

## **H. A. Wolfson & A. H. Kamali on the Origin of the Problem of Divine Attributes in Muslim Kalam**

The problems dealt with by the Muslim Kalam are at least of three types. Some of them are purely religious; some are purely philosophical; some are problems of religion treated in terms of philosophy<sup>1</sup>. It is my humble contention that not only the problems of purely philosophical nature, but also at least some of the problems of purely religious nature, along with almost all of the problems of religion treated in terms of philosophy, have their origin either in Plato or Aristotle. It is my contention that many of these problems even could not have arisen, had the Muslims not accepted Greek Philosophers views passed to them through Christianity or through Judaism. Since it is not possible to analyze all the problems in such a brief article, I have selected the problem of the nature of Divine Attributes, a problem apparently of essentially religious nature, to prove my contention. I intend to show in what follows, that the problem of Divine Attributes in Muslim Kalam, ultimately has its origin in one of the different interpretations of Plato's theory of Ideas as a further development mainly of the problem of "the relation of God, the world of Ideas, and the *Logos*" dealt with by Philo, and the reconstruction of Philo's ideas by the Church Fathers into Trinity. And as far as the

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### **REFERENCES**

Problem of the createdness/uncreatedness of the Qurān, Beautific Vision, problem of the creation of the world as *ex-nihilo* or 'out of something', Atomism, Causality, Predestination and Free Will, Problem of the relation of Faith & Action, are some of the different problems dealt with by muslim *mutakalimoon*. Mir Valliuddin, 'Mu'tazilism' & M. Abdul Hye, 'Ash'arism' in *History of Muslim Philosophy* Vol. 1, by M.M. Sharif (ed.), Royal Book Company, Karachi--3, 1983, pp. 202-214 and pp. 224-243. Also please see H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Kalam* Harvard University Press, 1976, Contents, pp.xi-xxvi.

semantic aspect of the same problem in Muslim Kalam is concerned, it is based on discussions on the “Unknowability of God and Divine Predicates” both in Philo and the Church Fathers.

Before we embark upon this discussion let us make a very important point clear. It is usually thought among our scholars that the thought of the orientalist is mostly infected with general Western malady — of their views being far fetched to the extent of absurdity. I agree with this view, but it can not be made a rule. As for Wolfson’s views concerning the different interpretations of Platonic Ideas is concerned, it is a fact of history that philosophers have disagreed as to the real nature of their relationship with God.<sup>2</sup> According to my understanding Wolfson has traced the development of Intradeical interpretation of Platonic Ideas with full logical consistency. Wolfson’s views on this specific problem of Divine Essence & Attributes, as I understand it, are far fetched to the least. To my mind, there is a similar malady found in the views of muslim philosophers in general — to try to prove by far fetched explanations that the views of the muslim theologians and for that matter, the muslim philosophers, were somehow or the other originated from the spirit of Islamic teachings; and that if they were influenced by Greek or other alien thought, only to the extent of their being consistent with the spirit of Qura’nic teachings; hence it was a creative assimilation and not a blind acceptance of alien thought.<sup>3</sup> A. H. Kamali in a series of his three

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“A part of that [Platonic] teaching is the much-disputed theory of Ideas. The theory is doubtless basic to all Plato’s thought, but is presented in so many ways and attended by so many difficulties that scholar’s have been for from certain about its meaning.” Irene Samuel, *Plato And Milton*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1965, p. 131.

Reference here is to *Studies in Muslim Philosophy*, by M. Saeed Sheikh, and ‘*Ibn e Tamiyya ka Tassawar e Sifāt*’ article by Moulana M. Hanif Nadvi in *Pakistan Philosophical Journal*, V, January 1962, Pakistan Philosophical Congress Lahore. Professor M. Saeed Shaikh in his Book *Studies in Muslim Philosophy* tries to prove that the views of the muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn e Sina were a creative assimilation and not a blind following of the Greeks on the face of the fact that he

