

# Eschatological Justice in Islam

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## Abstract

Justice is revered as a divine characteristic in all theistic religions. God is described as the ontological foundation of justice in the Islamic sacred text. The Prophet Muhammad frequently alluded to God's justice in this life and the Hereafter, and admonished Muslims to refrain from inflicting any type of injustice on God's creation, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. So, according to Islam's two major sources, God exists only in His essence and deeds. The concept of divine justice is likewise given a high priority in both the Old and New Testaments. Yahweh is referred to as the Abode of Justice by the biblical prophet Isaiah. Furthermore, divine judgments are described in the Scriptures as reasonable and right. As a result, one can conclude that the scriptures of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism agree that God is just in His actions. Muslim theologians, on the other hand, emphasized on topics such as divine justice coherence with other divine characteristics, sinner's perpetual residence in Hell, and the problem of evil.

**Keywords:** *Divine Justice, theology, ethics.*

## Introduction

On a human level, justice refers to the act of performing good deeds and the avoidance of evil deeds, as well as individual rights. Giving individuals their due right and obtaining one's own due right are the basic meanings of the word. As a result, a just person is described as one who does not violate the rights of others. Because it occurs between two persons, the provider and receiver of a given right, this understanding of justice implies a correlation. Receiving something due is right in this circumstance, but providing something is an obligation. As a result, the people's right to impose their will on an individual places the responsibility of paying their dues on his shoulders. In this sense, justice refers to the accomplishment of one's responsibilities to others. However, this association does not apply to man's relationship with God, because it would be irrational and irreligious to claim that God is obligated to act in a certain way because it contradicts the concept of divine omnipotence. Furthermore, such words reflect an unsuitable attitude toward God's splendor.

In terms of human relationships, the correlation between right and obligation is significant. No one is essentially indebted or payee, because men are fundamentally equal. However, this is not true in reference to God, because no human person can be compared to God in any way. As a result, no one can claim that God should act in a certain way as a result of his actions. God created man, his abilities, and the situations in which he operates. With regard to God, justice cannot be defined as the fulfillment of one's obligations and the payment of others' rights. If this is the case, what does it mean to speak of divine justice? To make our

discussion of eschatological justice relevant, it appears that we will need to find a new perspective. In Muslim theological philosophy, the answer to this question is directly related to the fundamentally good and wicked quality of things.

### **God's Justice, as well as His Other attributes and Acts**

It is not rational for God to have two contradictory attributes at the same time, hence there must be harmony and coherence among the divine attributes. This eliminates not only any inconsistencies between divine attributes, but also any contradictions among the concomitants of the various characteristics. If there is any inconsistency between the attributes, it means that at least one of the two contradictory attributes is wrongly attributed to God. As a result, one of them should be left out or construed in such a way that the inconsistency is eliminated. However, eschatological justice appears to be at odds with some other divine qualities. God's divine attribute of omnipotence indicates that He must be capable of doing everything He desires. The divine attribute of justice, on the other hand, requires God to perform some acts while avoiding others. God's unlimited power, on the other hand, does not allow for any restrictions on His actions. As a result, Ab al-Hassan al-Ash'ar emphasises the following:

The proof of God's being able to do whatever He wills lies in the fact that God is the Lord and the Dominating, and not the slave of anybody. No one is superior to Him so that he makes certain acts permissible. No one can command Him, nor can anyone prevent Him from doing what He wants to do. Nor anyone can define or describe Him. Therefore, no act is bad with respect to Him. If an act is bad with respect to us, this is because we have overstepped our limits and perpetrated an unbecoming deed. However, since God is not under the authority of anyone, nothing can be unbecoming with respect to Him (Al-Ash'arī, Abū al-Hassan, 260-324 AH, p. 117).

