, hearing, seeing, willing, and speaking. These were divided into attributes of essence and attributes of action.

The attributes of essence are those that are ascribed to God without any consideration of His creatures. The theologians took them to be: powerful, living, and knowing. There was great controversy over the relationship of the attributes and the divine essence (*dhat*). The divine essence is what possesses the attributes, that to which the attributes are ascribed.

Controversy arose because some theologians held that the attributes existed independently of God's essence, and this threatened the doctrine of Tawhid. According to the Shia theologians, Tawhid can be maintained, since all of the divine attributes are identified with the divine essence, and the differences among them are explained as the different ways in which we come to consider the divine essence. When we consider God's knowledge of all visible things, He is called seeing, and this is an attribute of action, because it is only ascribed to God with relation to the visible.

When we consider God's knowledge of all audible things, He is called hearing, and this is an attribute of action, because it is only ascribed to God with relation to the audible. God is said to be knowing, however, whether or not we consider Him along with any of His creatures, for the object of His knowledge includes the divine essence itself. So, seeing and hearing are considered attributes of action while knowing is considered an attribute of essence. Divine seeing, hearing and knowing, however, are not really three distinct entities; they are just different considerations of the divine essence.

This is the sort of position that gradually evolved among the Shia theologians as they considered the

controversies of the nature and attributes of God in the light of the verse of the Qur'an and the narrations handed down through the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon them).

Theological controversy was particularly intense with respect to the divine will. Willing something was interpreted as wanting it to come about and issuing a kind of mental order to this effect. But God is free from all wanting and does not undergo changes in mental state. So, it would seem that the notion of will cannot be applied to God. On the other hand, there are explicit references to God's willing various things in the Qur'an.

Ibn Sina sought to solve the problem by interpreting the divine will as divine knowledge of what is best. Whatever God knows to be the best comes about by virtue of His knowing it, and so, to say that God wills X could be considered as being a way of saying that God knows X to be best.

There are lots of problems with Ibn Sina's solution. Some have argued that this sort of solution is incompatible with the view that God has freedom of will. Some claimed that willing is only possible for temporal entities. Some have also claimed that in Ibn Sina's lost work on Oriental wisdom, he proposed another interpretation of the divine will, but there is no textual proof of this.

In the work of Mulla Sadra, we find an interpretation of Divine Will that differs from what is found in the theologians' works and from the views of philosophers like Ibn Sina.

Mulla Sadra's view of the will is the basis on which Imam Khomeini elaborated his views on the topic in his essay "*Talab wa Iradah*". According to Mulla Sadra, the divine will does not reduce to divine knowledge, but rather to love. Love is attraction, and the divine love is the attraction that the divine essence has intrinsically. Hence, the divine will is in one sense an attribute of essence, since God wills Himself as manifesting Himself to Himself. This is a major theological shift. Divine willing is added to the other three attributes of essence: powerful, living, knowing.

The divine will is free, because it is not coerced by any of the other attributes. God's willing does not reduce to His knowing, or to knowing and being powerful. In another aspect, however, divine willing can be considered an attribute of action if we consider willing to be related to creation. God manifests Himself not only to Himself, but through creation. Imam Khomeini explains: "His self-love necessitates the love of His creation (*athaar*), which is consequent to and contingent upon the former, not independent in itself. The Love of the manifestation of the Essence and its being known is the [Divine] Self-Love, not the love of things [as such]."

With regard to the problem of how God, who is not limited by time, can will that which comes to be in time, the solution is that God eternally wills Himself to become manifest through particulars with various temporal beginnings.

The analysis of divine will proposed by Mulla Sadra and Imam Khomeini is thus characterized by the following theses:

- (1) The divine will is not reducible to other divine attributes.
- (2) The divine will is free in the sense of not being coerced or forced, although it is not arbitrary in the sense that what God wills is good and in accordance with His wisdom.
- (3) The divine will is an attribute of essence insofar as God may be said to be willing because of Self-Love, regardless of creatures; but willing is an attribute of action with regard to His willing what there is in creation.
- (4) We may attribute particular acts of willing to God, but this is only a reflection of how the outcome of divine will appears to us and does not indicate any change or temporality in God.
- (5) God will creation by willing to manifest Himself. This analysis of divine will has two fundamental elements in common with Sufi doctrine:
 - (A) the prominence given to divine love; and (
 - B) the interpretation of creation in terms of manifestation. Mulla Sadra and Imam Khomeini both cite the famous *Hadith al-Qudsi* (which is mentioned by Rumi and other Sufis, although the scholars of narration have raised doubts about its authenticity): "I was a hidden treasure, so I loved to be known, so I created the creation that I may be known."

[Get PDF \[3\]](#) [Get EPUB \[4\]](#) [Get MOBI \[5\]](#)

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/articles/love-and-gods-will-muhammad-legenhausen>

Links

- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/dr-muhammad-legenhausen>
- [2] <http://peacethroughunderstanding.blogspot.com>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/118667>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/118667>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/118667>