

A Comparative Study of the Issue of God's Names and Attributes in New Theology and Transcendental Wisdom

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Abstract: *This research aims to conduct a comparative study of the issue of God's names and attributes in Islamic theology and transcendental wisdom. Theological and doctrinal discussions have always been subjects of debate and dialogue, contributing significant excitement to the scholarly discourse. Among these discussions, the topic of God's names and attributes holds particular importance and has been extensively debated among Muslim philosophers and theologians, as well as in contemporary theological discourse. The perspectives and positions on this matter vary, leading to different approaches and resolutions.*

The issue of God's names and attributes is one of the most vital and perhaps the most extensive and debated topics in theology, arising within the context of the concept of divine unity (Tawhid). Following the establishment of the existence of God, the question that emerges for theologians is the nature and attributes of God. The Quran and traditions speak about God's names and attributes, while also emphasizing the transcendence of God. Consequently, theologians have perennially grappled with the question of the relationship between the essence and attributes of God.

However, this issue is more prominently discussed in contemporary theology within the language of religion, addressing the feasibility of knowing God and whether one can articulate statements about God using the natural language limited to this world.

Keywords: *Names of God, Attributes of God, Language of Religion, Attribute of Knowledge, Attribute of Will, New Theology*

I. Introduction:

The discussion on divine names and attributes is an ancient and enduring topic in the history of Islamic beliefs and thought, as well as in other divine religions. As we know, in the early centuries of Islam, the issue of "anthropomorphism and transcendence" simultaneously with issues like predestination, free will, and Imamate was among the first doctrinal questions that sparked numerous differences, dividing Muslims into various sects and groups. The debate on the names and attributes of God has its roots in the Quran. In the Quran, God's beautiful names (Al-Asma al-Husna) are mentioned four times, and believers are invited to invoke God by these names. In the logic of the Quran, servitude and spiritual perfection revolve around the "mention of the name" of God, and believers, day and night, keep His name on their tongues and in their hearts.

One of the ways to recognize God is through the perspective of divine attributes, but caution must be exercised in this path to avoid the dangers of anthropomorphism and belittlement. In verse 180 of Surah Al-A'raf, God affirms His beautiful names and attributes, inviting people to invoke Him by these names and saying, "And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names." Furthermore, in verse 11 of Surah Ash-Shura, any resemblance and anthropomorphism with God are negated, stating, "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing."

In this research, the main question is how the issue of God's attributes and names has been approached and discussed in the philosophy of Mulla Sadra and contemporary theology.

Difference between Name and Attribute, and Qualification with Attribute:

Before delving into various dimensions of the discussion on God's attributes, attention to two essential points is necessary:

A. The difference between name and attribute in Islamic culture. "Name" in its literal sense means a sign or a symbol. A name is a nominal representation that distinguishes something from other things. "Attribute," in one usage, is a kind of name that, in addition to being a sign, also indicates a meaningful existence in the essence. As Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani (P740-816) defines attributes, "The attribute is the name that indicates some of the states of the essence. Therefore, any attribute can also be considered a name (Zamakhshari, 1407, V4, 344), but not every name is an attribute (Tafazani, 1409, V4, P344)." While Tabarsi mentions that perhaps no name among the names of God expresses a perfection of His perfections (Tabarsi, V3-4, P773), and on this basis, all the names of God are considered His attributes (Rayshahri, 1452, V3, P423-425).

. As mentioned in one of the narrations, "the names of God are attributes that He has mentioned in describing Himself (Kolaini, V1, 88)." Similarly, in Islamic traditions, expressions like "Sami' (Hearer)" and "Basir (Seer)" are sometimes referred to as names and sometimes as attributes (Sheikh Sadouq, 1405, P178-179).

