

THE REFLECTION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN SA'D AL-DIN AL-TAFTAZANI'S VIEWS

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Abstract

Since ancient times, achieving spiritual perfection and upholding ethical principles have consistently been among the most relevant objectives in global scholarship. Material and spiritual values, created as products of rational knowledge and thinking, play a significant role in the moral upbringing of humanity. As a result of spirituality and ethics reaching a qualitatively new stage within historical trends, innovative developments in science are viewed as noteworthy social realities.

In particular, studying the philosophical heritage of thinkers who left a profound impact on societal development and spiritual life, specifically those who worked in Central Asia, has played a key role in examining the moral identity of the region's peoples. In this regard, the contributions of the scholar Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, who enriched Islamic philosophy—particularly the science of Kalam—with socio-political, spiritual-educational, and religious-doctrinal conceptual theories and conclusions, are of special significance.

The relevance of the theories and ideas presented in Taftazani's scholarly heritage lies in their active contribution to elevating the socio-political, spiritual-moral, and educational spheres of our modern society to the level of global enlightened standards.

Keywords: Taftazani, ethics, Kalam, Islamic philosophy, religious-doctrinal conceptual theory, Abu Hafs al-Nasafi, "Sharh al-Aqa'id", "Aqa'id".

Introduction

During the "Second Renaissance" in Mawarannahr and Khorasan in the 14th–15th centuries, Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani contributed significantly to the scientific advancement of his era through his philosophical and ethical views. The issue of moral choice implies the degree to which an individual adheres to the social ethical norms of the society in which they reside. Furthermore, it encompasses aspects such as observing established rules in communicative (positive) interaction with others. Indeed, positive relations among humans are established only through constant mutual cooperation. In such contexts, human actions are shaped on the basis of free will.

An ideal moral choice, as a socio-spiritual need that calls people toward mutual cooperation, has been at the center of attention for scholars in every era. When this tradition elevated from the academic sphere to the entire societal stage, elements of social stability and prosperous life emerged in time and space. From this perspective, research efficiency increases only when the pursuit of enlightenment and ethical conduct are elevated to the level of a social requirement and necessity for every member of society.

Given the importance of proposals that ensure social stability based on enlightenment and morality, it can be stated that this topic remains an issue of significant practical relevance today, recognized not only by philosophers but also by specialists in the field of ethics.

Researchers conducting active scientific inquiries in Kalam—a branch of Islamic philosophy—have demonstrated the willpower and capacity to prove that the phenomenon and norms of Islam do not consist merely of acts of worship, but represent a synthesis that integrates crucial aspects of enlightenment, morality, culture, and philosophy. As a result, the educational energy within Islam gifted humanity rational knowledge and creative thinking.

Literature Review

Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani's philosophical and ethical views on Kalam are thoroughly analyzed on the basis of Islamic enlightenment and rational thought in *Sharh al-Aqa'id*—his comprehensive commentary on *Aqa'id* by our great compatriot Abu Hafs al-Nasafi.

In this work, special attention is devoted to one of the central topics of Kalam philosophy: human free will and the problem of moral choice. In particular, the author outlines virtuous character traits and good deeds derived from the Creator's attribute of creation, thereby instructing individuals to refrain from actions stemming from unacceptable behavior. Analyzing the text reveals an emphasis on the incompatibility with humanity of unhonored behavior and actions that fall under the status of sin and transgression within social moral standards. It can be observed that religious-ethical guidelines regarding the testing of individuals through such undesirable (negative) ethical concepts are substantiated using both textual (*naqli*) and rational (*'aqli*) sources.

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Today, regarding the issue of moral choice, promotional and educational efforts are being carried out to encourage individuals, through their positive actions, to improve their lives and align them with social ethical standards. In this regard, "human beings possess freedom of choice and have equal opportunities in choosing between good and evil"[1]. An individual realizes toward the end of the process that this moral choice serves as the starting point of human action. Given that along with free will, the governance of intellect and reflection is also entrusted to the individual, if the origin of a performed action is positive, its outcome will be directly proportional to it.

Considering the importance of proposals that ensure social stability based on enlightenment and morality, it can be affirmed that this topic retains serious practical significance today, recognized not only by philosophers but also by specialists in the field of ethics.

Research Methodology

Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani's views on human freedom of choice in selecting good or evil in one's destiny align precisely with the enlightening perspectives of the great thinker Imam al-Maturidi on this matter. Specifically, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, in defining freedom of will within Islamic norms,

emphasized that the blessing of intellect bestowed upon humans by the Creator requires that every human action depends on making the correct choice between concepts such as good and evil, lawful (*halal*) and unlawful (*haram*), reward (*thawab*) and sin, as well as right and wrong. This choice is evaluated by how beneficial the outcome is for the future of humanity. He stressed that choosing the right path manifests itself starting from the initial steps. In the progressive views of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, issues surrounding the continuous formation of ties of nobility, humanity, mutual respect, solidarity, and stability-oriented cooperation among members of society are consistently highlighted. Ultimately, while avoiding various forms of negative vices, factors that foster social harmony and cohesion within society are cultivated.