articles (referred to at end note no. 26), has presented the views similar to Wolfson on the origin of the problem of Divine Attributes in Muslim Kalam. Kamali's articles are rather more comprehensive and enlightening than Wolfson as he not only traces the origin and development of this problem in Muslim theology & Philosophy but also he traces the development of this problem in '*Tasawuf*'. Abdul Hameed Kamali also makes a more significant and positive contribution by presenting a quite new and genuine attempt in the right direction as I see it, i.e., at the development of a Logic of Divine Names. In this article, I have tried to make a critique of the Muslim Kalam on the problem of divine attributes by presenting with approval the views of Wolfson on the origin of this problem; and have presented the views of A. H. Kamali to make a comparison and to show similarity and continuity in their thought. With this explanation, let us now specify the different aspects of this problem in Muslim Kalam to trace its origin.<sup>4</sup>

In the Qur'an, Allah is described by what the Qur'an refers to as "the Most Beautiful Names of Allah" such for instance, "as the Living", "the Powerful", "the Beneficent", "the Wise" and so forth up to ninety-nine. In the early centuries of Islam i.e., as early as the first part of the eighth century, there arose in Islam a view, first with regard to only two of these Names and then with regard to all other Names by which Allah is designated, that each Name reflects some real being existing in Allah as something superadded and distinct from His

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himself analyses Ibn Sina's theory of Emanation and Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars to be quite contrary to be the spirit of Islamic teachings.

"Philo Judaeus is one of the writers who first attempted to reconcile Plato with Holy Writ. Philo Judaeus initiated the system of Biblical exegesis which made of the text a peg from which to suspend Plato's doctrines." Irene Samuel, *Plato And Milton*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1965, p. 37-

Essence, but inseparable from It and coeternal with It.<sup>5</sup> In the history of Muslim Kalam, the belief that certain terms attributed to Allah in the Qurān stand for real incorporeal beings which exist in Allah from eternity, is known as *Attributism*. This belief soon became the orthodox belief in Islam.<sup>6</sup> However, as soon as the belief in real attributes had been introduced, there arose opposition to it. This opposition declared the terms predicated of Allah in the Qurān, to be only Names of Allah, designating His actions, and hence the so-called attributes were not real beings and other than the essence of Allah: they were identical with His essence. In the history of Muslim Kalam this view is known by *Anti-attributism* or by the *Denial of the Reality of Attributes*. This view arose during the first half of the eighth century and is generally ascribed to Wāsil b. Atā of Basra, the founder of *Mu‘tazilism*<sup>7</sup>. And with the gradual introduction of Greek Philosophy into Islam, the problem of attributes became identified with the problem of Platonic Ideas, or rather with the problem of ‘universals’, as the problem of Platonic Ideas was called by that time, and with that the controversy between *Attributists* and the *Anti-attributists* in Islam became a controversy over

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Wolfson, ‘Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretation of Platonic Ideas’ in *Religious Philosophy (A Group of Essays)* by H. A. Wolfson (ed.), Harvard University Press, 1961, p.49.

*Ibid.*, and *The Philosophy of Kalam* Harvard University Press, 1976, chapter 2, Wolfson seems to have successfully shown that this view “could not have originated in Islam spontaneously but it could have originated under Christian influence in the course of debates between Muslims and Christians shortly after the conquest of Syria in the VII century. Majid Fakhry in his book *A History of Islamic Philosophy* also seems to endorse the same point of view when he says “Scholastic theology ... gave the Muslims, as it had given the Christians of Egypt and Syria centuries earlier, the incentive to pursue the study of Greek Philosophy.”, or when he says, “The beginning of the Islamic Philosophical school coincides with the first translations of the works of the Greek masters into Arabic from Syriac or Greek.” (Introduction, p.xviii, xix)

*The Philosophy of The Kalam, Ibid.*, p.132.