Theologians from the Shiite and Mutazilate faiths, on the other hand, took a different approach. Khawajah Nasr al-Din al-Tusi mentions the following in his *Tajrid al-Itiqad*: "Although God's power is absolute and all comprehensive, He does not perpetrate evil" (597-672 AH). According to Allamah Hilli,

God's power comprehends all the possible things, and bad acts are part of the possible things, too. So they are also involved in the range of divine power. But what is said of the fact that no bad act can originate from God is secondary to the primary possibility that God can do whatever He wants. Therefore, it does not invalidate the notion of the absolute divine power (Allamah Hilli, 1415, p. 306).

This implies that while one has the power to act, one should refrain from doing evil things. So, just because you've never done something wrong doesn't mean you can't. This is similar to a sane individual who has never consumed poison, but that does not preclude him from doing so in the future. It is reasonable to assert that God is devoid of wrongdoing. This, on the other hand, is a symptom and concomitant of His perfection, not a sign of His inadequacy.

Is divine justice and divine wisdom mutually exclusive? God knows how long a person will live and if he will commit sin or do good actions. The punishment of evil-doers is required by justice. But why did God create them if He knew they would do evil and sin? In his historic debate with his former professor AbuAli al-Jubbai, Ash'ari, who accepted the concept of divine determinism and rejected the basically goodness and badness of acts, alluded to this argument. "Suppose that there are three brothers all dead: one is righteous, another is unbeliever and wicked, and the third one is minor. What is their situation in the Hereafter?" Jubbā answers: "The righteous is in Paradise, the wicked one is in Hell, and the minor is among the People of Safety (*Ahl al-Salāmah*)."

Justice is inextricably linked to man's free will, because justice is only possible if he possesses it. Commands, prohibitions, ethical suggestions, and abominations, whether in human or God-human interactions, are only significant when man is free in the sense of being able to operate as he desires. Overemphasizing God's unity in His actions can lead to severe determinism. The idea of absolute determinism, on the other hand, entails attributing all of man's negative actions to God. As a result, 'Allamah Hilli states that all Ash'arites agree that every wickedness, including injustice, associating partners with God, and oppression, are deeds of God, and that God approves of them. Although accepting determinism implies that God is accountable for all evil in the world, opponents of free will refuse to accept this implication. They tend to view whatever God does as excellent because they deny the inherent goodness and badness of deeds. Allamah Hilli makes a similar remark on another occasion. "Determinism implies that God is unjust and has no purpose in His acts. If God creates the acts of servants, He will be creating their bad deeds, too, like injustice and vanity. But God is free from and exalted above such things" (Allamah Hilli, 1982, p.85). In an attempt to resolve the issue, Fadl Ibn Ruzbahān points out:

God is the creator of everything. However, there is a difference between creation (*khalq*) and action (*fi'l*), which means that though He creates evil, He is not the actor of evil (*fā'il*). Just as God's creating black does not imply that God is black, God's creating injustice does not entail that God is unjust. In addition, evil is not limited to the acts of man. Without doubt, God creates pigs and vermin. No one can avoid attributing the act of creation to God in these cases. Once it is admitted that these are created by God, one cannot but accept the evil inherent in them. Otherwise, one would deny an obvious fact. It follows that if the creation of evil necessitates the Creator being attributed of

evil and injustice, the creation of evil, a fact that is admitted by the opponents of the Ash'arites, will necessitate the attribution of evil to God (al-Muzaffar, 1360, p.489).

To avoid the challenges posed by the notion of determinism, several Muslim theologians, such as Dirar Ibn 'Amr and Ash'ari, moved to the theory of acquisition (kasb). While God created the deeds, man acquires them, according to this theory. The concept of act acquisition can be regarded as an attempt to reconcile God's omnipotence with man's free will and ethical responsibilities. Qadi Abd Al-Jabbar clarifies the definition of acquisition. "It is man who turns an act into the instance of obedience or disobedience. By way of explanation, while the existential root of act belongs to God, the act acquires an ethical value through the agency of man" (Allamah Hilli, 1301, p.308).

