Chapter 4: Self-Positive Attributes

Knowledge

Theologians are unanimous about knowledge being one of the perfect self-attributes of Allah, and that "al-Aalim العالم" is one of His Supreme Names (Attributes). No two persons contest it, so in order to explain, we have to prepare for the topic with a precept.

What is Knowledge?

Knowledge is defined as an image resulting from a thing on the mind's page. Or it is a reflection coming out on the mind when one is in contact with the outside. Men of wisdom have derived this definition from the sciences in circulation among people.

But this definition is incomplete because it does not cover some sections of knowledge. Knowledge is categorized as either incidental or ever-present. The said definition suits the first rather than the second. Let us explain both categories for you.

When man casts a look at the outside and observes the cosmos that surrounds him, the trees and the rocks, the sun and the moon, etc., he earns a realization, and the outside thing is realized only through the mediation of an image between the person who realizes and the thing which he realizes. This image is extracted from the outside through tools of knowledge, and then it moves to the centers of comprehension.

Trees are identified when they are exhibited, the image is known through the self, whereas man is the one who knows. We have called the thing as being in the outside known through exhibiting and the image as being known through the self because the outside is known to us via this image, without it, the link between man and reality is severed.

In other words, the outside reality is not present with us in this feature because the outside thing has an outside effect such as heat coming out of fire, wetness from water, weight from rocks and iron, etc. It is known that the outside thing does not come to our minds with these characteristics. For this reason, the outside thing has become known through exhibiting and the image is known through the self due to man always experiencing mental images.

Thus, you come to know the definition of incidental knowledge. It is the knowledge in which the outside reality is known not by itself but through the mediation of an exact image of it. All tools of the senses are employed in the service of this knowledge. It depends on three pillars: one who realizes, the outside, and the image. Do not think that this is an admission of the originality of the image and of the outside being a branch thereof.

There is no doubt that the matter is the opposite. The outside is the origin and the image is extracted from it, telling us about it. But what the mind practices and employs is the image that it has, not the same outside. This mental image is its only means to realize the outside and to be aware of it.

Up to here, you have come to know the definition of incidental know-ledge. As regarding the ever-present knowledge, it is the realizing person being aware of the presence of what he realizes without the mediation of anything, and it has two parts:

1. There is no mediation between the realizing person and what he realizes, while the first is not being aware of the reality. This knowledge is reached through the same image that is extracted from the outside. This is so because the outside is realized through the image. As for the image itself, it is known by the self, and there is no mediation between it and the realizing person. When one comes in contact with the outside through the mental image, he will achieve two types of knowledge: One is incidental in its capacity as knowledge of the outside through the image method, and one is present by regarding his knowledge as having been attained through the same image, its presence and reality being realized by the individual.

Thus, you come to know an essential difference between both norms of knowledge. What is known in the incidental knowledge is not present to the one who realizes it in its reality, as you have come to know. With the ever-present one, what is known is present with him in its reality, and this is similar to the mental knowledge image. Through its reality, which does not depart from being a mental existent thing, it is present to man. Thus, the incidental knowledge has three branches, whereas what is ever-present has two in as far as this part is concerned.

2. Knowledge in which there is no mediation at all between the person who realizes it and what he realizes is united through the self and is different according to noticing and considering. It is like man knowing and realizing his own self. The reality of every human being is present by itself with him, not absent from him. He sees himself rationally, senses it through his senses and conscience, and sees it present with him without any mediation between the realizing person and the self that he realizes.

In this case, knowledge becomes unilateral, not bilateral and tripartite as is the case in the first part (above). It is then that the one who realizes and what he realizes are both united, and man's self becomes knowledge and a discovery. Among the present knowledge is man's awareness of his feelings, happiness and pain. They all are present without any mediating image.

Thus, you come to know about the weakness of the conclusion about man's presence having taken place through his own thinking, so it is said, "I think, therefore I exist." It seeks evidence from the presence of thinking to indicate the presence of the thinker.[1] The aspects of weakness are:

First: Man's knowledge of himself is a necessity, it does not need a proof. Man's contemplation is not clearer than his self-awareness, his being aware of his knowledge of his entity, of himself.

Second: The one seeking evidence has admitted the result at the beginning of his evidence when he said "***I*** think." He has taken his presence as being pre-supposed, taken for granted, and then he has tried to find evidence of it.

Inclusive Definition

In the light of what we have stated, i.e. dividing knowledge to incidental and present, it is accurate to say that knowledge, in the absolute sense, is "the presence of what is known with the one who knows it." This definition covers knowledge in both its types.[2] Yet what is present in the first is the mental image rather than the outside reality. In the second, it is the same reality of what is known without any mediator between it and the one who knows it.

The mental image in the incidental knowledge is present with man, not absent from him. Also, the same man in the present knowledge is present with him, within him, since it is standing on its own. It is called knowledgeable. Since it is exposed to itself, not absent from it, it is regarded as being known. Since there is presence, not absence, this presence is called knowledge.

This definition is comprehensive, inclusive of all types of resulting knowledge in what is possible and what is a must. If you grasp this precept, the research in His knowledge, Glory to Him, stands once on its own and once due to His actions (the things that are outside His entity).

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself

His knowledge, Praise is due to Him, of His entity is not incidental, i.e. He takes the image from the Self and witnesses it through such a way. The reason is that such type of knowledge cannot be known about Him, as we will see later. Rather, it is ever-present, i.e. He is present by Himself and for Himself. Two evidences prove it:

First: One who grants perfection cannot lack it.

He, Praise belongs to Him, created mankind and the world by Himself through His ever-present knowledge. One Who grants such perfection has to create it in the best of way, the most perfect, because one who lacks perfection cannot grant it. He creates it the best that it can be. Although we are not familiar, and we will never be familiar, with the particularity of the ever-presence of His self with Himself, we refer to this knowledge as "the presence of His entity is with Him, and His knowledge of it without an intermediary is obvious."

His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself

His knowledge of Himself, Glory belongs to Him, is not incidental, that is, His takes the image from the self and witnesses it through this way. This is not so because this type of knowledge does not apply to Him as you will come to know. Rather, it is present, that is, He is present for His own self. There are two matters that prove it:

First: One who bestows perfection cannot be lacking it.

He, Glory belongs to Him, created man, who is aware of his presence at present. One Who grants this perfection has to be creating it in the best and most perfect way because one who lacks perfection cannot be the one who bestows it; He surely is the One Who creates it as best as can be. Although we are not, and we will never be, familiar with the particularity of His presence by Himself, we term this knowledge as "the presence of His entity with Him and His knowledge of it without a mediation in-between."

