

Analysis of the Efficacy of Supplication from the Perspective of Mīr Dāmād, with Special Emphasis on His Theory of Divine Decree (Qaḍā') and Determination (Qadar)

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Abstract

Supplication (du'ā') constitutes one of the most significant means through which human beings establish a relationship with God. Indeed, Islamic traditions describe it as "the weapon of the believer." Mīr Dāmād, as a leading Peripatetic philosopher, addressed this subject in several of his works, most notably *al-Qabasāt* and *Nibrās al-Diyā'*, seeking to resolve the philosophical challenges associated with supplication. Employing a descriptive-analytical method, the present study investigates two principal questions: first, whether supplication, according to Mīr Dāmād, can alter the Divine Decree and Divine Determination; and second, what conditions and impediments govern the efficacy of supplication. The findings demonstrate that Mīr Dāmād considers the Divine Decree to be immutable with respect to supplication, since Divine Decree pertains to the Divine Knowledge and the Intelligible World, both of which are exempt from change. By contrast, Determination pertains to the material realm and may therefore be modified through supplication. In explaining the efficacy of supplication, Mīr Dāmād relies upon his distinctive cosmological framework, which distinguishes among the three ontological orders of Eternality (Sarmad), Perpetuity (Dahr), and Temporal Time (Zamān), and interprets the doctrine of *Badā'* within this same metaphysical structure. Furthermore, he identifies the individual's ontological preparedness as the fundamental condition for the acceptance of supplication, maintaining that even if a person does not verbally express a request, the Exalted God grants it in accordance with that person's existential capacity and preparedness.

Keywords: supplication; efficacy of supplication; *Badā'*; Divine Decree; Divine Determination; Mīr Dāmād.

1. Introduction

By virtue of humanity's intrinsic existential poverty, the human being is utterly dependent upon the Exalted God and therefore requires a means through which this dependence may be expressed and a relationship with the Divine established. From a metaphysical perspective, the human being is, in relation to its Cause, nothing but pure relational dependence (*'ayn al-rabṭ*); indeed, at the level of its very essence, it is identical with need and dependence upon its ontological

Cause. Moreover, this essential dependence is operative not only in the coming-to-be of creatures but equally in their continued existence (Şafaei Aşl, 2023: 19).

Supplication represents one of the principal channels through which human beings communicate with God, a practice that receives particular emphasis throughout both the Qur'ān and the Prophetic and Imamic traditions. Accessible alike to ordinary believers and scholars, sinners and the pious, supplication is at once simple in practice and profound in its philosophical and theological implications. Throughout the history of Islamic philosophy, philosophers have sought to explain the nature of supplication and resolve the conceptual difficulties surrounding it. Among the most enduring questions is how the efficacy of supplication can be reconciled with Divine Decree and Divine Determination. Put differently, if God possesses eternal foreknowledge of all beings, their actions, and every event that occurs, how can supplication alter the course of events or transform a person's destiny? In response to such questions, which have occupied the minds of thinkers since antiquity, Muslim scholars have proposed diverse solutions in accordance with their respective intellectual traditions.

Mīr Dāmād is among the philosophers who devoted considerable attention to these issues. Drawing upon the works of earlier philosophers—particularly Ibn Sīnā—while simultaneously extending and refining their analyses, he developed an original account of the philosophical foundations of supplication. His discussions encompass the relationship between supplication and Divine Decree and Determination, the role of the soul's ontological preparedness in the acceptance of supplication, the conditions and impediments governing its efficacy, and the connection between supplication and the doctrine of *Badā'*. Employing his distinctive cosmological framework, especially his tripartite division of reality into the ontological realms of Eternality, Perpetuity, and Temporal Time, he sought to formulate a novel explanation of the relationship between the human being and the Creator through supplication. At the same time, he frequently adopted established Peripatetic principles and drew extensively upon the analyses of Ibn Sīnā.

From a lexical perspective, *du'ā'* denotes calling upon, invoking, or summoning someone (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, 5:267; Ibn Fāris, n.d., 2:297). Technically, the term retains a close affinity with its lexical meaning and signifies an expression of need and petition by a servant before God. Such a petition may be offered with the intention of obtaining a response and the fulfillment of a need, or it may simply consist of invoking God without any explicit expectation of response or the satisfaction of a particular request. According to 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, neither petition nor divine response constitutes an essential element of supplication, although both may function as its purpose or completion (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1990, 11:317).

Employing a descriptive-analytical approach, the present study seeks to answer the following questions: How does Mīr Dāmād conceive the relationship between supplication and the Divine Decree and Divine Determination? What conditions and prerequisites govern the efficacy of supplication, and what factors prevent its acceptance? Finally, what role does Mīr Dāmād's tripartite cosmological scheme play in providing a philosophical explanation of supplication?