‘universals’ as to whether they were *extradeical* or *intradeical* <sup>8</sup> (as will be discussed later). It is during this new phase of the problem that the theory of Modes(*ahwal*) as a new conception of the relation of attributes to Allah, makes its appearance. Dissatisfied, as they were, with both the *Attributism* (that attributes were really “existent”), and the *Anti-attributism* (that they were mere Names, hence “nonexistent”), the exponents of this new theory declared that attributes, now surnamed as modes, were “neither existent nor non-existent.” Abū Hāshim is the main exponent of this theory.<sup>9</sup> Some others among the *Anti-attributists* made an exception of certain terms predicated of Allah and treated them as things which were real and created. This is known as the *Theory of Exceptional Nature of Terms*. The terms treated by them in such manner were: (1) Knowledge (2) Will (3) Word(*Kalam*).<sup>10</sup>

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*Ibid.*, ‘*Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretation of Platonic Ideas*’ (article) p.52.

This theory introduced two innovations to the discussion of attributes. They replaced the old formula “neither God nor other than God” by “neither existent nor non-existent” as a description of modes in their contrast to attributes as conceived by the *Orthodox* and the *Mu‘tazilites*. Second, they introduced the view that modes are related to Allah as effects to their cause. The *Orthodox* had spoken regarding the attributes as being coeternal with Allah, or subsisting in His Essence, or being superadded to His Essence, without any suggestion that they were proceeding from Him as from a cause.

Jahm and Abu al Hudhail are the proponents of this view. Jahm though agrees with the *Mu‘tazilites* in denial of attributes he is reported to have said that “God’s knowledge is originated(*muhdath*) or created(*makhluk*).. Abu al Hudhail is reported to have said that the “Will” of Allah is not mere a word nor an eternal attribute with Allah, it rather exists as an incorporeal real being created of Allah outside himself. He is also reported to have regarded the attribute “Word”(*Kalam*) as of exceptional nature. He divided this term as attributed in the Qurān in two kinds: one kind is the term “Be”(*Kun*) and the other is “Command”(*Amr*). While both these kinds of the attribute “Word” are created, according to him, the creative Word or Command is created but incorporeal whereas the obligative Word or Command is created in an *abode* where by *abode* is meant the Preserved Tablet in the Heaven. Cf. *The Philosophy of The Kalam, Ibid.*, p.140-41.

The theory of modes which arose among the Mu‘tazilites as a moderate form of their denial of real attributes was, according to the testimony of Ibn-Hazm, adopted by some Asha‘rites as a moderate form of their affirmation of attributes. Two of such Asha‘rites, Bakillani and Juwaini, are mentioned by Shahrastani in his ‘*Nihayat*’.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the semantic aspect of the problem is concerned, it appears in the Kalam in two forms. The first form of the problem is how one is to take the Qurānic terms which describe Allah in the likeness of created beings. The basis of this problem is the Qurānic teaching that there is no likeness between Allah and other beings, expressed in such verses as “*Not is there like Him*”(42:9), and “*There is none equal with Him*” (112:4). Among the Attributists there were different opinions on this form of the problem. There were Likeners(*al-mushabbihah*), who disregarding the above mentioned verses, took the terms predicated of Allah in their extreme literalness. Then there were some who claimed that all terms predicated of Allah, while not establishing a likeness between Allah and other beings, should be taken literally to mean exactly what they say, however without asking “how”( *bila kayfa wa la tashbih*). Another group claimed that any term predicated of Allah was unlike the same term predicated of any other being, without however giving it a new unlike meaning. The Anti-attributists, however, all agreed that common terms predicated of Allah were, not only to be taken literally, but were also to be given new non-literal meanings. The second form of the semantic aspect, for both the Attributists and the Anti-attributists, was the search for the formula which would express their respective conceptions of attributes.

The formula that “attributes are neither Allah nor other than Allah” was first presented by Suleman b. Jarir al-Zaidy flourished at about 785 a.d. The same formula is used by Hisham bin al-Hakam(d.814 a.d.). The next to use the same formula is Ibn Kullab(d. 854), a Sunnite.