Briefly, one who enjoys intellectual commonsense does not find it rational to think that one who grants perfection can be without it, lacking it; otherwise, the one who receives the boon will be better than the one who grants it, and the one who is deriving the benefit is better than the one who grants the benefit. Since all possibilities have been proven to be rendered to Him, including the Knowledgeable entity itself, it becomes a must that the One Who creates this perfection should be knowledgeable by Himself, knowledge which is innate, not superfluous.[3]

Second: Factors of absence and disappearance of the self are non-existent.

To explain, we say that since the material existent is present in quantity, ratios and parts that have no collective presence, since its parts do not gather in one (and the same) status, some of its parts are absent from others. So, it is not right for the material existent, due to its being a matter, to be aware of itself by itself due to the absence that controls its own parts.

Absence contrasts the presence of the self. It prevents the attainment of the self-knowing itself (by itself). So, if the one who is present is above being absent, taken apart, his parts can be put together, a simple existent, as a whole, rather than parts and particles, his entity is ever-present, and it has an absolutely complete presence. Thus, we see the presence of our selves by our own selves, but not in

the sense of some parts of our bodies being present, but in the sense we have the presence of a human reality expressed by the term “I” which is above quantity, parts and particles.

So, if we suppose there is an existent at a high level of abstraction and simplicity, having no absence factors, which are among the features of a material being, his entity is present with him. This is the meaning of His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His own Self, that is, an innate presence that stands by itself in the most perfect way because it is above being material, a composition and a division as you will see the proof for His simplicity when we discuss the negative attributes.

There are other proofs that we have avoided in order to be brief. Yet some folks deny that He knows through His own self, and here is the explanation of their belief.

Self-Knowledge Requires Variation

Those who deny His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself by saying that knowledge is a standing ratio between the one who knows and the thing which he knows, and the ratio is usually between two different things, and the ratio of the thing to itself is impossible, since there is no variation here, nor is there duality. Briefly, the one thing, I mean the Almighty, Glory to Him, is One, a ratio cannot be imagined as existing in Him.

Critics have rebutted it with this gist: Multiplicity and variation exist in incidental knowledge because it is the adding of the one who knows to the outside through the mental image, so in it, the known image is not the same as the outside identity. As regarding present knowledge, there is no requirement in it to have external variation; rather, multiplicity suffices for consideration.

For example, He, Glory to Him, has an entity that is never absent from Himself. So, He knows, and since His entity is ever-present, it is known.

In other words, the terms of: knowledge, one who knows, something known, etc. are used for the sake of calculations and considerations. Considering the self’s revelation to the self is called “knowledge”, and the self is exposed to the self is called “a piece of knowledge.” Considering its familiarity with itself is called “knowledgeable.” If you consider how man gets to know himself, it may be easier for you to believe in all of this.

What we have stated is due to the critics saying that differentiation may be through the self, and it may be through a sort of consideration. Here, the Self of the Almighty, since it is knowledgeable and is different from it because it is known, this suffices for knowledge to be attached to it.[4]

His knowledge, the Glorified One, of Things before Creating

Them

His knowledge, Glory belongs to Him, of things is of two types: pre-creating knowledge, post-creating knowledge. The first is the one that we see to be one of the most important issues in the science of logic. Here is the proof for it:

Knowledge through Causality is Knowledge of Causer

Knowing the cause, as a cause, is knowing the causer, the one that caused it. Knowing the objective, as such, is knowing the existence of its effect. What is meant by knowing the objective is knowing the method which became a principle for the presence of the effect and for its taking place. In order to explain this principle, we use the following examples.

Knowing Causality is Knowing the Causer

Knowing the cause, as a cause, is knowing the causer, the one that causes it. And knowing the reason, as a reason, is knowing the effect. What is meant by the cause is knowing how it became a principle for finding the effect, for making it happen. In order to explain this principle, let us provide the following examples:

A. An astrologer who knows the astrological laws and cosmic computations gets to know that the eclipse of the sun or of the moon or the like takes place at a certain time or in a particular situation. His knowledge of these eventualities is nothing but his knowing the cause behind them.

B. The physician who knows the cases and types of the pulse as well as the conditions and situations of the heart can predict what will happen to a patient in the future. Such knowledge is nothing but his knowing the cause as such.

C. A pharmacist who knows the particularity of poison when one drinks it can inform us that the life of such a person will end at a certain period of time.

If you come to know these examples, we say that the world, all of it, is the effect of His Presence, Glory belongs to Him, and has no cause other than Him, Praise belongs to Him. Knowing the self is knowing the way that caused the world to come to be, the cause behind its existence.

In other words, knowledge the self, the indications of which you have already come to know, is knowing the way the entire cosmos came to be, and knowing this way is attached to knowing the effect. This evidence is based on precepts taken for granted by the theologians to the summary of which we would like to point out as follows:

First: The world, in all its parts, relies on Him, the most Praised One that He is, and this is the requirement for the Unity of the Creator, and that there is no creator other than Him.

Second: The causality of something is that it includes a particularity that requires the effect producing it, and it definitely positively requires the presence of the effect in the outside so as without this particularity, the effect will not come to be. For this reason, there is a special connecting link between the standing particularity relevant to the cause and the existence of the effect that requires the existence of the effect. Had it not been for that particularity, the ratio of the effect to the cause, and to others than lack it, would have been equal, although it by necessity is nil.

The particularity that exists in the fire, which brings about heat, is not the same particularity that is present in the water, which brings about wetness.

Third: His effect, the Almighty, on others is through His own Self, not through an incidental particularity, an entity that is superfluous to Him. He by Himself is the doer of everything, as is required by the simplicity of His own Self and His lack of need for anything at all (the superfluous particularity) beside Himself. The most Praised and Exalted One by necessity is the doer on His own; He does not act through a method attached to His own self.

Fourth: Knowing the entity that requires a thing is knowledge of the thing itself.

This discussion results in concluding that the Knowledge of the Almighty, by itself, is the knowledge of His particularity, entity, and it is inseparable from Him, I mean His knowledge of things requires such a connection, a link.

Great men of logic and philosophy have pointed out to the above. The head of theologians, Mulla Sadra (Sadr ad-Deen), has said, "The Self of the Praised One, as the cause behind all things, due to the latter's presence, and the knowledge of the cause requires knowing their effects; realizing them from this standpoint requires their arrangement one after the other."[5]

The wise Sabzawari refers to the same in a poem in which he says:

One who knows things other than Him and who relies on Him
Testifies to the cause behind the knowledge as one
Of knowing the effect, an unavoidable must.[6]

Precision and Perfection Prove His Knowledge of What He Makes.

Noticing any simple or complex set (an electronic pen or a computer) tells us that its maker is one who knows the laws and relations that govern it. A huge encyclopedia points out to the knowledge of those who wrote and compiled its texts.