In addressing these questions, Mīr Dāmād endeavors to formulate an account that harmonizes revealed religion (*sharī'ah*) with philosophical wisdom (*ḥikmah*). It is for this reason that, in his *Nibrās al-Diyā' wa Taswīyat al-Sawā' fī Sharḥ Bāb al-Badā' wa Ithbāt Jadwā al-Du'ā'*, a work specifically devoted to examining the relationship between supplication, Divine Decree, and the doctrine of *Badā'*, he first presents the traditions concerning *Badā'* and subsequently attempts to provide a rational explanation capable of reconciling belief in the alteration of human destiny with God's eternal foreknowledge and His Divine Decree and Determination. Likewise, in *al-Qabasāt*, he revisits Ibn Sīnā's discussions of these issues and seeks, through both Peripatetic philosophical principles and his own distinctive cosmological framework, to resolve the philosophical difficulties surrounding supplication.

1.1. Literature Review

Although numerous studies have examined supplication and its conceptual foundations, only a limited number have approached the subject from the perspectives of Islamic philosophy and theology. Among the most significant are:

(a) “The Influence of Supplication upon the Order of Creation from the Perspective of Three Philosophers (Ibn Sīnā, Mullā Ṣadrā, and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī),” by ‘Alī Muḥammad Sājidī and Fāṭimah Zārī’ (*Religious Thought*, Winter 2015, no. 53). This study examines issues such as the relationship between supplication, Divine Decree and Determination, and Divine Knowledge, while comparing the views of Ibn Sīnā, Mullā Ṣadrā, and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī.

(b) “The Relationship between the Efficacy of Supplication, Miracles, and the Principle of Causality According to the Commentators on Transcendent Philosophy,” by Fāṭimah Ra’fatī and Ḥasan Ibrāhīmī (*Analytical Philosophy*, Spring–Summer 2015, no. 25). This article is confined to the views of Mullā Ṣadrā and later commentators within the school of Transcendent Philosophy.

(c) “The Mystical Dimensions of Supplication in *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*,” by Maḥdī Ibrāhīmī (*Religious Thought*, Winter 2005, no. 13).

(d) “The Position of Supplication and Invocation in Avicennian Cosmology,” by Fāṭimah Sulaymānī Darah Bāghī (*Avicennian Wisdom*, Autumn–Winter 2013, no. 48).

(e) “A Philosophical Elucidation of Answered Supplication Based on the Model of Exploratory Response,” by Vaḥīdah Fakhkhār Nūghānī and Amīr Rāstīn Ṭuruqī (*Journal of Philosophy of Religion*, Autumn–Winter 2024, vol. 21, no. 2).

As this survey demonstrates, no independent study has thus far been devoted specifically to Mīr Dāmād's theory of supplication. Furthermore, a review of the dissertations and theses registered in the IranDoc database reveals no academic work dedicated either to Mīr Dāmād's treatment of supplication or to a comparative study of his views alongside those of other Islamic philosophers.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Given Mīr Dāmād's distinctive philosophical principles within the Peripatetic tradition—principles that substantially shape his understanding of supplication—and considering the absence of any independent study devoted to his views on this subject, a comprehensive investigation of supplication and its related philosophical issues is both necessary and timely. Accordingly, this article first examines the relationship between supplication and Divine Decree and Determination before proceeding to analyze the philosophical conditions governing the efficacy of supplication.

2. The Relationship between Supplication and Divine Decree and Divine Determination

Lexically, *Divine Decree* denotes judgment, decisive determination, command, creation, action, adjudication, and the completion of an affair (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, 15:187; Ibn al-Athīr, 1988, 4:78). According to ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, its comprehensive meaning is necessity and definitiveness, to which all other lexical senses ultimately return (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1990, 13:72). *Determination*, by contrast, literally signifies measurement, determination, or the assignment of proportion (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1991, 1:658).

Mīr Dāmād classifies both *Divine Decree* and *Determination* into two categories: Epistemic (‘ilmī) and Ontological (‘aynī) (Mīr Dāmād, 2012:634). By Epistemic Divine Decree, he means God's comprehensive and undifferentiated knowledge of all things insofar as this knowledge constitutes the cause of their existence (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:416). This position differs from that of the Peripatetic philosophers, who identified Divine Knowledge itself with *Divine Decree*. Mīr Dāmād argues that the concept of knowledge is not identical with that of *Divine Decree*, since the latter possesses a distinct ontological status. Moreover, *Divine Decree* pertains to knowledge in a universal and undifferentiated mode, whereas *Determination* concerns differentiated and detailed determination. Knowledge as such cannot properly be described by either of these modalities; consequently, *Divine Decree* and Divine Knowledge are conceptually distinct (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:417).

Ontological *Divine Decree* refers to the existence of beings within the realm of Perpetuity; more specifically, it designates the existence of immaterial intelligible substances in that ontological domain. *Determination* is likewise divided into epistemic and ontological forms. Epistemic *Determination* denotes God's detailed and gradual knowledge of things insofar as this knowledge serves as the cause of their coming into existence (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:416), whereas ontological *Determination* refers to the external realization of contingent beings and temporal events within the material world (Mīr Dāmād, 2012:633). Accordingly, ontological *Divine Decree* and *Determination* exist outside the Divine Essence as its effects, while their epistemic counterparts belong to the level of Divine Knowledge and therefore pertain to the Divine Essence itself.

