

The Definition of Sovereignty

Sovereignty or *salatanah* is an internal quality that we all understand. It is what we know by presence (*'ilm huduri*). To conceptualize it we can use the expression: "The agent *may or may not act*". There is no necessity to act or not to act.

Sovereignty is similar to any of necessity and contingency from one aspect and different from each from the other. Sovereignty similar to necessity in being is rationally enough to justify the existence of a contingent being and leaving no need to look for something else.

The difference between sovereignty and necessity is that with necessity an act loses its equal relations to existence and non-existence and necessity of existence takes its place, while with sovereignty the contingency remains the same. Necessity consists in the fact that the agent has to act or not to act, but sovereignty means that the agent may or may not act.

Sovereignty is similar to contingency in preserving the equal relations of the contingent to both existence and non-existence, but sovereignty is different from contingency in being rationally enough to justify the existence of a contingent being while with contingency the question remains why it must come into existence.

Having known that the sovereignty of the agent may substitute necessity and suffice the existence of a voluntary act which is the question at issue, reflection on our conscience and the way voluntary acts are issued from us shows clearly that the relation between us and our voluntary acts is one of sovereignty and not necessity. We as voluntary agents find that we have sovereignty upon our acts. We clearly understand the fact that even in circumstances in which all prerequisites and conditions of a voluntary act exist, it is not necessary to act. What we find deep in ourselves is this sovereignty upon our acts. It is up to us to act or not act and we are not compelled to do so¹.

1. Sadr, *Mabahith al-dalil al-Lafzi*, Vol. 2, p. 37 and handwritings of his lectures by Ayatullah Sayyid Kazim Ha'iri, pp. 419 & 420.

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