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*The Philosophy of The Kalam, Ibid., p.175.*

Wolfson gives the name of Kullabite Formula to it after him. About a century latter, the Kullabite formula was adopted by Abu Hashim, however, replacing the term “attribute” to “mode”.<sup>12</sup> At about the same time Asha‘ri adopted the Kullabite formula and another formula to construct a new formula. Hence he is reported to have said: Coexistent with Allah are things (*ashya*=attributes) other than Himself (*siwahu*).<sup>13</sup>

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According to Wolfson, among the things which Plato somehow left un-explained about his Theory of Ideas is the question: How are these ideas related to God? Sometimes he uses language from which we get that the Ideas have an existence external to God, either ungenerated and coeternal with God or produced or made by God: they are thus *extradeical*. Sometimes, however, he (i.e., Plato) uses language from which we get that the Ideas are the thoughts of God. They are *intradeical*. This second interpretation identifies Plato's God with mind. According to Wolfson, more than two methods have been applied by the students of Platonic philosophy to solve these real or seeming contradictions in his thought:

Modern students of Plato try to solve the problem by assuming that these different views about ideas were held by Plato at different periods of his life, and so try to classify his dialogues according to certain chronological schemes and speak of early dialogues, middle dialogues, and later dialogues;

The second method which is applied by the students of Platonic Philosophy is what Wolfson calls the Method of Selection & Rejection. The followers of this method

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Abu Hasham says of modes that they are “neither Allah nor other than Allah”. Hence it no longer is meant to describe a belief in the reality of attributes.

*The Philosophy of The Kalam, Ibid., p.212.*

simply select one set of statements in Plato and accept them as representative of his true philosophy and reject all the other statements as of no account. This method is applied by the early students of Plato's philosophy in antiquity.<sup>14</sup>

While these two contrasting methods of interpreting Plato's Ideas were followed by pagan philosophers, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria introduced a new method which though less convenient was more subtle. Wolfson describes this method, in its general form, as Method of Harmonization. According to this method, all the statements in Plato, however contradictory they may appear to be, are assumed to be true, and out of all of them a harmonious composite view is formed, in which all the apparently contradictory statements are made to cohere with each other.<sup>15</sup> Wolfson calls the method of Harmonization, in its specific form as introduced by Philo as Harmonization by Succession. Christian Fathers followed him in this method of integrating *Extradeical & Intradeical* interpretations of Platonic Ideas but with some difference. Wolfson calls this harmonization as Harmonization by Unification.

According to Philo's interpretation of Platonic Ideas, “when God by His own good will decided to create this world of ours, He first, out of the Ideas which had been in His Thought from eternity, constructed an ‘*intelligible world*’, and this *intelligible world* He placed in the *Logos*, which had likewise existed previously from eternity in His Thought. Then in the likeness of this *intelligible world* of ideas, He created this “*visible world*” of ours.”<sup>16</sup> Philo, thus integrated Platonic Ideas into an *intelligible world of Ideas* contained in a *Nous* called

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Wolfson, *Ibid.*, article pp.28-29.

*Ibid.*, pp.30-31. Such a method of interpretation was used by Jewish rabbis in their effort to harmonise contradictory statements in Hebrew Scripture.

*Ibid.*, p.31.



*Logos*<sup>17</sup> so that the original problem of the relation of Platonic Ideas to God becomes with him a problem of the relation of the *Logos* to God, and the problem is solved by him on the assumption of two successive stages of existence in the *Logos*, an *intradeical* one followed by an *extradeical* one. When we compare this account of creation with the story of creation as told by Plato in his *Timaeus*, we see that in Plato, there is a God who is called the Demiurge, the Creator. Besides the Demiurge, there is a model which is coeternal with the Demiurge. Plato calls this model as ‘the intelligible animal’. According to Plato this model contains in itself ‘intelligible animals’. The Demiurge looked at the intelligible animal and he created this world of ours in its likeness, which Plato calls ‘the visible animal’.<sup>18</sup>

We can readily see that what Philo was trying to do was to interpret the story of creation of the Book of Genesis in terms of the story of creation in the *Timaeus*.<sup>19</sup> In fact, this was his purpose.

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Wolfson tries to prove that Philo had identified *Logos* with *Nous*, however Dr. C.A.Qadir mentions the word ‘Sophia’ as used by Philo, instead of ‘Nouse’.(‘Alexandrio-Syriac Thought’, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy* vol.1,1983, ed. M.M.Sharif, p.117.)

Wolfson, *Ibid.*, article.