At first glance, supplication appears to alter the Divine Decree by changing what had already been determined. However, a careful reading of Mīr Dāmād's writings reveals a markedly different understanding. He regards supplication as a tributary flowing from the vast river of Divine Decree and Determination. The relationship between supplication and the realization of human aspirations

resembles that between mental conceptions and their actual realization in the external world (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:452). Consequently, there exists no contradiction between supplication and Divine Decree; rather, supplication itself constitutes an integral component of the Divine Decree and serves as one of the causes through which human destiny and the course of Divine Determination are realized.

Since ontological *Divine Decree* and *Determination* ultimately derive from their epistemic counterparts, the apparent tension between the efficacy of supplication and Divine Decree must ultimately be examined in relation to Divine Knowledge. Furthermore, because any discussion of change in Divine Knowledge inevitably raises the doctrine of *Badā'*, the philosophical reconciliation between answered supplication and Divine Decree can only be understood through a proper analysis of *Badā'*.

2.1. *Badā'*

Lexically, *Badā'* signifies "appearance after concealment" (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1991, 1:113), a notion that naturally implies some form of change. According to Mīr Dāmād, four conditions must be satisfied for *Badā'* to occur: (1) the action first commanded and subsequently prohibited must be one and the same; (2) both commands must concern the attainment of a single objective; (3) the command and its withdrawal must pertain to the same temporal context; and (4) both directives must be addressed to the same individual (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:41).

Muslim scholars have interpreted *Badā'* in various ways. Some have regarded it as implying change in Divine Knowledge (al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, 1984, 1:116), while others maintain that the change concerns not God's knowledge but the object known (Ṣadūq, 1993:429). A third group argues that alteration occurs only within the Preserved Tablet of Erasure and Confirmation, such that its attribution to God is merely figurative (al-Majlisī, 1983, 2:131). Others contend that the change exists solely in the knowledge of human beings or angels (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 6:395).

Mīr Dāmād adopts a distinctive interpretation. Just as abrogation (*naskh*) in revealed law signifies the termination of the period during which a legal ruling remains operative, *Badā'* in the ontological order signifies the termination of the continuation of a cosmic event; that is, every created reality possesses an existence limited to a particular temporal span (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:56). Accordingly, if supplication—or another factor such as almsgiving—appears to alter a person's destiny, this does not indicate a change in Divine Knowledge. Rather, the change itself had already been eternally encompassed within Divine Knowledge, and the external cause merely discloses to us what had always been known by God.

To clarify this point, it is necessary to consider Mīr Dāmād's distinctive cosmological doctrine, according to which reality is divided into three ontological orders: Eternality, Perpetuity, and Temporal Time. Material beings exist within the domain of temporal time, intelligible substances inhabit the realm of Perpetuity, while God Most High together with His Divine Names and

Attributes transcends both within the order of Eternality. These three ontological realms are hierarchically ordered, each higher realm encompassing those beneath it (Mīr Dāmād, 2002, 1:9).

Corresponding to this ontological hierarchy, Mīr Dāmād also distinguishes three levels of Divine Knowledge. Elsewhere, however, he describes these levels in terms of the Divine Essence, the Pen or First Intellect, the Preserved Tablet, the Tablet of Erasure and Confirmation, and the Manifest Book (Mīr Dāmād, 2002, 1:198).

Within this framework, *Badā'* can occur neither in the realm of Eternality nor in the realm of Perpetuity; it is confined exclusively to the material world, whose defining characteristic is temporality. The Divine Essence is absolutely exempt from every form of alteration, and since Divine Knowledge belongs to God's essential attributes, it likewise admits no change. Similarly, the immaterial intelligibles inhabiting the realm of Perpetuity possess fixed and immutable existence. Change presupposes potentiality and ontological preparedness, neither of which exists within that realm (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:56).

Accordingly, Mīr Dāmād categorically denies the occurrence of any alteration within Divine Knowledge itself. Change and *Badā'* pertain exclusively to the level of Divine action and are therefore realized only within the material order. In other words, *Badā'* takes place at the level of *Determination*. Once a determination has reached the stage of definitive *Divine Decree*, the possibility of *Badā'* no longer exists. It is for this reason that certain traditions state: "When the Decree has been irrevocably executed, there is no *Badā'*." (al-Kulaynī, 1984, 1:149)

According to Mīr Dāmād's interpretation of this tradition, although the stage of determination is prior to material realization insofar as it functions as the final cause, in the order of external existence *Divine Decree* precedes *Determination*. Since an effect cannot fail to follow from its complete cause, it is likewise impossible for what has been definitively decreed to fail to be realized through *Determination* (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:81).

With regard to traditions that appear to describe changes in Divine Decree and Determination, Mīr Dāmād argues that God may originally have attached the realization of a particular event to specific conditions. Consequently, when those conditions change, the realization of the event may be postponed until the appropriate circumstances are fulfilled, at which point its occurrence becomes necessary. This principle explains traditions concerning the postponement of death or the extension of one's lifespan through supplication or maintaining ties of kinship (*ṣilat al-raḥim*). God eternally knows both possibilities: one conditioned upon the fulfillment of a particular circumstance—such as extending one's life through maintaining family ties—and the other considered independently of that condition (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:40).

