

The “Habit of God” theory and Mowlavi’s Viewpoint on it

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Abstract: The “Habit of God” theory is known to be one of the most significant subjects in rhetoric which has drawn the theorists’ attention more particularly the Asharians. The eminent Ashari Ulema including Imam Mohammad-e Qazzali, Baqlani, Alaoddin-e Tousi, Azadoddin-e Iji and Aamadi intended to present this view rational and canonical. The philosophy underlying the origin of this view is that the rhetoric Ashari disciples expressed vehement opposition against a self-evident philosophical doctrine called “Causal License”, and they spared no effort to annihilate this philosophical doctrine by inventing an alternative one, since the majority of Ashari Dialectical Theology were anti-philosophy and had a strong aversion to its basis. The primary reason for their opposition is that the Asharians negate the causality and effect system fundamentally. For they believe that accepting this system is contrary to the power of the Almighty, and that all causes and effects, and events are under the absolute supremacy of the Omnipotent power of the Almighty. Following the ancient Asharians, Mowlavi-e Balqi-e Rumi has emphatically propounded this term in his Masnavi. This article is an attempt to study this very viewpoint of Mowlavi.

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1. Introduction

If we want to explain the concept of The “Habit of God” used by Abolhasan Ashari whom the clear-sighted Asharians follow, it must be claimed that it is a term used by poets in reply to this fundamental question: that “If the macrocosm is rule-based, then how God acts within and what is his role in this regulated system of occurrences and remains? And if He is the only agent of the universe, how could attribute the effect of one phenomenon to that phenomenon itself, and believe in the causality and order system of the cosmos?” (Barbour, 1999: 1)

In addition, the Muslim philosophers and Dialectical Theologians have a wide diversity of views on either analyzing the basis of causality or the minor rules of causality. These philosophers have commemorated some minor rules for causality one of which is the most primary is “the essential connection between the cause and the effect, i.e. the rule of Causal License”. A good crowd of theologians hold the opinion that “the rule of causal license” is the most significant element in philosophical causality, and that if one negates it, in fact s/he negates the causal license. Among the Muslim Dialectical Theologians, the poets not only has opposed (more than all) to the rule of causal license but also they have made a determined attempt to seek an alternative to causal license and to find the right position for it so that they can interpret the universe’s manifestations under its flag. (Khademi, 1999: 2). The “Habit of God” viewpoint is an alternative to the causal license in Dialectical Theology history of

Islam. This concept is the theoretical base and essence of Ashari Dialectical Theologians about the causality. Some researchers has defined “Habit” as: “An agent does a task repeatedly much like the previous ones and s/he is obliged by no means to repeat the task or to unite the methods. (Ibid: 1).

In principle, Habit-based knowledge is founded on two kinds of believes which are:

a) the belief that there are some matters which remain constant in reality; i.e. the trend of past events will continue to happen in the present and future, but not necessarily. In other words, the past trend will be repeated, except for the times God’s will changes them into an unexpected events.

b) The belief that our knowledge is in conformity with this regular system (i.e. God) fills this gap in our knowledge that this trend of events is in accordance with reality. Therefore, we must not be doubtful, since Habit corresponds roughly to experience. Imam Qazzali believes that the whole knowledge the Humans have of natural science is based on the Habit system.” (Khademi, 1999: 4).

2. The poets’ viewpoint on The “Habit of God”

Every individual endowed with a specified quality is actually and inherently created by God in a direct and immediate manner. The Means occurring to our minds are not real, but are God’s Habit of exerting effects is in the very center of these matters. Otherwise, there is no cause unless one. The whole affairs are done by the Glorious God. About all the phenomena we consider them to be the cause and effect, it could be claimed that this is God who

creates them related together. Ration and traditional manifestations also lead to this matter. Power of the Almighty shall not be limited by the cosmos for he is the absolute power, and this absolute power does not allow any other power to be effective. Causality and effect are always inseparable from power. Hence, the creatures have no power; therefore they won't have causality and effect. Thus, in addition to the aforementioned traditional reasons, the common sense tells us that God is the only agent in the universe. (Kakaie, 1999: 3).

In other words, the sense merely indicates conjunction, but is incapable of perceiving the connection and effect. The only thing we see is *at the time of events not by events*. As Qazzali says: "how could one come to know that fire is the agent of combustion. They could not find a reason, unless, observing the combustion while meeting the fire. Observation indicates that it is obtained at sight (*at the times of events*) and does not indicate that it is obtained *by* the events. (Tousi: 238).