### **Justice and Evil**

To be just, one must avoid committing any type of wrongdoing. Opponents of the divine justice theory, on the other hand, believe that all evil in the world is the result of human injustice. As a result, the topic of divine justice is centered on the problem of evil in the world. One cannot deny that the world contains innumerable and diverse forms of evil. So, how can we reconcile all of this evil with the concept of divine justice? The majority of Muslim thinkers regard evil as the absence of good or as something that does not exist. Ignorance and poverty, for example, are merely a result of a lack of knowledge and a lack of resources. Though there is some evil, it is not evil in the traditional sense. Snakes, scorpions, and floods are all deemed wicked not because they are snakes, scorpions, or floods, but because they inflict illness or death. As a result, evil is a byproduct, not a necessity in the world.

### **Justice and Divine Punishment**

A just God not only avoids doing injustice, but also disapproves of the occurrence of injustice among humanity. As a result, God, as the ultimate judge, should punish the evildoers in proportion to the seriousness of their sins. This problem can be divided into two categories:

- (a) Many of the world's evildoers get away with it, which contradicts divine justice. Muslim theologians attempt to explain this by referring to divine reward and punishment in the Afterlife. Shiite and Mutazilite theologians also subscribe to this explanation. Another popular explanation is the divine recompense hypothesis. According to this view, God will compensate man for the benefits he has been denied as well as the bad he has suffered in this world. Man will be completely satisfied with the compensation.
- (b) No crime may be so serious as to warrant eternal torment in Hell. Every religion, on the other hand, considers followers of other religions to be irreligious, and hence deserving of Hell. In this regard the Qur'an Says: "Allah hath promised the Hypocrites, men and women, and the rejecters of Faith, the Fire of Hell: Therein shall they dwell: Sufficient is it for them: For them is the curse of Allah, and an

enduring punishment” (Al-Quran, 2007, 9:68). Unbelievers and hypocrites will suffer eternally in Hell, according to this verse. The evildoers, too, will spend eternity in Hell, according to the verse below: “But those who disobey Allah and His Apostle and transgress His limits will be admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment” (Ibid, 4:14).

Grave sinners will not spend eternity in Hell, according to Shiite theologians. For example, Shaykh al-Sadiq claims that only unbelievers and polytheists will spend eternity in Hell, whereas monotheists will receive divine forgiveness after committing grievous sins. According to Shaykh Mufid, Shiite theologians have reached an agreement that the divine threat of eternal damnation in Hell exclusively affects unbelievers.

One common solution to this problem is that there is no conventional relationship or correspondence between the sins committed in this life and the punishments meted out in the afterlife, because proportion between crime and punishment can only be expected in relation to positive and conventional. However, the relationship between sin and its consequences in the afterlife is analogous to the relationship between cause and effect.

## Conclusion

God is not unjust because injustice arises from one of two factors: either the unjust individual does not realize that his conduct is unjust, or his needs compel him to act unjustly despite his knowledge. God, on the other hand, cannot be imagined to do anything wrong because He knows what is good and what is wrong and is self-sufficient. This argument presupposes that acts are fundamentally good or evil. The validity of the essentiality of deeds, on the other hand, implies that God is not unjust, but it does not imply that He is just. This argument holds true insofar as refraining from doing evil is deemed sufficient to designate an actor as just, or insofar as the absence of an act is considered an act. God has plenty of reasons to do good, and nothing stands in the way of Him doing so. Furthermore, He has sufficient reason to refrain from doing evil, and He has no motivation to do so. God, on the other hand, is capable of accomplishing everything. The occurrence of an act is necessitated by the existence of power and motive. He will perform an act if he thinks it is good and has the power to do it, and if it does not cause harm. Muslim thinkers seek to establish that God is perfect and devoid of flaws using various approaches. God’s acts are also complete and flawless, according to the principle of cause and effect homogeneity. As a result, attributes like justice, which indicate God’s perfection, can be assigned to God.

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