Consequently, even when alteration occurs within the temporal world—or, according to certain traditions, within the Tablet of Erasure and Confirmation—Divine Knowledge itself remains entirely unchanged. Rather, God's eternal knowledge encompasses these changes precisely as conditioned events. Nothing changes within the Preserved Tablet, which represents

the immutable level of Divine Knowledge. Hence, the "appearance after concealment" that constitutes *Badā'* occurs only for those who lack access to the Preserved Tablet. Neither God Himself nor those granted access to this immutable level of knowledge ever experience *Badā'*.

For this reason, Mīr Dāmād maintains that the philosophical problem of answered supplication cannot be understood apart from the doctrine of *Badā'*. Until *Badā'* is properly explained, neither the efficacy of supplication nor the apparent alterations in Divine Decree can be adequately understood. This, he suggests, underlies the famous tradition declaring that:

"God has not been worshipped through anything like *Badā'*." (al-Kulaynī, 1984, 1:146)

The emphasis placed upon this doctrine may be explained by the fact that genuine worship presupposes belief in *Badā'*; without such belief, authentic worship cannot be fully realized. Mullā Ṣadrā likewise argues in his commentary on *al-Kāfī* that belief in *Badā'* prevents the servant from fully comprehending the divine wisdom underlying human actions, thereby rendering worship more complete and sincere (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1987, 4:196). It may also be argued that the exceptional merit attributed to *Badā'* derives from its transmission through the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt. Since acceptance of deeds is fundamentally dependent upon devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt, acceptance of the doctrine of *Badā'* likewise signifies acceptance of their authority, which precedes every other act of worship.

2.2. Critical Evaluation

According to Mīr Dāmād, neither differentiation nor gradual realization has any place at the level of Divine Decree; rather, both pertain exclusively to the level of Divine Determination. Since epistemic *Divine Decree* and *Determination* derive from Divine Knowledge, which is identical with the Divine Essence (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:418), his account rests upon a particular metaphysical understanding of existence and quiddity.

Unlike Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Dāmād maintains that *existence (wujūd)* possesses merely a verbal or infinitival significance and is posterior to quiddity (*māhiyyah*), becoming actual only through the act of divine bestowal (*ja' l*). Accordingly, quiddity is brought into being through simple creation (*al-ja' l al-basīṭ*) and constitutes the primary object of Divine Knowledge. On this view, God first knows quiddities, after which creation occurs. Quiddities are thus eternally present before God, and the creative act is directed toward them.

This metaphysical position was fundamentally challenged by Mīr Dāmād's student, Mullā Ṣadrā, through his doctrine of the Primacy of Existence (*Aṣālat al-Wujūd*). Mullā Ṣadrā argued that the divine act of creation pertains to existence rather than quiddity, with quiddity constituting merely the shadow or mental abstraction of existence (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 1:340; 1982:36).

Mīr Dāmād further maintains that Divine Decree is entirely immune from *Badā'*. Nevertheless, certain traditions divide *Divine Decree* itself into definitive and non-definitive forms

and explicitly describe supplication as capable of averting Divine Decree (al-Kulaynī, 1984, 2:469). This apparent tension seems to arise from Mīr Dāmād's identification of epistemic *Divine Decree* with God's essential knowledge and ontological *Divine Decree* with the intelligible realm. Such a philosophical mapping of scriptural terminology onto his cosmological system may not always be warranted, particularly since the Qur'ānic and ḥadīth literature occasionally employs *Divine Decree* and *Determination* interchangeably and classifies each into definitive and non-definitive forms (Miṣbāḥ, 1984:450).

Moreover, Mīr Dāmād's denial of *Badā'* within the realm of Perpetuity rests upon the premise that this ontological order is entirely devoid of potentiality and preparedness (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:56). Yet this conclusion appears difficult to reconcile with traditions that speak of non-definitive Divine Decree. A possible resolution may be found by reconsidering the relationship between potentiality (*quwwah*) and actuality (*fi 'l*). Instead of regarding them as mutually exclusive opposites, one may understand them as different degrees of a single reality. In this perspective, potentiality becomes a relative concept: a thing may be actual in comparison with a previous stage while remaining potential with respect to a higher degree of perfection (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2007:439).

Under such an interpretation, potentiality and actuality are related through gradation (*tashkīk*) rather than absolute opposition. Their difference is therefore grounded in an underlying ontological unity. Consequently, motion—which consists in the transition from potentiality to actuality—does not necessarily require two completely distinct ontological states but may instead occur within a single graded reality. This interpretation opens the possibility of change even in ontological realms superior to the material world and thereby offers a means of reconciling traditions concerning non-definitive *Divine Decree* with the immutability traditionally attributed to the realm of Perpetuity.

Another noteworthy point concerns Mīr Dāmād's explanation of *Badā'* through his tripartite cosmology. On the one hand, he seeks to restrict "appearance after concealment" exclusively to the material realm. On the other hand, he defines *Badā'* so broadly that virtually every extraordinary alteration occurring within the material world falls under its scope (Mīr Dāmād, 1995:118). Such a definition would appear to include even the miracles of the prophets.