However, some Muslim scholars have established a distinction between the terms "name" and "attribute" of God: "A name is derivative because 'All-Knowing,' 'All-Powerful,' and the like name, and an attribute is original because 'knowledge,' 'power,' and similar qualities are attributes" (Sabzevari, 1380, p.55). This difference has been interpreted in various ways in different schools of theological, philosophical, and mystical thought (Mulla Sadra, 1981, vol.6, p.282).

B. The difference between qualification and attribute. Some have posited differences between the two terms (Asgari, 1353, p.19). Expressions such as: "Qualification in language means expressing a quality that is in the qualified, and the attribute itself is what is in it" (Mesri, 1418, vol.1, p.505; Bukhari, 1411, p.111). Or: "Qualification is realized in the one qualifying, and the attribute is in the one being qualified" (Jurjani, n.d., p.280). Some individuals who subscribe to the second view point out that despite the mentioned difference, one of these two terms is sometimes used in place of the other, either in real or figurative usage. This difference is also noticeable in the examination of the attributes of God. For example, some writers classify the Mu'tazilites as "affirmers of qualification and negators of attributes" because they refer to God as "knowledgeable without knowledge" (Ayyad, n.d., vol.2, p.283). Some Ash'aris also use these terms to explain the antiquity of God's attributes. For instance, they say, "The qualification [of God], which is the words heard or an expression of them, is other than a quality that exists in God" (Baqellani, 1414, p.245). However, in this writing, these two terms have been used interchangeably, as many researchers have adopted this approach and explicitly stated its semantic unity: "Both qualification and attribute are nouns and have a single meaning, just like promise and pledge" (Sheikh Tusi, 1381, vol.6, p.176).

II. Attributes of God:

The attributes of God can be broadly categorized into two groups:

1. Substantive, Beauty, and Perfection Attributes: These attributes express a perfection of God's perfections and have an aspect of existence and substantiation. The absence of these attributes would be considered a deficiency for God. Examples include knowledge, power, and life. As these attributes, with their inherent substantiation and perfection, contribute to the beauty and elegance of the qualified, they are also called "beauty attributes."

2. Negative, Majestic, Transcendental, and Sanctification Attributes: These attributes negate any deficiency or imperfection from God. Since deficiency and imperfection involve a kind of negation and lack of perfection, denying them from God leads to affirmation. For example, ignorance means the absence of knowledge, and negating ignorance means affirming knowledge, which itself is a form of perfection. Thus, all negative attributes ultimately return to substantive attributes. Negative attributes such as: not ignorant, not unable, and so on. . .

These attributes are called Transcendence and sanctification attributes because they distance God from any deficiencies. They are also referred to as majestic attributes because they elevate God's status above being characterized by shortcomings. (Tabatabai, 1384, vol.2: 110-111).

Non-limited Divine Names:

Mulla Sadra, after providing a definition of divine names and offering some explanations on how divine names exist without limitations or "non-limitedness," argues that divine names, which are the means of His effusion, are non-countable. Thus, he states the divine names and the manifestations of these names are existential and unified in meaning. Regardless of whether these manifestations are sensory forms or intellectual forms, he asserts that the limitation of a thing is expressed through detailed intellectual forms represented by multiple words referring to a single concept. Therefore, it is necessary that the meaning of all divine names and their existential manifestations which are outwardly and inwardly the parts of the universe with their plurality, should be a true limit for the concept of the name "Allah". Thus, all the true meanings of the realities of the created world must be limitations for the name of Allah, meaning that, for a definition, one must comprehend it. Therefore, humans should confine it within their understanding, just as all the meanings of divine names are limitations for God. However, unlike the limits of finite things that the human mind can encompass, the other limits of things may be surrounded by the human rational perception. In contrast, the meanings of divine names are infinite.

The term " Truth " in that context, where it was mentioned, "If the truth had no limit, it would be confined," refers to the various meanings attributed to the name of Allah. These meanings are validated based on their general significance and rational understanding, not in terms of the true essence of their meanings, which is the essence of Oneness and the Most Unseen. The truth, in this context, lacks attributes, limitations, names, or forms. No rational means can comprehend its essence, and those with insight and spiritual intuition can only perceive a fraction of its divine radiance after the annihilation of their existence within it. (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, vol.1, p.39).