However there are some differences too. The first difference is that Philo describes the contrast between the *pre-existent ideas* and the *created world* as a contrast between *the intelligible animal* and *the visible animal*. As for the significance of this difference is concerned, it involves two problems: i) the problem of the existence of a world soul. To Plato there is a World-Soul, a Soul, which exists in the body of the world, just as there is a soul which exists in the body of any living being. To Philo, however, there is no World-Soul. The function of the Platonic as well as the Stoic, *World Soul* which is a soul immanent in the world, is performed in Philo's philosophy partly by *Logos*, which with the creation of the world becomes immanent in it, and partly by what he calls the *Divine Spirit*, which is incorporeal being not immanent in the world. Without a soul, the world to Philo is not an

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Philo and Jesus Christ were contemporaries. By the time Philo preached his philosophical sermons in the houses of worship of Alexandria, Jesus preached his sermons in the synagogues of Galilee. About half a century later there appeared one of the four standard biographies of Christ, the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel according to St. John. This biography of Christ is based upon the theory, introduced by Paul, that before Christ was born there was a pre-existent Christ, an idea of Christ. This pre-existent idea of Christ, which in the letters of Paul is called *Wisdom* or perhaps also *Spirit* is described in this biography of Jesus by the term *Logos*, which is conventionally rendered into English by the term *Word*. “The Gospel according to St. John” opens with the verse:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”.*

Then like the *Logos* of Philo, which became immanent in the created world, the *Logos* of John, which is the pre-existent Christ, became immanent, or as it is commonly said, incarnate in the born Christ. Wolfson gives reference from the same Gospel narrating a verse which reads:

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animal being. ii) then it involves the problem of the existence of ideas as segregate beings. To Plato, all the ideas, with the exception of those of living creatures exist in segregation from each other. Whereas to Philo all the ideas are integrated into a whole, namely, the *intelligible world*; and their relation to the *intelligible world* is conceived by him as that of parts of indivisible whole, which as such has no real existence of their own apart from that of the whole. The second difference between them is that in the *Timaeus* there is no mention of a place where the ideas exist, whereas in Philo the ideas are said to have their place in the *Logos*. Now, while the term *Logos* occurs in Greek Philosophy, having been used ever since Heraclitus in various senses, it was never used as the place of the Platonic ideas. (See *Ibid*, article, p. 32)

“*And the Word was made flesh*”(1:14)<sup>20</sup>

In spite of some differences the similarities between the *Logos* of Philo and the *Logos* of John are quite striking. The two elements which were missing or at least which were not clearly stated regarding the *Logos* of John were supplied, however, in the second century by Church Fathers known as Apologists, who, having been born pagans, were before their conversion to Christianity students of philosophy. They identified the *Logos* of John with the Philonic *Logos* and thus, without the Johannine *Logos* ceasing to mean the pre-existent Christ, it acquired the two main characteristics of the Philonic *Logos* so that it was no longer a single Idea, the idea of Christ, but it became the place of *intelligible world* consisting of all ideas; then again like the Philonic *Logos*, it was made to have two stages of existence prior to its incarnation: first from eternity it was within God and identical with Him; second, from about the time of the creation of the world it was a generated real being distinct from God.

Following Philo too, these early Fathers of the Church added to the *Logos* another pre-existent incorporeal being, the Holy Spirit. Thus, together with God and the *Logos* making three pre-existent real beings, subsequently to become known as Hypostasis or persons. Now the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the New Testament but it is not clear whether it is meant to be the same as the pre-existent Christ, or whether it is meant to be a pre-existent being different from the pre-existent Christ. The Apologists, under the influence of Philo, definitely declared the Holy Spirit to be distinct from the *Logos*.<sup>21</sup> Like the *Logos*, the Holy

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Wolfson finds justification for such type of controversy in religions in the fact that in the history of religions, many a hotly debated problem was not so much over actual beliefs as over the manner in which to formulate actual beliefs. And behind it there was always the fear that a wrong formulation might lead the unwary astray. But I think that Wolfson has not given proper recognition to political interests of the ruling elite. According to my view mostly it is due to the political interests of the ruling class that one way or the other stirs controvercies in religious factions and it is after this that it becomes a problem of the sanctity of the real beliefs to some.