Furthermore, certain traditions—such as the account of Prophet Jesus' foretelling that a wedding celebration would become a funeral procession (al-Majlisī, 1983, 4:94)—seem to derive from realities belonging to higher ontological realms rather than merely the material order. One might attempt to resolve this difficulty by attributing Jesus' knowledge to the Tablet of Erasure and Confirmation and associating this tablet with the Imaginal World (*'Ālam al-Mithāl*), where determinations are still connected to the properties of material existence. However, unlike Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Dāmād does not recognize an independent Imaginal World situated between the intelligible and material realms. Consequently, this solution is unavailable within his philosophical system, and the difficulty remains unresolved.

Finally, Mīr Dāmād's analogy between *Badā'* and legal abrogation (*naskh*) appears open to criticism. *Badā'* may occur not only within the ontological order but also, in certain instances,

within the legislative order—for example, God's initial command to Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son. *Naskh*, by contrast, pertains exclusively to legal rulings. Moreover, the abrogating and abrogated rulings belong to different temporal contexts, whereas *Badā'* concerns the alteration of one and the same concrete reality. The unity involved in *naskh* is generic and admits multiplicity, while the unity involved in *Badā'* is numerical and individual. A further distinction lies in the fact that *Badā'* concerns Divine actions, whereas *naskh* pertains to legal obligations governing human conduct (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, 1987, 4:184).

3. The Efficacy of Supplication

Mīr Dāmād maintains that a supplication uttered through the language of ontological preparedness is invariably answered. The language of one's existential state, he argues, is more eloquent than verbal expression, and the discourse of the heart speaks more truthfully than articulated speech. In support of this claim, he cites the Qur'ānic verse: "There is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise." (Qur'ān 17:44)

He consequently warns that those who remember God should ensure that their inward state corresponds to their outward speech. Supplication and remembrance attain acceptance only when they arise from one's genuine existential condition and inner preparedness. Whenever one's inward disposition accords with one's spoken words, the desired objective is attained. Indeed, even if the tongue remains silent while one's existential state itself "speaks," such a supplication suffices for acceptance, although the coincidence of both inward state and outward expression represents the more perfect form of supplication. Conversely, if a person verbally requests something for which he or she lacks the corresponding ontological preparedness, mere verbal petition is of no avail (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:458).

Accordingly, the greater the ontological preparedness and proximity possessed by contingent beings, the more receptive they become to Divine effusion (*ḥayḍ*) and generosity. On the part of God there exists neither withholding nor miserliness. In other words, no distinction exists, from the standpoint of Divine generosity, between prayers that are answered and those that are not. The sole determining factor is whether the individual possesses the existential capacity to receive that particular manifestation of Divine grace. Divine agency is therefore perfect and complete, while the obstacle preventing the fulfillment of certain prayers lies entirely in the inadequacy of the recipient's own preparedness:

*Within every atom Your grace displayed the beauty it deserved;
The fault was never Yours—the mirror of our being was tarnished.*
(Mīr Dāmād, 1988:52)

Nevertheless, Mīr Dāmād emphasizes that not every supplication—even one issuing from a sincere inward state—necessarily receives an immediate response. Acceptance may be prevented by the absence of one or more essential conditions or by the presence of certain impediments. Such instances, however, do not diminish Divine generosity in the least.

To substantiate this point, he cites a tradition narrated from Imām al-Riḍā (A.S.). When asked about the meaning of God's attribute al-Jawād ("the Generous"), the Imām replied that, with respect to human beings, generosity consists in giving what one is obliged to give. With respect to God, however, generosity remains perfect whether He grants or withholds. He bestows upon worthy of receiving and withholds from those who lack the requisite worthiness (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:53). Thus, worthiness and unworthiness pertain solely to the recipient rather than to the Giver. No deficiency exists in the Divine Bestower; consequently, the attribute of Divine generosity can never be denied of God.

Following the Peripatetic tradition, Mīr Dāmād further maintains that the celestial souls and separate intellects possess knowledge of the particulars of the material world and that God, as Creator of all these ontological levels, knows particulars through the mediation of these intellects (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:455).

On this basis, he raises a classical philosophical question. Since human supplication itself constitutes one of the causes through which events come into existence, what purpose does prayer serve if Divine Decree has not already encompassed the servant's request? Conversely, if Divine Decree has already included the servant's supplication, why should the servant exert himself in prayer at all?

Rejecting the second formulation of the dilemma, Mīr Dāmād argues that the servant's request is itself included within Divine Decree and Determination and constitutes one of the conditions necessary for the realization of the decreed event. Whenever God has decreed the fulfillment of a particular objective, the servant's supplication forms an integral part of the complete causal order leading to that objective. Should the servant refrain from praying, one of the indispensable conditions of the event would be absent, and the intended outcome would therefore fail to occur (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:51).