Difference between the Divine Names and Attributes from the Perspective of Mulla Sadra:

Mulla Sadra believes that the attributes and perfections of the Transcendent God are, firstly, essentially and exclusively related to Himself and, secondarily, related to creatures per accidens.

The root of this unity is the self-sufficiency of the Divine, as "Samad" in the sense of "full" and "complete." This inherent fullness leads to the overflow of divine perfections and their manifestation in the realm of possibilities. In created beings, attributes are distinct from the essence, and there is no substantiality between the essence and attributes. The essence is purely existent and simple, while the attributes are equally simple and transcendent. Thus, there is no inherent conflict between them, unlike in the created realm where attributes can be conflicting.

All the attributes of God are necessary to His existence, forming a unified whole despite their multiplicity. God's attributes surpass sensory perception; He is neither tangible nor subject to sensory manifestations. All goodness originates from Him, making Him the essence of all existences, and the relation of essential attributes to Him is akin to the relation of existence to essence (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1363, p. 254).

Although His essence is necessary for existence, the unity of essence and attributes in the realm of analogy is similar to the unity of existence and essence, to the extent that they cannot be conceptually separated.

Among the negative attributes of God is His lack of substance, as He lacks a nature, non-spatiality, as He requires no subject, and non-materiality, as He is not composed of matter and form. Thus, He is a simple reality, and the existence of every creature depends on Him, and their survival is contingent on Him (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1363, p. 254).

In the divine names and attributes, possibility is inconceivable; it is an existence without absence, an act without potency, an obligation without possibility, and goodness free from evil, as He is infinite and limitless. In the realm of the possible, knowledge and power are two distinct qualities, whereas in the existence of the Almighty, they are essentially one. All His attributes are not only identical but also lack differentiation in terms of action and effect (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 6: 115).

The classifications of divine names according to Mulla Sadra:

Mulla Sadra believes that attributes are either affirmative and existential or negative and sanctifying. These two attributes are expressed in the Quran in the verse: "Blessed is the name of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Generosity (Ar-Rahman/78)."

From his perspective, the attribute of Majesty distinguishes His essence from any resemblance to other majesties and elevates it, ultimately returning all attributes to a single negation, which is the negation of possibility. The second type (attributes of generosity) is divided into essential (such as life and knowledge) and additional (such as creativity and sustenance). All essential attributes return to necessary existence, and all additional attributes return to the unique addition, which is "guardianship" (Sadr al-Muta'allihin, 1981, Vol. 6, p. 118).

Mulla Sadra discusses both essential and active attributes in his works, emphasizing their intrinsic connection with the essence and their transcendence over the essence. He argues that the distinction between essential and active attributes is not one of unity and multiplicity, as both derive from the same reality. The differentiation lies solely in their essential identity with the essence and their additional nature beyond it (JavadiAmoli, Vol. 6, Part 2, p. 340.)

Mulla Sadra's perspective on the divine essence and attributes:

From perspective of the transcendent wisdom, God is characterized by the utmost intensity and simplicity due to the principle of simple reality. God possesses all attributes and perfections inherently. Attributes are not additional to the essence; rather, each attribute is a realization of another, and all attributes are inherently present in the essence of the Almighty. The only distinction among them is in terms of conceptual understanding. Mulla Sadra argues that every perfection added to beings is essential for the Almighty but is contingent on others, as they depend on His emanation. Therefore, the Almighty inherently possesses all existential perfections, such as life, guardianship, knowledge, power, and will, not as additional qualities but because in the assumption of additional attributes, the bestowal of these perfections upon other beings would imply a dependence on another life, power, knowledge, and will. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 6: 143-144). In terms of essentiality, he writes, "Essentiality means that the essence is such that all these attributes and meanings are inherent in it without the need for a separate attribute to affirm them" (ibid, 145.)