In other words, "when an object is near something, it does not mean that this object is created by that thing." (Ibid: 239). This is occasionalism (or conjunctionism) which means "the belief that all causes originate from the power of Almighty and we consider the natural phenomena as the superficial causes because of His direct and immediate intervention". (Kakaie, 1999: 2). In "Sharholmavagef", in many cases he has attributed natural causality conjunction and quotes from Abolhasan-e Ashari, the founder of this doctrine: "Indeed, all the creatures are directly dependent on the power of the Almighty and that God's will is in the center of all things' creation and existence." (Ibid:2).

Ebn-e Meimoon also mentions "referring causality to conjunction" as one of the certainties of Ashari religion: they do not believe that this matter is the cause of that one.... For instance, when a piece of cloth looks black juxtaposed to cerulean color, they say: This is God that created blackness in cloth when it is put near cerulean.... Or there is no causality when a hand and concomitantly a pen move. The public poets claim that while mowing this pen, God creates 4 forms (which are the author's will, his power to stimulate, the hand's movement, and the pen's movement). There is no causality among these forms, and only conjunction is in the soul." (Atai, 1972, 207).

"By generalizing this matter about the whole universe and referring all the causalities to the mere conjunctions, we encounter to some interesting subjects in the works of poets. For instance, plants grow *at the presence of* all these 4 forms not *by* these forms." (Iji, 1991:138).

About lunar eclipse and eclipse of the sun (opposed to the philosophers who attribute it to the transduction of the sun and moon between the earth and the other side) they believe that: "This is God who put the light into the sun and moon. He does not let the light in when they transduce. Therefore, the lunar eclipse and eclipse of the sun has nothing to do with transduction." (Ibid: 135)

"Prophets play no part in the miracles. The only effective force is God who puts the miracle about the prophets' will." (Ibid: 220). "And more than this, miracle and rational cause is not to justify the believers, but God provides the audience with justification at the time a miracle takes place. (Ibid: 229).

3. Mowlana's viewpoint on The "Habit of God"

Mowlavi is one of the gnostics who is rhetorically disciple of Ashaere School, has emphatically used this term in Masnavi. Apart from the figurative meaning of Habit, he has used this lexicon in its primary meaning. The latter will be explained in the next pages.

In the first Book of Masnavi, verses number 823-830 Mowlavi writes:

*Faced to the fire, cried the king: O! Hot-tempered!
Where is thy great incendiary nature?
What happened thee! Thou aren't burning!
Is it my misfortune changed thy heart?
O fire! Thou aren't patient!
Why thou aren't powerful when not burning?
Cried the fire: I am the same fire thou know!
Come and see me flaming.
My nature won't swift!
When my Lord (God) orders me, I flame!*

"According to Asharian and mystics, all the existence is directly on the strength of God and whatever comes to the existence is due to His power. He is the Almighty power who feels no obligation. The events happen subsequently since there is a Habit for them, and there is no tie among them. For instance, combustion done by fire, quenching one's thirst by the water does not mean that fire and water burns or quenches thirst, but God has made the Habit so that water and fire produce this result, when God wants them to stop, they will no longer have their effect. In the above-mentioned verses, Mowlavi stresses this belief and when he draws a parallel between fire and the Turkaman dog, he wants to say that this animal is able to make a distinction between friend and stranger. The dog does 2 contradictory tasks." (Foruzanfar, 1991: 230).

In the second Book of Masnavi, verses number 1625-1632 Mowlavi writes:

*With no reason I burn!
Fate this is called fate, not reason! O untrue nature!
On the right time, shall me swift my Habit,*

On the right time, shall I clean the dust of my forehead!

I shall order the sea: Be a fire!

I shall order the fire: Be a rose-garden.

These verses indicate that "I will remove the dust of Habit from my creative power in order to prove that cause and effect has nothing to do with my power." (Anqravi, 1992: 570). Afterwards, "Molana mentions that the subsequent events which we define them as cause and effect are nothing more than Habits developed by God." (Zamani, 1991,414).

In addition to the aforementioned term, Mowlana has used the lexicon "Habit" in its primary and usual meaning. Thus, the primary meaning of this word must not be used erroneously instead of its Asharian equivalent. For instance, in the 2nd Book of Masnavi, verses number 3458-3459:

Lust is nature of vanity and revenge,

Habit is the strength of lust!

Habitually, if man act wicked,

Then, shall anger throw man down!

Hence, Mowlavi alludes to the point that falling into the habit of concupiscence, lust and wicked acts ultimately faces the man with adversity. In the 2nd Book of Masnavi, in the verse number 3471 he composed:

O man! Thou habituated to wickedness,

A Habit of Snake shall come out of Lust of Ant!