Everything realized according to Divine Decree is thus preceded by the realization of its causes and conditions. Human striving, inward aspiration, and supplication are genuine constituents of the Divine causal order. Prayer is therefore not external to destiny but one of the divinely ordained means through which destiny itself is accomplished. It is for this reason that humble entreaty before God plays such a decisive role in removing hardships and facilitating the realization of human aspirations, enabling the individual to attain the fullest possible preparedness for receiving Divine grace:

*By the blessed tears of the infant, milk is drawn from its mother;
Seek the answer to prayers through the grace of tearful eyes.*
(Mīr Dāmād, 1988:51)

Mīr Dāmād proceeds to explain that even the causes leading one to supplicate ultimately arise through a combination of external conditions and internal volition. External circumstances belong to the order of nature, while volition originates within the human soul and is itself a temporal event.

By the principle that every originated thing requires a cause, human volition likewise demands an explanation. This does not entail an infinite regress of successive acts of willing. Rather, human volitions arise under the influence of terrestrial and celestial factors (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:455). Yet this should not be understood to mean that human willing is wholly determined by external causes or reduced to the necessary will of God, for such an interpretation would render human beings compelled and eliminate genuine freedom (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:473).

Accordingly, human supplication proceeds from the conjunction of external preparations and inward volition. External circumstances may direct the individual toward turning to God in prayer, although such outward stimuli are not always necessary. At times, the individual's intrinsic awareness of existential poverty and need alone is sufficient to give rise to sincere supplication.

3.1. Conditions for the Acceptance of Supplication

According to Mīr Dāmād, purified souls possess the capacity, through supplication, to exert influence upon the elemental constituents of the material world, and these elements respond to their volition. Such influence constitutes one manifestation of the efficacy of supplication. He illustrates this principle by noting that a merely imagined object may produce observable physiological changes within the human body, demonstrating the soul's power over its own corporeal constitution. In certain instances, however, the soul extends its influence beyond its own body, affecting other souls and external realities. Nevertheless, the efficacy of supplication should not always be attributed to the intrinsic power of the soul itself. Rather, it ultimately derives from the First Principles, provided that the objective sought by the supplicant accords with the universal order of creation (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:453).

This account gives rise to an important philosophical objection. If the acceptance of supplication ultimately depends upon the celestial principles, and if the celestial realm stands in a causal relationship to the terrestrial world, how can the higher cause be affected by the prayer of a lower effect?

Mīr Dāmād responds by insisting that the causal hierarchy between the celestial and terrestrial realms remains entirely intact. A cause is never acted upon by its own effect. Consequently, the acceptance of supplication does not imply that the higher realities become influenced by lower ones. Rather, since both the celestial and terrestrial orders derive from a higher common Cause, the realization of a prayer through the mediation of celestial beings does not entail that those beings themselves are passively affected by earthly supplication (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:452).

In explaining this point, Mīr Dāmād adopts Ibn Sīnā's formulation: God is both the cause of the existence of the supplicant and the cause of the supplicant's very act of supplication. At the same time, the supplicant's prayer serves as the occasion upon which God knows the servant's request—that is, the supplicant functions as the occasion for the manifestation of Divine Knowledge concerning that particular prayer. This, however, does not imply that the servant exerts any causal influence upon God. The true efficient cause remains God alone, while the supplicant

merely occupies an ordained position within the divinely established causal order (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:454). Therefore, given that the higher intellects and souls merely serve as intermediaries through which divine effusion reaches human beings, rather than being affected by human supplications in the material world, it can be argued that Mīr Dāmād regards supplication as a partial cause (*juz' al-'illa*): its presence is necessary, but it is not sufficient in itself. In other words, the mere willing of the higher intellects and souls does not suffice for the acceptance of a supplication; the human being must also articulate his or her request. Conversely, the mere articulation of the request is not sufficient either; divine determination must also be directed toward its acceptance.

Mīr Dāmād further maintains that one of the essential conditions for the acceptance of supplication is the supplicant's certainty (*yaqīn*) that the prayer will be answered. This principle underlies numerous Islamic traditions. For example, it is reported that whoever performs the Friday prayer with genuine faith will have all sins forgiven, and whoever fasts during the month of Ramaḍān with sincere belief shall be assured of Paradise. Likewise, the traditions repeatedly warn believers never to regard any act of worship or any sin as insignificant. God has concealed His pleasure within acts of obedience; therefore, no act of worship should ever be neglected, for Divine good pleasure may reside precisely therein. Similarly, He has concealed His wrath within acts of disobedience; consequently, no sin should be treated lightly, for Divine displeasure may accompany that very act (Mīr Dāmād, 2001:383).

As noted earlier, however, certainty itself presupposes a more fundamental condition—namely, the individual's ontological preparedness. Indeed, certainty may ultimately be regarded as one expression of such preparedness. The person who truly possesses the existential capacity to receive Divine grace naturally prays with complete confidence, free from hesitation or doubt.

Another important condition for the acceptance of supplication is the visitation of sacred places and the tombs of the Friends of God. Human souls differ in nobility according to the degree of knowledge and perfection they have attained. Some souls ascend to such a level of intellectual and spiritual perfection that they become comparable to the Active Intellect. After separating from their earthly bodies, these perfected souls remain eternally among the blessed souls and separate intellects inhabiting the higher ontological realms, where they continue to exercise influence in a manner analogous to the celestial intellects.