According to the principle of suspicion in existence, the more potent and exalted the existence, the more virtues and effects it possesses. The multitude of concepts and their abstraction refers to different degrees of perfections within that existence. Since these concepts and rational matters are abstracted from the essence of that existence, their judgment is the same as the judgment of its essence and nature. Thus, all these concepts and matters are unified in existence and exist about the essence of the being (ibid, 281-282.)

Mulla Sadra elucidates the essentiality of the essence and attributes by drawing on the issue of the primacy of existence. He considers the essence akin to existence and attributes as akin to nature. From this perspective, existence is essential, and concepts and natures are considered valid. The multitude derived from concepts and natures is considered valid, and the attribution of various attributes to the oneness essence of God is not considered inconsistent with His unity and simplicity .

He further explains this matter in more detail in the Shavad Al-Rububiyya :

"Just as existence and essence both exist in external reality and existence is essentially derived from it and is ascribed to the essence both in terms of existence and essence, names and attributes of the Almighty are also not independently existent. Instead, they exist by themselves and as a separate existence due to the existence of the Almighty, and, in terms of reality, they are manifestations of His oneness. (Mulla Sadra, 1360: 39)."

Therefore, names and attributes are established and realized within the essence of the Divine before their manifestation from Him. The proof and existence of these names and attributes are similar to the proof of the existence of essence; they are essentially inseparable from the essence and do not have the potential for fabrication. It's like nature, which cannot be said to be created or uncreated, but it is created indirectly through its existence. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 6: 282.)

Mulla Sadra explains the saying of Imam Ali in Nahj Al-Balagha, "The perfection of sincerity is the negation of attributes from Him" (Nahj Al-Balagha, Sermon 1). He clarifies that the negation is about attributes exceeding the essence, not an absolute negation of attributes. It means if attributes are more than the essence, they contradict it and should not be attributed to the essence. (Mulla Sadra, 1981, Vol. 6: 141). Therefore, from the perspective of transcendent wisdom, the variation between essence and attributes is in terms of concept, but in the realm of existence, there is no change, and the essence and attributes exist as one.

The Divine Names and Attributes in New Theology

The Significance of Divine Attributes

Philosophers have focused on the language of religion for two primary reasons. The first reason is their interest in the issue of meaning, wanting to understand how the terms regarding the Lord convey meaning. Philosophers strive to answer the question of how, with words used to speak about created phenomena, one can meaningfully discuss God, whose existential rank is far superior and transcendent. The second reason for philosophers' interest in the discourse of religion is their pursuit of analyzing and evaluating religious beliefs, which are expressed in the form of propositions. Understanding the language that serves as the tool for expressing various religious beliefs is essential for a comprehensive grasp of those beliefs and serves as the groundwork for subsequent philosophical inquiries (Peterson et al., 1376: 254-255.)

Based on this foundation, the discussion on the language of religion has been presented in two specific and general categories. The specific category pertains to concepts used regarding the attributes and actions of the Lord, such as the knowledgeable and compassionate God. The general category encompasses all religious propositions, whether related to the attributes and actions of God or events, historical occurrences, natural phenomena, moral teachings, behaviors, and so forth.

Of the two mentioned issues, the one that receives more philosophical and theological discussion is the first issue. This matter has a longstanding history in both Christian theology and Islamic theology and philosophy.

Before delving into the definition of attributes, another important issue here is the relationship between the attributes of God and the essence of God. This matter is crucial because Alston believes our knowledge of God is through subject-predicate propositions; we cannot know the subject concerning God, so our only means of knowledge is through predicates, i.e., the attributes of God (Alston I, 1989: 52-154.)