In other words, the existence of the effect indicates the existence of the cause. Its details lead to its being particular to its own cause. The precision of composition of the things that exist in the world, as a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, prove that their Maker is knowledgeable of what He creates, familiar with

what He makes. The details that make up a created thing lead us to the Attributes of the One Who has created it.

This evidence has been of interest to thinkers. What is made indicates, from the standpoint of arrangement of parts, that is, the parts are made for each other in order to serve the purpose of what is made, that it did not result from a maker who is not familiar with these details. Rather, it was made by a maker who organized it for a purpose, so he has to be knowledgeable of it. If man looks at a house, he will realize that the foundations were made for the wall and the wall was made for the ceiling, etc. He will conclude that the house was built by one who is knowledgeable of the building industry.

The conclusion is that whatever is made, its precision, minute details, marvelous system, certain and exact amounts tells us that its maker is fully familiar with these laws and symbols, knowledgeable of the measurements and systems the made item needs. From this onset, the cosmos, starting from the infinite atom and ending at the gigantic constellation, from the tiny cell to the largest planet, the systems and the very precise plans, tells us that the Creator of the cosmos is fully knowledgeable of all the secrets and laws it contains. It tells us that it is impossible for Him to be ignorant of them.

The Holy Quran has referred to this evidence when it said:

"Should He not know, the One Who created, the One Who understands the finest mysteries (***and***) ***is well acquainted*** (***with them all***)***?!"*** (***Qur'an, 67:14***)***.***

The Almighty has also said,

"We have created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him" (***Qur'an, 50:16***)***.***

Our Imam, the Commander of the Faithful (as), has said, "He knows what shall be and what was; He created the beings with His knowledge, initiated them with His wisdom."[7]

Imam Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridhah (as) has said, "Praise be to the One Who created creation with His might, perfected what He created with His wisdom and placed everything in its place with His knowledge."[8]

It is to this evidence that al-Tusi, the critic, pointed out in abstracting belief saying, "... And precision is evidence of knowledge."

So, you say that some animals may perform precise actions in organizing their homes and ways of living, as is the case with the bees, ants and many beasts and birds, although they are not masters of knowledge.

I say in response: The precision in action, which we have stated, proves that the doer's knowledge is a mental case not liable for specificity. As for these animals, their work is the result of inspiration from their Creator as Quranic texts have stated. The most Praised One has said,

***"And your Lord taught the bees to build their cells in hills, on trees, and in* (*men's*) *habitations. So eat of all the produce* (*of the earth*)*, and find the spacious paths of your Lord with skill: From within their bodies, a drink of varying colors comes out in which* (*there*) *is healing for men: Truly* (*there*) *is a Sign in this for those who ponder"* (*Qur'an, 16:68-69*).

Interpreting these wonderful actions, some people may render them to animal instincts. This does not contradict what we have stated. Mute instincts are no more than a blind matter that cannot find something balanced except when there is a higher command that leads them to what they are required to do. And this interpretation has room somewhere else.

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Things After Creating Them

You have come to know evidences about His knowledge of Himself and of His actions before creating things, and it is time now to look into His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His actions after creating and forming them. In this regard, we contend ourselves with both following evidences:

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, is Action

The external things end up in their status of existence at Allah, Glory to Him, and everything ends up at Him. Every effect is present at its cause, not being absent from it, nor is it obstructed from it. You have come to know the fact that knowledge is the presence of what is known with the one who knows it.

In other words, every existent thing other than Him is possible, be it is an essence and is incidental, external or mental. All are colored with the color of possibility, and there is no avoiding relying on it. Reliance is only presence with Him, His being fully acquainted with it, Glory to Him.[9]

In order to explain this evidence, we say this: Every possible thing is affected, in its coming into being, by Allah, the Glorified One. The effect has no meaning other than being attached to its cause and its standing for it in reality like the literal meaning of a noun. Just like the literal meaning, in all its affairs, it stands through the meaning of the noun, so is the effect. It stands through its cause. Just as the literal meaning being cut off from the name ends its presence, so is the effect when detached from the cause: It ends up at its being non-existent.

If you say, "I started my course from Basra," there are noun meanings: course and Basra, and there is a literal meaning which is the starting of the course from that city. But the second meaning stands on both sides; without them, it cannot stand on its own. Similarly is the effect, that is, the possible implementation of presence. It stands through the one that implements it, not through its own actuality other than its being attached to its cause.

Otherwise, it will be required to be independent, and this, if we suppose it is possible, trails it. If there is such a thing, it will be outside its own cause. Getting out of its limits requires independence that cannot exist with something being probable. There must be caution in its regard and never abandon such

caution since all things are present with Him. Presence is knowledge: You have come to know that knowledge is the knower possessing what is known.

Thereupon, the world, just as it is His doing, so is His knowledge, Glory to Him. In order to bring the picture closer to comprehension, notice the mental images created by the soul on the mind's stage. They are the doing of the self and, at the same time, they are knowledge of them. The self does not need, in order to know these images, other images.

Likewise, the self encompasses these images, and they stand through the One Who undertakes them, who creates them. Such is the world in its precision and magnanimity: a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, which is sustained by Him. He fully encompasses it.

Expanse of His Presence is Evidence of His Knowledge

Irrefutable evidences have shown that His existence, Glory to Him, is above having a body, a matter, time and place. It is above any time or place restriction. Something like this has an unlimited and endless presence. Limits and restrictions are outcomes of a thing being restricted by time and place.

What exists in time and place does not go beyond the frame of its environment. As for the thing that is above these two restrictions, nothing limits it, nor is there anything that confines it. A thing the condition of which is as such knows everything and is not confined to anything. Rather, it encompasses everything.

In order to bring an example that brings the picture closer to comprehension, let us say that one who sits in a room and looks to the outside from a small opening in the wall does not see but a portion of the passing train. He is the opposite of one who stands on the roof or looks from a higher angle, such as from a plane.

Based on this principle, the more one is stripped of restrictions, the more and more knowledge of things he will have. Allah is above time and place, above each and every limit and restriction. Nothing encompasses Him that is located within the frame of time and place. Rather, He encompasses everything that takes place on the stage of existence.

Imam Ali (as) has pointed out to some of what we have stated saying, "Allah, the most Exalted and the most Great, is the 'where' of the 'where'; there is no 'where' for Him. He is too great to be confined to a place, He is everywhere without getting in contact with a thing, without neighboring a thing. His knowledge encompasses it; nothing is empty of His management."

We are going to recite some holy verses as we research His knowledge, Glory to Him, of the details.

Levels of His Knowledge, Glory to Him

It has become obvious from the above that His knowledge of things, Glory to Him, is of two levels:

First: He knows them before bringing them into existence, and you have already come to know the evidence for it.