Although death terminates the soul's governing relation to the body, it does not entirely sever the soul's connection with it. Since bodily matter persists through the successive transformations of form, the soul retains an enduring relation to its body, a relation that ultimately grounds the possibility of bodily resurrection. It is precisely this continuing bond that explains why visiting the graves of God's saints becomes a means of receiving Divine grace and attracting spiritual blessings (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:455).

The purpose of visiting the saints and offering supplication at their shrines is that the soul of the visitor may seek assistance from these perfected souls in acquiring goodness and felicity or in

repelling evil and harm. Through this encounter, the soul of the pilgrim acquires a greater likeness to the separate intellects and thereby becomes more receptive to their spiritual assistance and illumination (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:456).

The degree of Divine assistance varies according to the spiritual condition of the supplicant. For example, when the body's temperament is balanced, the soul is better able to receive spiritual aid. Likewise, places in which believers gather—such as the Sacred House of God or the shrines of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.)—possess a unique spiritual atmosphere. In such places, human minds become purified, thoughts attain greater concentration, and hearts acquire increased receptivity. Mīr Dāmād likens this phenomenon to polished mirrors that reflect and intensify the rays of light. Under these conditions, souls become more fully prepared to receive spiritual effusion. Similarly, detachment from worldly preoccupations and wholehearted attention to spiritual realities strengthen the soul's connection with the higher realms and facilitate the reception of complete Divine assistance (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:457).

3.2. Causes of the Non-Acceptance of Supplication

Mīr Dāmād identifies several reasons why a supplication may remain unanswered. First, the prayer may not originate from the language of ontological preparedness. Second, the request itself may be incompatible with the universal order of existence and the divine wisdom governing creation. In other cases, the absence of the necessary conditions or causes prevents the prayer from being answered. It is also possible that the supplication has not been offered in the proper manner. A prayer may be expressed incorrectly, even though the supplicant's inward intention is sincere. Furthermore, a supplication may indeed be accepted, yet the manifestation of its effects may be deferred to a later time. Mīr Dāmād cites the Qur'ānic verse addressed to Moses and Aaron: "Your prayer has been answered." (Qur'ān 10:89) Although God declared their supplication accepted, its external realization occurred only forty years later.

In other instances, Divine wisdom transforms the object of the supplication into something more beneficial for the believer. A request that is not ultimately in the supplicant's best interest may be replaced by a greater reward, the fulfillment of which is reserved for the Hereafter. Finally, the postponement or apparent rejection of a prayer may itself constitute a form of divine trial (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:459).

Mīr Dāmād also makes a subtle theological observation regarding Divine punishment. Even punishment, he argues, is itself an expression of Divine mercy, since it purifies the sinner in the intermediate state (*barzakh*) and on the Day of Resurrection. Divine punishment should never be understood as satisfying anger or vengeance, for such human emotions are utterly incompatible with the Divine Essence. God's mercy always precedes His wrath. Nevertheless, believers should not become complacent on account of this all-encompassing mercy, for Divine chastisement, itself an expression of mercy, may still encompass them. In this context, Mīr Dāmād cites the well-known tradition:

"These I created for Paradise, and I do not mind; and these I created for Hellfire, and I do not mind."

Accordingly, every human being ought to strive continually for self-purification so as to become worthy of Divine blessings rather than Divine punishment (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:460).

3.3. Critical Evaluation

With respect to the voluntary character of supplication and human willing, a number of philosophers have argued that Mīr Dāmād's account fails to overcome the problem of determinism (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 6:390). Since volition is a real existential attribute, it must itself possess a cause. That cause must either consist in another act of willing originating within the soul or in an external factor acting upon it.

The first alternative leads to an infinite regress, since every act of willing would require another preceding act of willing ad infinitum. The second alternative appears equally problematic because it renders human volition the product of external determination, thereby resulting in determinism (Imām Khomeinī, 2000:48).

This objection, however, applies only if volition is regarded as an independently existing reality. Mīr Dāmād explicitly states that the multiplicity of successive volitions is merely conceptual and mentally constructed rather than ontologically real (Mīr Dāmād, 1988:474). Human beings possess only one genuine volition, which can subsequently be analyzed into multiple conceptual stages. Once the mind ceases to perform this analytical division, only a single act of willing remains.

Nevertheless, this clarification does not entirely resolve the philosophical difficulty. If the analytically distinguished acts of willing are themselves real, the problem of infinite regress reappears; if they are merely conceptual, then purely conceptual entities cannot produce real external effects. Consequently, Mīr Dāmād's explanation does not fully account for the voluntary character of human willing.

A similar difficulty arises concerning the influence of perfected souls upon higher ontological realms. Although the human soul, through purification and spiritual perfection, may acquire all the perfections possessed by the separate intellects, it nevertheless remains an effect and never ceases to be ontologically dependent upon them. The intellects therefore continue to retain causal priority and ontological superiority over the soul.