In modern theology, and among most philosophers, the essential and foundational question about the possibility of genuine discourse about God revolves more around the interpretation of traditional theistic beliefs. This interpretation of God exhibits two important characteristics that seem contradictory at first glance.

A- Transcendence and otherness of God: meaning God's distinctiveness from all aspects of the entire creation.

B- Immanence or personhood of God: meaning the personal agency and action, or possessing distinctively human attributes.

The otherness of God

The otherness of God, or transcendence, implies that God while having objective reality, is different from every aspect of the created world (Alston K, 1989: 172). Concerning the origin of this attribute in monotheistic theology and what qualities in God lead to His absolute uniqueness, we can address this inquiry based on whether this theology is founded on God's role as the creator, His supreme perfection, or His self-existent essence, among other aspects. By doing so, we can elucidate the qualities that render God entirely distinct within this theology.

In traditional monotheistic theology, God is deemed the creator of all, not a creation of Himself. This creative nature applies both to the inception of creation and its continuity. "It is not only that God brings forth every creature at the outset, but also that God's creatorship and eternal activities necessitate the perpetual preservation of creations in existence" (Alston J, 1989: 197).

In this theology, from another perspective, due to the absolute perfection of God, He is eternally complete, surpassing any conceivable perfection. (Alston F, 1989: 124) He lacks any deficiency or need in Himself or any of His attributes. In His absolute perfection, if He is knowledgeable, His knowledge is absolute, and similarly, His absolute power is limitless and infinite. In a word, He is Infinity and inconceivably superior, devoid of any conceivable comparison. Consequently, He is inherently simple, and cannot be physical, but he is incorporeal, devoid of senses, and motionless.

From the standpoint of God's essential being and self-existent nature in this theology, no other entity has any role in His existence. Alston articulates this by stating, "God's existence is not contingent on anything external; God necessarily exists and is present in every possible world" (Alston J, 1989: 198). In addition to existence, "He is the total necessity in all perfections, and every true proposition about Him is necessarily true" (Alston F, 1989: 123).

Another characteristic of God in this theology is His absolute simplicity. He does not belong to any specific kind or genus because there is nothing that shares His nature. Therefore, unlike other beings, He lacks attributes and qualities that can be distinctly separated, meaning He does not possess human-like attributes that imply composition and complexity. In essence, in this theology, everything that can be said about the nature of God boils down to His uniqueness, and within this uniqueness lies His complete distinctiveness.

Actual Attributes of God

As mentioned earlier, Alston regards three attributes as crucial in distinguishing God entirely from other beings: incorporeality, timelessness, and infiniteness (Alston C, 1989: 72). Therefore, he endeavors to demonstrate that God is not hindered by these three characteristics to perform functions and operations similar to those of humans.

God's incorporeality

Certainly, I'll do my best to translate the text while adhering to your guidelines. Here's the translation:

One of the obstacles to the actual resemblance of humans to God is God's incorporeal nature, as every action and behavior in humans necessitates body movement. For instance, philosopher Paul Edwards argues in his renowned article 'Problems of the Idea of God' that 'we cannot explain human actions except by referring to bodily movements' (Edwards, 1970: 48). Similarly, thinkers like Kai Nielsen, a Canadian analytical philosopher, assert in the article 'Contemporary Criticisms of Religion' that every intentional action requires bodily movements by the actor (Novak, 2008: 117). Thus, qualities of action and practice do not apply to an incorporeal being without a body. Therefore, beyond these qualities, if we don't assume that every mental attribute, such as love, also serves as a guide and director, these attributes will never apply to God. In other words, if the word 'love' is to have the same human meaning, it would be meaningless to say that God loves in a human sense without having a body (Ibid, 118), and the same applies to other mental concepts.