Second: His knows of them after getting them out of the status of the self, and you have already come to know its evidence. All this is based on philosophical proofs. But the Holy Quran reminds us of His knowledge through manifestations which it sometimes expresses as the Preserved Tablet, other times as the Unfolded Scroll, a third time as the Clear Record, a fourth time as the Well-Guarded Book, a fifth time as the Guarding Book, a sixth time as the Book of Destiny, a seventh time as simply the Book, an eighth time as the Clear Imam, a ninth time as the Mother Book and a tenth time as the Tablet that blots out and confirms.

To the Preserved Tablet, the most Praised One refers saying,

***"Nay! This is a glorious Qur'an,* (*inscribed*) *in a preserved tablet"* (*Qur'an, 85:21-22*).**

To the Unfolded Scroll He refers saying,

***"By a decree inscribed in a scroll unfolded"* (*Qur'an, 52:2-3*).**

Referring to the Clear Record, He says,

***"... nor anything fresh or dry* (*green or withered*) *but is* (*recorded*) *in a clear record* (*for those who can read*)*"* (*Qur'an, 6:59*).**

To the Well-Guarded Book He refers saying,

***"That this indeed is a most honorable Qur'an, in a well-guarded Book"* (*Qur'an, 56:77-78*).**

To the Guarding Book, the Almighty refers saying,

***"We already know how much of them the earth diminishes: With Us is a record guarding* (*the full account*)*"* (*Qur'an, 50:4*).**

To the Book of Destiny (term of death), He refers saying,

***"Nor can a soul die except by God's leave, the term being fixed in writing"* (*Qur'an, 3:145*).**

When He simply refers to the Book, He says,

***"We gave* (*clear*) *warning to the Children of Israel in the Book..."* (*Qur'an, 17:4*).**

The Holy Quran makes a reference to “the Clear Imam” in Surat Ya-Sin:

“We have taken account of all things in a clear Imam” (***Qur’an, 36:12***).

To the “Mother Book”, the Almighty refers saying,

“And indeed it is in the Mother Book, in Our presence, high (***in dignity***)***, full of wisdom”*** (***Qur’an, 43:4***).

And to the Tablet that blots out and confirms, the Almighty refers saying in His Book,

“Allah blots out or confirms whatever He pleases: The mother of the Book is with Him” (***Qur’an, 13:39***).

We have contended ourselves with referring to each Book with one verse although there are many.

Scholars of exegesis have differed among themselves about the truth of these books and their details. Some say that they are stripped of matter and material, so much so that it is right to regard them as manifestations of His endless knowledge. And there are those who say that they are material tablets and books in which things, their life spans and periods are recorded by way of symbols. Both opinions cannot be taken for granted. Rather, believing in them and looking into their exegesis must be done through the Book (Quran) and the authentic Sunnah.

It is also regarded, among the manifestations of His knowledge, is decree and destiny that we will discuss in a special chapter by His leave.

Two interesting items have to be pointed out here:

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, is Presential, not Incidental

You have come to know the difference between the incidental and the presential types of knowledge, so we do not wish to repeat ourselves. But what must be pointed out is that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of His own self and of His action is presential. As for His knowledge of His entity, it is due to such entity never being absent from Him, it is always present with Him. As for His knowledge of things, you have come to know that it is of two types.

First: Knowledge of the self is knowledge of the calculation that results in things, and knowledge of such calculation is knowledge of things. Thus, it becomes clear that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of Himself reveals in detail the things in the way that is appropriate for Him.

Second: The presence of probabilities whenever necessary. What is probable stands through the presence of the Creator, Glory to Him, in its taking place and in its sustenance. His being self-sustaining, Glory to Him, is like the meaning of the letters composing a name. This type of existence

does not permit absence, for the latter spells its non-existence and annihilation. So, if the possible existents have this characteristic, how can one imagine that He is separate from them?

It is nothing but supposing their non-existence and non-presence. Thereupon, the world, in all its particles, is the outcome of His own action, Glory to Him, of His own bringing it into being. At the same time, it is present with him. Such presence is His knowledge. Allah's knowledge and His action are two different concepts, but they are in agreement on the outside.

As regarding whether or not He has beyond the present knowledge an incidental knowledge, researching it is the task of detailed books. Peripatetian philosophers have claimed that He, Glory to Him, has an incidental knowledge that they label as painted images.

His Knowledge, Glory to Him, of Details

It is amazing how some philosophers go as far as denying His knowledge, Glory to Him, of details. They are influenced by some flimsy misconceptions. You will be familiar with the answers to some of them. Carefully discerning what we have stated about the probable existents, you will find it obvious that His knowledge, Glory to Him, of the details is quite clear. Its reality is clear if you understand how creation is, how existence is only due to the outgiving of Allah, Glory to Him, and here is its explanation:

The cosmos, with everything it incorporates, from the atom to the constellation, regenerates; it is always changing, not only in its incidental characteristics and outer shapes but also in its essence and entity. What appears to the onlooker to be fixed, stable and immovable in the natural world is actually the fault of the senses. The reality is different. In all its atoms, matter is subject to alteration, change and flow in every time and place.

The meaning of change in the world of the matter is the regeneration of its existence, the flowing of its coming to be time and over again. Every material phenomenon is preceded by a time void. The presence of matter, which came to be through a gradual and flowing process, is like a spring the water of which continuously gushes out. It does not have a presence, firmness, immobility and stability.

If creation and existence are the outcome of a gradual and sequential process, and the effect cannot come out of the limits of its cause, it seems that the world, in its atoms and particles, as it was made by Allah Almighty, is known to Him. Gradual outpouring and presence in the form of a gradual process which He, Glory to Him, has set up, necessitates His knowledge, Glory and Exaltation belong to Him, of the outer details.

Deniers' Misconceptions

You have already come to know that His knowledge of the particulars, Glory to Him, and the rest of discussion in analyzing the misconceptions raised in this field, and here are their explanations:

First Misconception: Knowledge of Details Inheres Change in His Knowledge

They have said that if He, Glory to Him, knows the details that go on in the cosmos, it becomes mandatory for His knowledge to change according to the change of what is known. Otherwise, conformity would have been non-existent. Since time details change, and had they been known to Allah Almighty, this would have necessitated change to His knowledge, which is impossible.

This has been explained by *allama* Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani who says, "Some of them have denied His being knowledgeable of the details according to the changing partial variable; rather, He knows them as things that are comprehensible essences. Their argument is that had He known that Zaid was sitting in this house, after his departure, when His first knowledge remains, becomes ignorance, and if is removed, change becomes a must."[10]

Misconception Analyzed

This misconception is extremely weak, and its rebuttal is:

First: The revocation might. If knowledge of details requires it to change when what is known changes, it also becomes a must to change its ability due to its being relevant to details, while the ability is one of the characteristics of the self. So, what is the answer in the ability aspect, and what is the answer in the knowledge aspect?