The perfections found in the separate intellects exist essentially (*bi'l-dhāt*), whereas those possessed by the human soul exist only derivatively (*bi'l-ghayr*). Put differently, the perfections of the intellects are entirely independent of the soul, while every perfection found in the soul depends upon the intellects. Mīr Dāmād's position may be illustrated by the analogy of sunlight reflected in a mirror. The mirror truly possesses light, warmth, and the other qualities of sunlight, yet it possesses them only through its dependence upon the sun. Similarly, the human soul may manifest

all the perfections of the separate intellects, but every one of those perfections derives from them, whereas the intellects possess their perfections independently of the soul.

Although this explanation successfully accounts for the resemblance between perfected human souls and the separate intellects by distinguishing between essential and derivative perfection, it still fails to explain how souls possessing only derivative perfections could influence higher ontological realms through supplication. More importantly, it does not fully explain how supplication could affect Divine Decree itself, whose ultimate foundation lies in Divine Knowledge.

Mīr Dāmād's own solution, however, is to deny that supplication alters Divine Decree from outside. Rather, supplication itself constitutes one of the elements included within Divine Decree and Divine Determination. In other words, the servant's prayer forms one component of the complete cause through which the divinely ordained event comes to realization.

4. Conclusion

Mīr Dāmād explains the philosophical nature of supplication and its acceptance through several interconnected metaphysical principles. Foremost among these is the doctrine of ontological preparedness. According to his view, whenever an individual possesses the existential capacity to receive Divine grace, that grace will inevitably be bestowed, whether explicitly requested or not. Conversely, if such preparedness is lacking, Divine grace may either be postponed until the individual acquires the requisite capacity or the supplication may remain unanswered during this worldly life altogether.

This interpretation recalls numerous traditions concerning the acceptance of supplication, according to which God may withhold the fulfillment of a believer's request because its realization would ultimately prove detrimental to the person's worldly or spiritual welfare, preserving its reward instead for the Hereafter. Mīr Dāmād's explanation, however, differs in an important respect. Whereas these traditions generally ground the postponement of supplication in the believer's welfare, Mīr Dāmād identifies the decisive criterion as the individual's intrinsic ontological preparedness. In Mīr Dāmād's analysis, inherent preparedness and expediency are related but distinct concepts. Inherent preparedness refers to the human being's existential capacity and readiness to receive divine effusion and attain the desired object, whereas expediency concerns the suitability of that object for the person's welfare and well-being. Thus, a person may possess the necessary preparedness to receive divine effusion, while the object of supplication may nevertheless fail to be realized in the requested form because it is incompatible with his or her best interests. Accordingly, preparedness should be regarded as an ontological condition for the acceptance of supplication, whereas expediency may function as an impediment to its acceptance. Although the notion of existential preparedness had already appeared in the writings of earlier mystics, particularly Ibn 'Arabī (1946, vol. 1, p. 61), they explained this preparedness through the doctrine of the immutable entities, whereas Mīr Dāmād develops the concept within his own philosophical framework.

To explain the efficacy of supplication, Mīr Dāmād further relies upon his distinctive analysis of Divine Decree and Divine Determination. By distinguishing between the scientific and objective dimensions of Divine Decree, he argues that supplication cannot alter the level of *Divine Decree*, since any change at this level would imply change either in Divine Knowledge or in the higher immaterial realms. Because neither potentiality nor motion exists within those realms, change is metaphysically impossible there. Consequently, any alteration resulting from supplication must occur exclusively within objective Divine Determination, which corresponds to the temporal and material world.

This conclusion follows directly from Mīr Dāmād's cosmological doctrine of the three ontological realms. Both Eternality and Perpetuity remain entirely beyond alteration, while only the temporal material realm constitutes the domain in which *Badā'* may occur. His distinctive interpretation of *Badā'*, understood as the ontological counterpart of legal abrogation within the created order, likewise supports his account of supplication. Supplication is not an external force that interrupts Divine Decree; rather, it forms an integral element of that very decree. From the very beginning of creation, the realization of a particular event has been conditionally linked to the servant's supplication. Once the servant prays, one of the necessary components of the complete cause is fulfilled, allowing the ordained event to become actualized in the external world.

This interpretation effectively resolves the apparent objection that supplication would require a change in Divine Knowledge. God eternally knows that the servant will alter his temporal destiny through supplication, and scientific Divine Decree is constituted in accordance with precisely that eternal knowledge. Consequently, no change whatsoever occurs within Divine Knowledge itself. As noted in the preceding discussion, however, this explanation does not fully account for those traditions that appear to indicate the occurrence of *Badā'* within ontological levels superior to the material realm.

In addition to ontological preparedness, Mīr Dāmād identifies certainty regarding the acceptance of one's prayer as another essential condition for effective supplication. Likewise, visiting sacred places contributes to the acceptance of prayer because the Friends of God, on the one hand, continue to exercise influence within creation in a manner analogous to the separate intellects and, on the other hand, retain an enduring relation to their earthly resting places. Through the believer's presence at these sacred sites, their spiritual mediation becomes a means for the acceptance of supplication.

Finally, Mīr Dāmād enumerates several causes for the apparent non-acceptance of supplication, including the absence of existential preparedness, the lack of genuine benefit in the requested object, and the failure of the necessary conditions governing authentic supplication to be fulfilled.

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