Analyzing the theme of ethical principles in Taftazani's works demands high moral and legal (*fiqh*) knowledge alongside logical reasoning from every researcher. This process consists of scientific analysis and observation. The analysis of results provides comprehensive and well-rounded answers from the perspective of Islamic philosophy to controversial questions arising in the science of Kalam. Regarding the issue of human destiny—created by the Creator alongside both "virtuous" and "vicious" deeds—if God Himself willed that a person perform actions that ultimately lead to accountability, punishing that person for such a fault brings about well-founded questions regarding the principles of justice.

This debate has become one of the most pressing topics regarding human moral choice in Kalam philosophy, evolving into a crucial issue of social life. In resolving such problematic questions within Kalam philosophy, Taftazani's works can be evaluated, in a certain sense, as a spiritual necessity that ensures social stability.

In this work, which is evaluated as a social necessity, the category of ethics demonstrates that human nature does not consist of destructiveness, bloodshed, or cruelty; rather, it manifests in qualities such as gentleness of speech, humility, composure, good nature, and virtuous conduct. Therefore, if an individual chooses an unacceptable path instead of utilizing these bestowed positive virtues within ethical boundary norms, holding them accountable constitutes a just decision. Another supporting rationale is that "the Creator merely willed unacceptable behavior as a test and trial; no mandatory path was imposed upon the human being"[2]. In this regard, the thinker Taftazani emphasizes in several passages of the work's section that the ability to choose by one's own free will remains preserved within the individual. Furthermore, the issue of facing punishment begins as soon as the individual performs the action that serves as the basis for accountability.

Analysis and Results

In the views of the thinker Taftazani, it is emphasized that all good and bad human actions come into existence through the will and desire of the Creator. In this section of the work, it is noted that the Jabriyya and Mu'tazila sects opposed the views of the Sunni community (*Ahl al-Sunnah*). Specifically, according to the representatives of the Mu'tazila sect, only good human deeds are created by the Creator, whereas evil deeds are produced by the human being himself. Differences are noticeable between Taftazani and the representatives of the Mu'tazila movement on certain religious-doctrinal matters—particularly regarding the attributes of the Creator, freedom of choice, and the doctrinal

selection of virtuous versus vicious conduct. In particular, "the Mu'tazilite sect held the belief that 'Allah Almighty creates only good actions, while the servant himself creates bad actions'" [3].

The Jabriyya sect, described in Taftazani's *Sharh al-Aqa'id*, is recognized as a radicalized religious movement that fundamentally differs from the Sunni creed. This movement was considered the only sect to deny that humans were granted freedom of choice. They held the erroneous belief that: "Allah predestined sinful actions for humans, and humans are compelled to commit sinful deeds" [4]. From these misguided ideas, a highly erroneous conclusion emerges that all historical events whose outcomes were evaluated as unacceptable actions occurred due to a fault of the Creator. However, in numerous passages of the Holy Qur'an, the Creator continuously encourages human society toward social cooperation through positive virtues such as goodness, compassion, kindness, generosity, and other similar qualities.

A general conclusion drawn from the above arguments is that we consider Taftazani's written refutations against movements promoting certain destructive views to be fully justified.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Spiritual calls emphasizing that virtuous character, choosing the noble path, and, in general, knowledge and enlightenment serve as criteria guiding human society toward high spiritual perfection constitute the core idea of Taftazani's works. The following description given to Taftazani's character states that in order to achieve perfection, he possessed a higher motivation compared to others, and regarding the early periods of his scholarly activities, Sheikh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf noted: "*Falling behind his peers in the initial stage could not diminish Sa'd al-Din's aspiration for knowledge; he strove tirelessly, attaching no importance to anything other than scholarship*" [5]. From this perspective, it would not be wrong to state that the thinker Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani, who embodied high human virtues, serves as an exemplary model not only for Schopenhauer, but for scholars across all eras.

The moral categories outlined above manifest as obligations imposed by society upon every citizen, illustrating the essence of morality within an individual, their lifestyle, and their direct and indirect interactions with the community. Ultimately, these relationships define the general boundaries of actions performed by members of society while simultaneously serving as a theoretical and practical foundation for many ethical norms. The actions of an individual are executed within the realm of rational knowledge and intellect. Cases where unacceptable actions committed by an individual or a specific group selected from members of society exceed the boundaries of reason—thereby posing a socially dangerous threat not only to other individuals and groups, but also to animal and plant life, and indeed to all of humanity—have been evidenced across all intermediate cycles of historical trends.

An individual who approaches moral choice incorrectly and fails to feel the burden of responsibility completely rejects social moral rules, eventually forgetting them entirely. The socio-spiritual existence of the individual becomes fully consumed by the influence of negative factors within society. The outcome is clear: the individual falters in moral choice and commits errors, thereby making their "own contribution" to the quantitative growth of immoral behavior in society.

The theme of moral choice implies the degree to which an individual adheres to the social ethical norms of the society in which they reside. Furthermore, it encompasses aspects such as observing established rules in communicative (positive) interaction with others. Indeed, positive relations among humans are established only through constant mutual cooperation. In such contexts, human actions are shaped on the basis of free will.

Researchers conducting active scientific inquiries in Kalam—a branch of Islamic philosophy—have demonstrated the willpower and capacity to prove that the phenomenon and norms of Islam do not consist merely of acts of worship, but represent a synthesis that integrates crucial aspects of enlightenment, morality, culture, and philosophy. As a result, the educational energy within Islam gifted humanity rational knowledge and creative thinking.

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