In another verse, he mentions that all the misfortunes and hardships humans suffer is due to the fact that they are not used to it. And that irregularities and anomalies annoy them intensely. In the 3rd part of Masnavi, verse number 625:

O man! Thy misfortunes and hardships,

Surely, come out of thy Habit!

Studying the figurative meaning of Habit among the Ashari is certainly irrelevant to our discussion.

Asharian's theory of Habit has been either criticized by a number of Dialectical Theologian or rendered null by a number of philosophers. Among the Dialectical Theologian, the late Sheikh Tousi who is one of the Shiites great interpreters, either in the book "the economy not related to the belief" or in the book "Setting the Principles" which is a theoretical explanation to "the beauty of Science and Action" written by the late Seied Morteza, has studies the theory of Asharian's The "Habit of God". According to him, the only way to know God is to have a glimpse at His creatures' occurrence. First, he proves the creatures' occurrence in two ways: one might claim that according to the Habit theory it is not necessary to say that every creature needs a creator, but we might possibly notice this through the Habit. Then, Sheikh Tousi states several reasons for rendering the Habit theory null which are:

"A) If we want to do something and have got the will to do it, and there is nothing to hinder us, then that task will be done. Again, if we want not to do something and have got no will to do that, then it won't be done. And the very matter renders null the "Habit of God" theory. This is for the reason that if this theory is true, then to accomplish this task is the choice of God and He can change the Habit. In other words, we have got the will to do something and there is no obstacle, then it will be done, or vice versa. But, if we take a precise look at our actions, we come to know that there are no other ways to do them. In addition to that, change could be applied in all the cases except for the tasks we mentioned (where making any kind of change is impossible).

B) In case that this theory is true, then there must be no difference between the unavoidable tasks and the tasks done by Habit. And that removing whiteness by blackness is not necessarily required but it is based on the Habit. Science does not necessarily need life, but we consider it based on Habit. It is also true about the other phenomena among which there is a necessary existential connection. To sum up, according to this analysis, unavoidable tasks and habitual tasks could no longer be distinguished from each other.

C) In case that accomplishing this task depends on Habit, we must say that those who know nothing about these habits are unaware of this commandment, too.

D) Another reason is that if this theory is true, then there must be no difference between the accidental tasks and habitual tasks. Therefore, a structure must be built accidentally, a masterpiece must be written without an author or a textile must be woven without a knitter." (khademi, 1999: 4)

With the above mentioned points, one might think that Mowlavi's ideology like the radical Asharian, negates 'the Means System' basically, and believes that everything culminates in the Almighty power. But, this fundamental point must be carefully considered that although Mowlavi accepts The "Habit of God" theory and puts emphasize on it, it could not be the reason to negate the "Means System". Furthermore, he attributes some events to the "Cause and Effect System" and believes that natural and material intermediations are involved in the events and accidents.

In the 5th part of Masnavi, verses number 1540-1550 he clearly declares:

The doctrine shall be the Lord's (God's) Rule,

Times shall come, Power shall break the Rule!

The time thou are dismissed, is not thy fault,

This is the Lord, not thou!

Omnipotent is the Lord,

Almighty power shall remove all Means!

*Man sees Means in universe,
To see his desires satisfied!*

As mentioned, Mowlavi points to some significant axioms in these verses: God has established a Rule set forth for discussion by the philosophers. This is called "Rule of God", meaning that God has a set of Rules based on His knowledge and He never violates them. Mowlavi has also accepted this Rule, while Asharian completely negate the "Rule". Thus, Mowlavi expresses this viewpoint emphatically that the "Means' System" also exists alongside The "Habit of God", so that individuals could seek for their goals by those Means. A very important point is that the Almighty power is above the all Means and Causes, and that God's will can completely change all the Means and Causes.

4. Conclusion

Every individual endowed with a specified quality is actually and inherently created by God in a direct and immediate manner. The Means occurring to our minds are not real, but are God's Habit of exerting effects is in the very center of these matters. This theory of creation is known as "the Habit of God" and Ashari Dialectical Theologians are big believers of that. Mowlavi is one of the Gnosticizes who has accepted "the Habit of God" theory and has emphatically stated it several times in Masnavi. But, his viewpoint about "the Habit of God" is not a radical one like most of the Ashari. In addition to "the Habit of God" system, he firmly believes in "the Means' System". Besides the figurative meaning of Habit, he uses its primary meaning very precisely and

considers most of the misfortunes and hardships of human life as the habit of people.

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