Second: Through resolution. Our knowledge of events that are in various periods of time is knowledge of time, as for His knowledge, the most Exalted One that He is, it is not conditioned by time at all. There is no present, past and future here. These adverbs are relevant to time when measured according to time-related existents, the time in which one lives. When one does something, it is said that he is doing it during a particular time. What he did is labeled as past. And what he will do is called future.

As for what exists outside the frame of time, environment and place, it cannot be imagined in His regard that there is any past, present and future. Allah, Glory to Him, knows all fractional events as a whole, not with regard to some of them taking place in the present, some in the past and some in the future. Rather, He knows them through knowledge that is inclusive, one that is above being subjected to time conditions.

In other words, since the Almighty dos not occupy a space (just as He is never subject to time), relating Him to all places alike is not by measuring them with Him so as one would say that it is near, distant, medium. Thereupon, His relevance to all things, in all times, is one and the same. What is present since time immemorial, and what remains forever, is attributed to Him and there is nothing in His knowledge that "was", "is" and "will be".

Rather, they all are present with Him in all their details but not with regard to time having anything to do with them according to their three characteristics. They cannot be applied to Him, the most High. Such knowledge is not variable but continuous, such as the knowledge of totalities.

In order to bring this closer to comprehension, we bring about this example. If the street is full of cars that pass one after the other, and if someone is looking at them from a narrow window, he sees each moment a passing car. The cars will then, relevant to him, are of three types: one has already passed, one is now passing and one is yet to pass. This division is sound as related to him in this situation.

Based on this premise, the existent which is above the restrictions of time and the limits of place is familiar with all things once, and the changing existents are painted with the hue of stability in as far as He is concerned.

Knowledge in the example brought while explaining the misconception, that is, Zaid sitting for a while at home, then he came out of it at another time, is relevant to sitting and coming out once and there is no sense here for advancing and delaying.

Another Way to Resolve Misconception

This misconception is based on the supposition that His knowledge of things, Praised is He, is incidental through the drawn images that stand through Him, Glory to Him, the change in what is known will then be concurrent with the images that stand through Him. This will require His essence being the place for change and alteration.

But if we say that His knowledge of the details, Glory to Him, is presential, that is, the things, in their outer identities and self realities, are the products of His own doing, Glory to Him, and at the same time His knowledge, there is no objection, then, to say that a change has taken place to His knowledge, Glory to Him, as a result of a change that took place to the existent things.

This is so because the knowledge that depends on His knowledge is the one described as being innate. As for the operative knowledge, that is, the knowledge that stands in the position of an action, there is no objection if it changes as His action changes. The knowledge that stands in the position of the action is no more than the knowledge of the same action and nothing else. It is to this conclusion that the critic al-Tusi refers when he says, “The changes of additions is possible.”[11]

In other words, change is what is added, not in the entity itself. What is meant by additions is His action, which is His knowledge. There is no objection for a change to take place in the additions and attachments while no change takes place to the entity itself.

Second Misconception: Realizing Details Needs a Mechanism

Realizing the details needs material tools and physical mechanisms, while the most Glorified One is above having a body or physical requirements.

The answer to this misconception is obvious. Knowledge of details acquired through material tools is the affair of one who is not familiar with how to perpetuate their maintenance, and things do not stand through him but are present in his possession, such as humans. Man’s knowledge is through extracting

images through sense-related tools. Therefore, realizing details depends on these tools and on their functions.

When it comes to the Almighty, since His knowledge encompasses all things, and since He truly sustains them, His knowledge does not depend on tools and on their functions.

It is to this answer that the virtuous al-Qoshaji refers as he explains abstraction saying, "Realizing details needs a physical mechanism if the knowledge (of them) comes through extracting images. But if it is a pure addition, without an image, there is no need for it."[12]

Third Misconception: Knowledge of Details Requires Plurality

Knowledge is an image that is equivalent to what is known and drawn to the one who knows it. There is no doubt that things have various images. The abundance of known things requires abundance of the single self from all aspects.[13]

The answer to this misconception, as you have already come to know, is clear, too. It is based on His knowledge of things being drawn within Him, Glory to Him, similarly to things drawn within the human self, so this requires plurality in the single self. You have already come to know that His knowledge of things is not like that. Rather, the outside identities are present with Him, with His Self, without any images, and this type of knowledge is stronger than that in which things produce images.

Fourth Misconception: Knowledge of Details Requires Turning What is Probable into a Must

If knowledge of a variable takes place prior to its variation, such knowledge becomes a must. Otherwise, it is possible there is no such requirement. Hence, His knowledge, the most Exalted One, turns into ignorance, which is impossible.[14]

In other words, the knowledge of the most Exalted One is not relevant to events prior to their taking place. Otherwise, this will require the events being both possible and a must at the same time. As for the first, it is due to their taking place. As for the second, without Him, it would be possible that they would not have existed; thus, His knowledge turns into ignorance.

The answer to this misconception is obvious. What is impossible is the combination of what can by itself be and also what must by itself be. As for the combination of what by itself is possible with what must be (existent) as a must through others, there is no doubt about it. The effect, in the full presence of the cause, is by itself probable and a must through others.

Thereupon, if His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, hinges on the presence of an event at a particular time, His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, does not get Him out of the self probability. The ultimate requirement for His knowledge (of something) being in agreement with the reality is that something exists through something else, whether the cause behind it is Allah, Glory to Him, or someone else, and it is in agreement with what is probably by its own self.

Briefly, the event that takes place during a certain circumstance does not get out of the limit of probability after being attached to His knowledge, the most Exalted One, and the full cause for it takes place. The creation, all of it, is possible by itself while, at the same time, it is a must through someone else.

The Holy Quran and the Expanse of His Knowledge, the Most Exalted One

From what we have already stated, we can grasp the greatness of the (Quranic) phrase that says, "Allah's knowledge encompasses everything." It means that the Almighty knows what has already passed, what will come to pass, and what is in existence in the universe, the secrets and the symbols.

The most Praised One says,

"The keys of the unseen, the treasures that none but He knows, are with Him. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge: There is no grain in the darkness (***depths***) ***of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry*** (***green or withered***)***, but is*** (***recorded***) ***in a clear record"*** (***Qur'an, 6:59***).