Timelessness of God

The second aspect distinguishing God from humans is His timelessness. In classical monotheistic interpretation, God is devoid of time, preventing the attribution of actual attributes to Him. Actions and deeds are processes that unfold gradually within the framework of time. Therefore, functional concepts of mental attributes, derived from the functioning of humans, which are time-bound entities, do not apply to a timeless being. On one hand, according to many contemporary functionalists, causal relationships arising from internal and external factors and other mental states as the basis and conditions for realization occur temporally. Faced with these challenges,

Alston doesn't accept the conventional meaning of action, where time is an intrinsic part of the concept of the action and causal relationships are necessarily time-sequential. In his view, time serves as a container for the realization of an action, not a component of its meaning. Consequently, with some expansion in the meaning of action derived from human conduct, it can also be attributed to a timeless being (Alston C, 1989: 72). Moreover, he argues that an action that occurs based on a causal relationship is not always sequential but can sometimes be contingent on the coexistence of causes and reasons (Ibid, 73)."

Infinity of God

The infinity of God implies the absence of any deficiencies, His independence from anything, and His perfection in all attributes, possessing all excellences such as omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness. Alston focuses his argument on the two descriptions "wanting" and "knowing" to demonstrate that attributing human mental actions or qualities to God is not inconsistent with His infinity, necessity, and non-contradiction. He specifically concentrates on these two descriptions as they have been widely accepted by functionalists, acknowledging their functional structure and guiding nature for specific actions and behaviors. Other philosophers have also used terms like will, desire, intention for wanting, and awareness, perception, and knowledge for knowing (Alston B, 1989: 51).

Another significant reason for choosing these two descriptions is their apparent contradiction with the description of God's infinity. Wanting something in humans implies that the desirer has a deficiency or lack, which they strive to overcome by achieving their desired goal (Alston C, 1989: 75). Similarly, the acquisition of knowledge in humans occurs through premises and reasoning, a process applicable only to beings with a possible lack of knowledge or ignorance, striving to eliminate this deficiency through deductive reasoning (Ibid, 77).

Analysis of the Description of Wanting or Will in God

Many functionalists have discussed the description of wanting or will under various titles and for different purposes. Alston, agreeing with the views presented by Brandet and Kim in the article "Wanting as the Explanation of Action," prefers a semantic interpretation of this description. They interpret the functional aspect of the description of wanting or intention to encompass its entirety.

In summary, they argue that if the statement "Person X wants P" is meaningful, then wanting entails the following functions:

- The unexpected occurrence of P brings happiness to X, and its absence results in dissatisfaction (even imagining P for X is satisfying).
- If X is aware that acting A leads to the realization of P, X will tend to perform A and will want P to follow if there are no obstacles.
- If X is aware that the obstacles to achieving P are absent, X will be happy.

These inclinations, awareness, and behaviors create a mental state in X known as wanting, enabling us to comprehend a functional understanding of the description of wanting (Alston B, 1989: 51-52).

Elaboration on the Nature of God's Knowledge

Alston presents two perspectives on the nature of God's knowledge: the propositional view and the intuitive view. According to the propositional view, God's knowledge is akin to human knowledge, consisting of propositions. For instance, God's knowledge of human speech is formulated as: every human is capable of speech. In contrast, the intuitive view posits that God's knowledge is intuitive, encompassing all the constituents of knowledge within God, who contemplates them within His essence.

Alston offers reasons to refute the attribution of belief to God. Whether God possesses belief or not hinges on whether beliefs are components of divine knowledge. According to Alston, irrespective of our stance on divine knowledge, beliefs are not components of divine knowledge (Alston F, 1989: 163).

Alston discusses two perspectives on the nature of God's knowledge: the propositional view and the intuitive view. Statements like 'God knows that the Israelites worship idols' often represent divine knowledge in a propositional manner. Conversely, some thinkers believe that God's knowledge is not propositional but rather, it is an indistinct intuition of the world. (Alston A, 1989: 181). According to Alston, in neither of these perspectives does God truly become a holder of belief in the literal sense (ibid: 182).