*Ibid.*, p.41.

Spirit was held by them to have been at first *intradeical* which then became *extradeical*. These three persons of the Trinity, however, though each of them a real being and each of them God and each of them really distinct from the others, constituted one God, who was most simple and indivisible. Since they all constitute one God, whatever is said of any of the persons of the Trinity, with the exception of the terms which describe the one single distinction between them, applies to the one indivisible God which they all constitute. Wolfson calls this type of harmonization as harmonization by unification which was added by the Apologists to the Philonic harmonization by succession.

Various attempts at explaining the unity of a triune God in the third century by Origen and others ultimately meant the reduction of the unity to a relative kind of unity. But this was not acceptable by many. There were two choices before them: either to deny that *Logos* was God, or to deny the reality of its existence. Those who followed the first alternative are Arians. Wolfson calls those who followed the second alternative, after one of its exponents, as Sabelians.

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How the Doctrine of Attributes was introduced in Islam, Wolfson claims that it is traceable to the Christian doctrine of Trinity. He not only provides external evidence in the form of tracing the origin of basic terms used in these discussions to show how such transformation was effected, but also offers logical reasons and psychological motives in favor of his claim about this transition from Trinity to Attributism.

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From the very beginning of the history of the problem of divine attributes in Islam two Arabic terms are used for what we call attribute, namely, (i) *ma'na* and (ii) *sifah*.<sup>22</sup> Now if there is any truth in what Wolfson has claimed above, these two fundamental terms used in the doctrine of attributes should reflect similar fundamental terms in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Arabic term *ma'na*, among its various meanings, also has the general meaning of “thing” and it is used as the equivalent of the term *shay*. Now it happens that in Christianity, the term “things” is used, in addition to the terms “hypostasis” and “persons” as a description of the three persons of the Trinity in order to emphasize their reality.<sup>23</sup> Similarly regarding the term *sifah* it can be shown that it also goes back to the Christian terminology of the Trinity. The term *sifah* comes from the verb *wasafa*, (to describe) which as a verb occurs in the Qurän thirteen times and of which the substantive form *wasf*, “description” only once; the term *sifah* never occurs in the Qurän. While in most cases in the Qurän, the verb *wasafa* is used with reference to what people say about God (Allah), in all these cases its usage is always with reference to something unlaudable which impious people say about God(Allah).<sup>24</sup> The laudable terms by which God(Allah) is described in the Qurän are never referred to in the Qurän by any form of the verb *wasafa*; they are referred to as the Most Beautiful Names(*al-Asma' al-Husnä*).<sup>25</sup> When this term was coined and by whom, is not known but finally it put

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*The Philosophy of the Kalam, Ibid.*, p.114, It is said that Wassail maintained, in opposition to those who believed in the reality of attributes, that “he who posits a *ma'na* and *sifah* as eternal, posits two gods.”

*Ibid.*, p.115.

*Al-Qurän*, 2:18,112; 6:100,140; 21:22; 23:93; 37:159,180; 43:82. The instances where the term is used with reference to evil things; 12:18,77; 16:64,117; 23:98.

*Al-Qurän*, 7:179; 17:110; 20:7; also *The Philosophy of the Kalam, Ibid.*, pp.117-8 and the footnote no.30 at p.118.

on the highly technical sense of the term “attribute”, and took the place of the Qurānic term *Ism* (Name). What has been said uptill now is enough to make it clear that the use of term *sifah* in the sense of *attribute*, whatever be its origin, at least is not Qurānic, rather is contrary to the Qurānic concept. Wolfson, in his book *The Philosophy of the Kalam*(p.119-120) and in his article *Extradeical & Intradeical Interpretation of Platonic Ideas* has attempted to show that the term *Sifah*, like the term *ma'nä*, is also derived from the vocabulary of the Christian Trinity. There is essential difference in the logic of the Qurānic term *Ism* (Name) and in the logic of the un-Qurānic term *sifah* (as used equivalent to the Greek term *attribute*) which the muslims failed to comprehend.<sup>26</sup> I will discuss it later.