The most Praised One also states,

"Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all: He knows what is in the heavens and what is on earth. And Allah has might over all things'" (***Qur'an, 3:29***);

"Allah knows what every female (***womb***) ***bears, and that of which the wombs fall short*** (***of term***) ***or exceed. Every single thing is before His sight in*** (***due***) ***proportion"*** (***Qur'an, 13:8***);

"We have created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him, for We are nearer to him than his life-vein" (***Qur'an, 50:16***),

and

"The One Who knows the unseen and from Whom not the least tiny atom in the heavens or on earth is hidden, nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in a clear record" (***Qur'an, 34:3***).

There are other verses that refer to the Almighty's knowledge of all details.

Loftiness of the Quranic Expression About the Expanse of His Knowledge

One of the most complex concepts is imagining the concept of what is infinite as a fact and a reality. Man is still dealing in his life with limited matters. Therefore, imagining something infinite is a very difficult problem for him. This system, the stars that it contains, is only a portion of our expansive

constellation. Despite that, the part and the whole are endless in as far as the particles and compositions are concerned. The largest figure an ordinary individual knows how to use in his life is the billion: the number 1 before which nine zeros line up.

Also, the human civilization, because of its coming to perfection through mathematical sciences, has reached what is called astronomical numbers/figures. Nevertheless, all numbers, including the "astronomical" ones, which mankind has reached, cannot be described as infinite. When the Holy Quran wants to explain His knowledge, Glory to Him, as being infinite, it does not use numbers and mathematical figures or even the "astronomical" ones because they all end up at a certain limit/point.

Instead, it brings about a superb example that shows the expanse of His knowledge. He says,

***"And if all trees on earth were pens and ocean* (*were ink*)*, with seven oceans behind it to add to its* (*supply*)*, God's words would still not be exhausted* (*in the writing*)*, for Allah is Exalted in might, full of wisdom"* (*Qur'an, 31:27*).**

Look at this magnificent expression which is superior to all others, and see how you find no mathematical figure that depicts the expanse of His knowledge, Glory to Him, equivalently to His saying "…God's words would still not be exhausted". If one were to say that the extent of His knowledge is the figure one before which there are hundreds of zeros, he will not convey the meaning of His statement: "…God's words would still not be exhausted". Thus, you come to know the truth of His statement, Glory to Him,

***"Only little knowledge is communicated to you,* (*O mankind!*)*"* (*Qur'an, 17:85*).**

It expresses the limitation of human measurements and criteria. It also expresses how little, how minute, mankind's knowledge is.

Statements by Imam Ali (as) About the Knowledge of the Most Exalted One of Details

Commander of the Faithful Ali (as) has said, "The number of rain drops is not beyond His knowledge, nor is it the number of the stars in the sky, the particles of dust carried by the wind, the sound of ants on soft rocks, or where particles fall in the dark night. He knows where leaves fall, what visions conceal."[15]

He, peace with him, has also said, "Praise belongs to Allah Who knows the dust raised by the beasts in the plains, the sins of His servants which they commit in privacy, the places where sea creatures go, and the tumultuous water stirred by storms."[16]

He (as) has also said, "He knows what the chests hide, what the consciences conceal; His knowledge encompasses everything."[17]

Up to this point, talk comes to an end about the positive entitative attribute that is knowledge. The following discussion covers the second attribute which is potence, that is, His being Omni-Potent, Mighty, Able, Powerful, if the most Praised One so wills.

3. Self-Affirmative Attributes

1. The one who seeks such evidence is the French philosopher Rene Descartes.
2. The goal behind this definition is only to point out in a way to the truth of the knowledge without observing the condition of a true definition, so it must not be criticized as requiring a role so the one who defines it may derive it in the definition.
3. Refer to Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 176. You will come to know in the next researches that His Attributes are His own Self.
4. Murad fi Tajrid al-Itiqad كشف المراد في تجريد الاعتقاد , p. 175 and Sharh al-Qawshaji شرح القوشجي, p. 313.
5. Al-Asfarالأسفار, Vol. 6, p. 275. Refer also in this regard to abstractions and its explanations.
6. Sharh al-Manzouma شرح المنظومة, philosophy section, p. 164.
7. Nahjul-Balagha, pieces of wisdom section, No. 191.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 4, p. 65.
9. Kashf al-Murad, p. 175.
10. Qawaid al-Maram, p. 98.
11. Tajrid al-Itiqad, p. 176.
12. Al-Qoshaji, Sharh al-Itiqad, p. 414.
13. Ibid.
14. Kashf al-Murad, p. 176.
15. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 178.
16. Ibid., sermon 198.
17. Ibid., sermon 86.

Potence

Theologians have agreed that potence, might, is one of the perfect entitative attributes similarly to knowledge. Therefore, the Omni-Potent is regarded as one of His Names, Glory to Him.[1]

Potence, as far as language is concerned, as defined by lexicographers, connotes ownership, independence and plentitude. Ibn Manzour (author of the lexicon *Lisan al-Arab*) has said, "It is said that one is able to do something; he has the ability, the dominance; so he is able, capable."

The most Praised One says,

***"...in the presence of an omni-Potent Sovereign"* (*Qur'an, 54:55*),**

that is, One Who is Able, Mighty. Ability is independence and abundance.

Al-Raghib has said, "If an individual is described as being able, it is a characteristic through which he can do something. But if Allah Almighty is described by it, it is denying that there is any incapacitation in

Him." It is obvious the explanation provided by al-Raghib of the might in Allah, Praise belongs to Him, by rendering it to the negative attributes (denying incapacitation in Him), is an obvious error by him. Might is perfection, and it does not depart from His perfection.

Defining Potence

Philosophers and logicians have interpreted potence in many ways the most significant of which are the following:

1. Potence means the ability to do or not to do. The Omni-Potent is the One Who can do something, and He can abandon doing it.

2. Potence is action at will, and inaction in the absence of such a will. The Omni-Potent is the One Who, if He pleases, does something, and if He does not, He would not do it or, if He does not want, He would not do something.

The first definition implies the soundness of doing or not doing, that they both can be done by the Omni-Potent. This ability may be described as being of a "what" nature, so one may say that man, as a human, may or may not do something. As regarding the ability with readiness, it describes the ready matter, that is, it is described with attributes of perfection such as we say that a seed can become a tree.

According to both estimates, His Potence, Praise belongs to Him, cannot be explained with the use of this statement because Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is above "what" being applied to Him. Rather, He is existence all of it; so, how can we describe Him with possibilities which are among His own manifestations? Also, He, Praise is due to Him, is above matter and "readiness"; so, how can His might be explained by something based on matter, readiness, etc.?

The second definition is seen outwardly as the doer being the creator of the deed through his will. It is conditional that the doer is not perfect in his deed except when something else is added to him, which is the "will", something which is impossible to apply to Allah, Praise belongs to Him, Who is Independent in His doing of anything besides His own self, not even the "will" if added to Him.