Intuitive Interpretation of Knowledge

The intuitive interpretation of knowledge posits that knowledge is simply a direct and immediate awareness of reality. According to Peirce's formulation, knowledge is 'merely a situation where an identity or reality is immediately present to consciousness' (Peirce, 1935: 57). Despite the strong and thorough beliefs of many English and American epistemologists, the interpretive understanding of belief aligns more prominently with traditional interpretation. However, historically, the intuitive interpretation has gained more prominence. This interpretation dominated the 17th and 18th centuries, taking on a transformative role in Descartes' interpretation of clear and distinct perception and Locke's definition of knowledge as the agreement or disagreement with ideas or representations.

According to this perspective, knowledge and belief are different psychological states. I can believe in p without p being true. However, in the state of knowledge that this interpretation claims, I cannot be in a state of knowledge about p without p being true. Therefore, this state is the presence of the fact in my awareness, and without such a factual presence, such a state cannot exist. Knowledge is not a state that can exist without the actual existence of the proposition as something that inherently exists; knowledge has no intrinsic nature other than the presence of the proposition in awareness. Thus, knowledge, according to this interpretation, is strictly truth-conducive; its intrinsic nature ensures the reality of the proposition (Alston, 1989: 191).

Considering this interpretation, it becomes apparent why self-knowledge, knowledge of mental states, and other empirical sciences are inherently truth-conducive. In these cases, the actual objective reality is presented to awareness, unlike empirical sciences where mental forms and concepts mediate and may not perfectly correspond to external objects. After proving the empirical knowledge of the self, Sheikh Ishraq emphasizes transcendence from matter and dominance, highlighting that "if the dominance of the self over the body is greater, the presence of its faculties will be more intense for the self" (Suhrawardi, 1372, Vol. 1: 73).

Error in perception is conceivable when there is an intermediary between the perceiving subject and the essence being perceived, and awareness through this intermediary comes into being. In such a case, the question arises whether this form or concept that is intermediated between the perceiver and the perceived truly represents the essence of the perceiver and perfectly corresponds to it or not. Until it is established that this form or concept precisely matches the essence of the perceiver, certainty about the accuracy of perception cannot be achieved. However, if an object or person is present to the perceiver without any intermediary and is identical to the perceiver or has unity or union with it, there is no room for assuming error. And it is not possible to question whether knowledge is by the known or not because in this case, knowledge is identical to the known.

Therefore, according to Alston's perspective, the nature of God's knowledge is direct intuition, and hence, considering the challenges posed by believing in God's knowledge, it cannot be equated with belief. However, after recognizing that the nature of God's knowledge cannot be believed, it is necessary to analyze the functional role of God's knowledge from Alston's perspective.

Conclusion:

In the discourse on the Names and Attributes of God, Mulla Sadra asserts that the attributes of creatures exist in a simple and complete form in the transcendent Lord. While elaborating on certain characteristics such as self-subsistence, necessity, actuality, simplicity, independence, and substantiality, he contrasts these with their absence, namely possibility, contingency, dependence, and non-substantiality, highlighting the distinction between divine Names and Attributes and those of the created realm.

According to Mulla Sadra, humans possess the capability to recognize God and His Attributes. Without this ability, human incapacity in understanding God and His attributes would block the path of divine recognition, contradicting the wisdom and benevolence of God.

However, in new theology, thinkers like Alston posit that although God possesses attributes distinct from humans, it is possible to comprehend God and His attributes through human language by refining its expression. Alston endeavors to align the theory of functionalism in the philosophy of mind with the attributes and actions of God. Through this alignment, a common core of meaning is derived, allowing these attributes to apply to both humans and God. Consequently, it can be claimed that genuine discourse about the attributes and actions of God is possible, leading to a direct and authentic understanding.

Both philosophers agree that the expression of God's attributes shares a spiritual meaning with that of humans, signifying a unity in meaning but with a difference in existential intensity.

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