As far as the Orthodox Muslim concept of Attributes is concerned, it can be shown that their position is like, though not exactly the same, as orthodox Christian position. If one is to put the Muslim Attributes in place of the second and third persons of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Trinity is transformed into Muslim Attributism. However unlike the second and third persons of the Trinity, which are *intradeical* and *extradeical* by unification, that is, they were at once the same as God and other than He, these orthodox Muslim attributes were *intradeical* and *extradeical* by location, that is, they were in God but other than He. Whereas the unorthodox position of the Anti-attributists in Islam corresponds to Sabellianism in Christianity.

Against the Christian concept of Trinity Qurān says: .... *say not “Three” — Cease! (it is) better for you.... Allah is only One God”* (4:171) *They surely disbelieve who say: Lo!*

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Professor Abdul Hameed Kamali’s article ‘Maqoola e Sifaat aur Haqiqat e Asmä’ (Urdu) in *Iqbal Review*, 1986, pp. 1-32, presents a very ingenious attempt to develop this ‘Logic of Good Names’. This article is the last of a series of three articles. The first two articles, ‘Mahiyat e Khudi aur Khud Aagahi ki Tashkeel’ and ‘Martba e Zat e Haq’(Urdu) were published in the issues of the same *Iqbal Review* in July 1963, and January 1964 respectively.

*Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God*” (5:73).<sup>27</sup> Keeping in view these verses, it seems strange to believe that the view of the real attributes in Muslims is traceable to the doctrine of Trinity. With reference to *Disputatio Christiani et Sasaceni* by John of Damascus (d.ca.754) Wolfson states that after the conquest of Syria by Muslims in 7th century, there were debates between Christians and Muslims on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Wolfson sketches some such typical debate between a Muslim and a Christian to show that the view of the reality of attributes in Muslims could not have arisen spontaneously but it could have originated under Christian influence in the course of debates between Muslims and Christians. In these debates a Christian tries to convince a Muslim that the second and third persons of the Trinity are nothing but the terms “Wisdom” and the “Life” or “Wisdom” and “Power” which in the Qurän are predicated of Allah. The Christian further argues that there is nothing in the Qurän against the belief that the predication of either pair of these terms reflects the existence in God of real beings, or persons or Hypostasis, as they called them. The Muslim can find no objection and accepts the view that in God there are real beings to correspond to certain terms predicated of Him in the Qurän. However, it is only in the course of debate when the Christian tries to argue that these two persons of the Trinity, the second and third, are each God like the First Person, that the Muslim immediately stops, refuses to go on, and condemns him quoting Quränic verses against Trinity.<sup>28</sup>

As further proof of the alien origin of the problem, according to Wolfson, is the fact that with the gradual introduction of Greek Philosophy into Islam, the problem of attributes became identified with the problem of Platonic ideas or rather with the problem of ‘universals’, as the problem of Platonic ideas was known by that time and with that the controversy between the Attributists and the Anti-attributists became a controversy over

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Marmaduke Pikhthall, translation of *The Glorious Qurän*, Taj Company Ltd., Karachi, Pakistan, 1984. pp. 97 & 110.

‘The Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretation of Platonic Ideas’, *Ibid.*, p.50.

‘universals’ as to whether they were *intradeical* or *extradeical*. There is no concept of such ‘ideas’ in the Qurän. The Most Beautiful Names (*Asma-ul-Husna*) or attributes for that matter, are not ‘ideas’. They lack the essential characteristic of the Platonic ideas, that of being pre-existent patterns of things that come into existence. Hence all these discussions regarding Divine attributes in terms of universals, were unwarranted and out of place in Quränic perspective.

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According to Professor A. H. Kamali the logic of the Quränic term *Ism* (Name) is absolutely different from the logic of the term *Sifah* (Attribute) which was used to replace it. ‘Name’ is never a part or component of the being of the ‘named’. The being of the ‘named’ is always prior and transcendent to the ‘name’. ‘Attribute’ is always a component of the very being of the thing/person ‘attributed’. It is, therefore, the principle of the priority of the being of the ‘named’ over the ‘name’ in the logic of ‘naming’ which essentially differentiates it from the logic of ‘attribution’. This seems to be what the muslim theologians could not attend to because of oversight, and because of their over indulgence in the un-Quränic terminology of Aristotelian metaphysic. One very important thing to be remembered is that beliefs and ideas ride on the back of terms<sup>29</sup>; whenever there is a transmission of terminology from one ideological setting to another, there is always a transmission of belief or ideas with it.