Defending Both Definitions

The objective behind describing the Almighty as having Potence, Might, Ability, is to prove His perfection and goodness and to hold Him above shortcomings or defects. Had some definitions required a shortcoming or a misconception about Him, Glory to Him, it must be stripped of such requirements and must be discerned in the (light of) absolute perfection. This is not relevant to only Potence. Rather, all Attributes applied to Him, Praise belongs to Him, enjoy the same.

For example, life is the starting point for perfection and goodness, the source of feeling and knowing. The goal behind describing the most Praised One as Living is only a reference to such perfection. What

we realize of life, extract from natural beings, cannot be used to describe the most Exalted One because it would require the most Praised One to be a natural existent ready for action and impression, in addition to other characteristics of material life.

For this reason, we must describe Him, Glory to Him, as life stripped of shortcomings. This is an overall restriction in all divine attributes, none of the Attributes of the most Praised One can be described through them except in this context. This is what the wise gnostic who knows Allah, Praise belongs to Him, tries to do.

It is then that the interpretation of His Might, Glory to Him, becomes accurate, according to both definitions stated above, but while stripping each of them of the shortcomings which it requires, such as the most Praised One having a “what” or a “ready” matter, as is the case in the first definition, or that the most Praised One is the doer through a will that is beyond the self, as is the case with the second definition.

Based on the above, what can be said is that the ratio of the deed to its doer cannot lack one of three divisions:

First: The doer is restricted by the deed; he cannot separate himself from his deed. Such is the compelled doer like the fire as it burns or the sun as it shines.

Second: The doer is restricted not to leave the deed. Thus, the deed would be restricting him.

Third: The doer is not restricted by one of the ratios. The deed would not be resistant until it is restricted to abandonment, nor is the abandonment is resistant until it is restricted by the deed. The matter with regard to interpreting the potence is rendered to the doer being absolutely unrestricted by any deed or by the abandonment of it. 2

This is what we understand when He, the Praised One, is described as the Omni–Potent, whether it is interpreted as the soundness of action or inaction, or whether it is interpreted as “If He wills, He does, and if He does not will, He does not.” We derive from both definitions the perfection of His Might, leaving aside any shortcomings.

So, it is accurate to say that the Might in His regard, Praised is He, is the soundness of action and inaction, that is, He is above being restricted by action or inaction. It is also accurate to use the second definition, not in the sense His action is done through a superfluous will, but according to what you have known: His being above any restriction regarding action or inaction.

Indications of His Might

Evidences pointing out to His Might, Praise belongs to Him, are many. We are going to explain their most obvious, the strongest.

First: Instinct

Every human being finds it within himself that he is attracted towards a lofty might when calamities take place, believing that there is a Supreme Might which is the only resort for salvation during those hard times. This is what he senses without being taught, without learning. The existence of this instinct reveals the existence of such an absolute might. Otherwise, its existence would have been regarded as nonsense.

What is meant by instinct here is not having an image of the Omni-Potent when hard times reign so it may be said that imagining something is not evidence of its existence. It is like imagining the Phoenix is not regarded as evidence of its actual existence. Rather, it is the inner inclination, one's self-conscience is attracted to it, and the sense that such an attraction is similar to the rest of his senses.

One who is deeply drowned into hard times, one who has lost all hope for any material cause, finds it within the depths of his soul that there is a feeling in which he does not doubt, the feeling that there is an existent that knows about his problems, one who is capable of pushing them away from him.

There is no contradiction to his instinct if he is distracted from such existent when the hard times no longer are there, when calamities are no more, for not every instinctive matter manifests itself in all circumstances. The surfacing of instincts requires special conditions and atmospheres, including even the instincts of a carnal desire, anger, etc.

Briefly, just as instinct calls for the existence of the most Praised One, it also calls for His Attributes: knowledge, might, etc. The most Praised One says,

***"Say: 'Think to yourselves, if God's Wrath were to come upon you, or the Hour* (*that you dread*)*..., would you then call on someone other than Allah?* (*Reply*) *if you are truthful! Nay! You would* (*certainly*) *call upon Him, and if it is His Will, He would remove* (*the distress*) *which made you call upon Him and you would forget* (*the false gods*) *which you associate with Him'"* (*Qur'an, 6:40-41*).**

Second: Cosmic Order

The cosmic order, in all what is tiny and what is magnanimous in it, in all the goodness and glory, the precision and the magnificence, the mastership and the perfection, speaks of the might of the One Who initiated all things, of His ability to create what is the most precise and the most wonderful. Natural sciences have greatly helped in this field, proving the might of the Maker. The more perfect these sciences are, the more mankind becomes familiar with the cosmic systems, laws and wonders, and the more this attribute manifests itself in the best and most glorious way.

Thus, it becomes obvious that a doer's deed, just as it reveals the existence of the doer, also reveals his quality. A good book of poems tells us about the existence of one who wrote it. Likewise, it tells us about his artistic ability, superb taste and capability to soar in the horizons of imagination in order to mold lofty

meanings in good word templates. Both books, the one titled *Canon*, which deals with medicine, by Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and his other book titled *Al-Shifaa* (healing) in philosophy, prove that their author was among those who were genius in medicine and philosophy.

Therefore, we see that when He, the most Praised One, describes His magnificent actions and creations in the verses of His Holy Qur'an, He concludes them with the Attribute "the Omni-Potent". He, the most Praised One, says,

***"Allah is He Who created seven firmaments, and of the earth (He created) a similar number; through the midst of them (all) His command descends so you may know that Allah has might over all things, and that Allah encompasses all things in (His) knowledge"* (Qur'an, 65:12).**

Precision and mastership in a deed are signs of knowledge, indications of might. We see in some statements of Imam Ali (as) how he relies in proving His might, the most Exalted One, on the magnificence of His deeds and the goodness of what He creates, the most Praised One that He is.

He (as) has said, "He initiated creations through His Might, spread the winds through His mercy and firmed with stones the field of His earth."[3]

He (as) also says, "He showed us of His domain His Might and the wonders that articulate signs of His wisdom."[4]

He (as) also says, "He straightened of things what is crooked thereof, set a system for their limits and synchronized, through His might, their antitheses."[5]

He (as) also says, "He established testifying evidences for things which he created with His grace, and for His great might."[6]

And there are other such references in his sermons and statements, peace with him.

Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (as) answered a question by an atheist thus: "How could One Who has showed you His might in your own creation have veiled Himself from you?"[7]

Third: One Who Grants Perfection Does not Lack It

Among the evidences for His might, Praise belongs to Him, is that He created mankind just as He created others, giving him the ability to make what is wonderful, strange, huge and amazing things. It is known that man, through his presence and ability, is the cause behind His existence, Praise belongs to Him. So, how can One Who creates mankind and bestowed things on him be lacking in what He gives?