The Names are of two types: the personal(*Zati*), and the attributive(*Sifati*). A personal name stands in the consciousness of the knower, for a real or even fictitious person/thing, through which the knower affirms for himself the being/existence or non-being/non-existence of that person/thing. The first intuition in man of the Ultimate Reality is essentially to be the intuition of an Absolute Being. Name ‘*Allah*’ as stated in the Qurän is used as a personal name of this Deity believed in by the Muslims. Another way, the intuition of this Being is formed in man, is through the consciousness of the activity of this Absolute Being as expressed in Its

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*The Philosophy of the Kalam, Ibid., p. 71.*



relations with respect to other beings. Qurän witnesses in man, an intuition of the ninety-nine kinds of the activity of this Deity. This is the only Quranic sense of the term *Sifah*, in which it can be used if it is to be used. Hence ninety-nine Good Names of Allah are stated in the Qurän. The term ‘attribute’ comes from Aristotle. It is soaked in the dualism of Aristotelian metaphysics. As Aristotelian metaphysics bifurcates reality into two principles of form & matter, its logic bifurcates a thing into subject & its attributes. ‘Subject’ is the logical substratum of ‘attributes’. ‘Attributes’ cannot be imagined to exist without a logical substratum. But the ‘subject’ in its own term cannot be conceived to exist if the attributes are withdrawn out of it. But both are real in their own right. Quränic metaphysics is through and through monistic. According to it the ultimate principle of reality is One. Allah is the Personal Name of this Deity and He has other Good Names too which describe His activity or relations. There is no concept of any bifurcation of Absolute Reality i.e., Allah into His Essence and His Attributes in Quränic metaphysics. It was only when the muslims mistakenly accepted from the Christians, the Aristotelian concept of *Attribute*, as equivalent to Quränic concept of *Ism* (Name) through an un-Quränic concept of *Sifah* that they translated a Quränic category into Aristotelian category which gave rise to the problem of the relation of Divine Essence and its Attributes and hence the schools of *Attributism*, *Anti-attributism* and *Modeism* etc. And the same problem when stretched further, multiplied itself into the problem of the createdness/un-createdness of the Qurän. Another principle which the muslims mostly seemed to ignore was the principle that: *Naught is as His likeness.*(42:11)<sup>30</sup> Had the muslims not ignored this principle of absolute transcendence of God either, they should have been saved from bifurcating the being of Allah into His Essence & Attributes. But here they again followed the authority of Aristotle who had applied the same concept of change for God as

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Marmaduke Pikhthall, translation *The Glorious Qurän*, Taj Company Ltd., Karachi, Pakistan, 1984. p. 483.

for things.<sup>31</sup> Thus Aristotle's logic<sup>32</sup> as well as *intradeical* interpretation of platonic ideas both supported each other in derailing muslims from philosophizing in the right direction.

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Aristotle says that volition implies change, and change implies imperfection. He applies the same principle on things of this world, as well as on God in the same sense. Cf. H.A.Wolfson, 'Avicenna, Al-Ghazali and Averroes on Divine Attributes', in *Homenaje a Millas- Vallicrosa* vol. ii, 1956.

It were the muslim philosophers specially Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina who solely followed Aristotle on this problem. Their approach to the problem is based on their rigid conception of the Absolute Simplicity of God as a conception of the unity (*Tauhid*) of God, and on Aristotlian 'doctrine of the kinds of predicables'. They tried to prove that Divine Attributes are properties; since the definition of property is that it is not part of definition however logically derivable from the definition of an object, so no question of multiplicity in the being of God. For details please see H.A.Wolfson, 'Avicenna, Al-Ghazali and Averroes on Divine Attributes', in *Homenaje a Millas- Vallicrosa* vol. ii, 1956.