Dominance of the Almighty's Might Over Everything

The human nature rules that the absolute perfection towards which mankind is sometimes attracted is capable of anything that is possible. It does not entertain minds at all, had it not been for the doubts raised by skeptics, that there are limits for His might, or that He can do something but not something else. Muslims during the first era embraced this belief which Allah's Book inspired to them, the Book that states the generality of Allah's might, Praise belongs to Him.

The matter of logic reached mentors of the Mutazilites who recorded details about the expanse of His might, Praise belongs to Him, to which we would like to refer by way of generality:

1. Al-Nizam[8] has said, "The Almighty cannot do what is ugly."

2. Abbad ibn Sulayman al-Seemari[9] has said, "He cannot do what is the opposite of what He knows."

3. Al-Balkhi[10] has said, "He cannot do similarly to what His servants do."

4. The two Jubaais[11] have said, "He cannot do exactly what His servants can."

It may have been attributed to men of wisdom that the most Praised One *cannot* do but one thing, and that nothing comes out of Him other than a lone thing: reason. There are beliefs espoused by the dualists that are ambiguous. We shall set aside another place to explain the latter.[12]

This is a historic picture about the growth of this viewpoint, that is to say, limiting Allah's might! It seems that most of these individuals were influenced by imported opinions that entered the Islam lands during the period of the renaissance of translation. Their misconceptions and the latter's analyses will be presented to you after we review the evidences of those who advocate that His might is general.

Evidences of Advocates of the Generality of Divine Might

What is meant by the "generality of His might," Praise belongs to Him, is its absorption of anything that is possible. In others words, the Almighty can create everything that He can, nothing is impossible for Him to do. Critics have come to this conclusion based on their statements such as these:

"The requirement is present, the obstacle is missing." The first is due to the fact that the Almighty is able through His own might. Its ratio to the whole is equal to its being above time, place and direction.

"As for the second, the requirement for something to be destined is its possibility. Possibility is common among all. So, the attribute of ability is also common among the probabilities, which is the ultimate pursuit."

This can be explained through the following evidence.

The “obstacles” in the way of His general ability may be one of the following matters:

First: Something is not possible on its own, such as the combination of two opposites or antitheses.

Second: There may be an obstacle in the way of His will being affected and of its inclusion of everyone. That is to say, as if there is an equivalent might that contrasts and opposes His might.

Third: His own Self is not equal with regard to things.

These three factors are rejected in their entirety. As for the first, what is meant by the generality of His might is its inclusion of any matter that is possible without the existence of an innate objection. Divine Might has nothing to do with this. The Doer is not at fault; the fault is in the source.

As for the Second, the equivalent might, which opposes His, is rejected on account of what has already been proven and fixed in its place, to the unity of the One Who does things, to the lack of a similitude to Him in existence. As regarding the probable might, it does not compete with His might: It is His own creation.

As for the third, His being above any restriction, condition, direction, place, makes Him equal relatively to anything that by itself is possible. So, there is no sense that there are some things that are possible while others are not. Selectivity with regard to His might, Praise belongs to Him, is pawned to some things being close to Him rather than others similarly to man who lives in a specific place and time.

Past and future things are outside his control because he (man) is chained by time and space. As for the Absolute Abstract Who created all times and places, all essences and conditions, it does not make sense that His essence is close to one and is distant from another.

This explains that evidence.

There is something else that is more glorious and magnificent than what has been stated, and it is based on His infinitude in goodness, perfection, etc. Its outcome is that His presence, Glory to Him, is infinite, limitless. In other words, it is an absolute presence not limited by any imaginable or external limits. He is infinite in existence, infinite in perfection and goodness because the source of perfection is existence.

The absence of infinitude in the aspect of existence is inherent to its absence in the aspect of perfection. What perfection is there that is more magnificent and wonderful than the Might that is infinite due to His perfection being infinite? This proves the expanse of His Might that encompasses anything that can be.

Expanse of His Might, Glory to Him, in Another Sense

The expanse of His Might, Glory to Him, has two meanings. One of them you have already come to know. The second is submitted by men of wisdom in their books. Its conclusion is that the cosmic phenomena, what is abstract and what is material, what is innate and what they do, end up at His Might,

Praise belongs to Him.

Just since there is no partner with Him in His essence, there is no partner with Him in His actions. Anything for which the word “existent” is used is directly created by Allah, Praise belongs to Him, or through causes and effects. Everyone relies on Him, there is no avoiding it. This is the uniqueness of the Creator that we will explain when we discuss the negative attributes.

Those who oppose this meaning of expanse of Might are the dualists who have made a doer for goodness as being different from the doer of evil and all Mutazilites who made man an independent doer in his actions. By His leave, the most Exalted One, we will explain this in its place and how both of these doctrines are wrong.[13]

As regarding the statement of wise men, that is, what comes out of Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is first reason from which the second reason was issued, up to the end of the circle of existence at the matter and the hyle[14], apparently it is purely hypothetical and is not different from all existents ending at Allah, Praise belongs to Him, through causes and effects, and the details are in their proper place.

Religious Texts and the Expanse of His Might, Glory to Him

Texts from the Quran and Sunnah have supported each other with regard to the expanse of His Might and its absolution. We would like to quote some of them here:

The most Praised One says,

“...And Allah has might over all things” **(*Qur’an, 33:27*).**

He has also said,

***“Allah* (*alone*) *prevails over all things”* (*Qur’an, 18:45*).**

He has also said,

***“...Nor is Allah to be frustrated by anything whatever in the heavens or on earth, for He is all-Knowing, all-Mighty”* (*Qur’an, 35:44*).**

Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said, “All things are with him alike with regard to His knowledge, potence, authority and might (over them).”[15]

Imam Mousa ibn Jafar (as) has said, “He is the Omni-Potent Who is never incapable.”[16]

Questions and Answers

Those who advocate the generality of His Might, Glory to Him, have been faced by several questions

which we are going to submit then analyze. These questions are:

1. “Can the most Praised One create His likeness?” If this question is answered in the affirmative, it will require the hypothesis that there will thus be a partner with Him, Glory to Him. And if it is answered in the negative, it will prove that His might is limited, not general.

2. “Is He capable of making the wide world fit into an egg without the world’s size being minimized or the egg maximized?” If it is answered in the affirmative, it will require the opposite of what is necessary, that is, the thing to be contained is greater than the container. If it is answered in the negative, it will indicate that His might is not general.

3. “Can He, Praise belongs to Him, create something to which He cannot put an end?” If it is answered in the affirmative, it will then indicate that His might is not broad, since He cannot put an end to something. And if it is answered in the negative, it will necessitate the non-generality of His might. The answer to a question such as this, be it positive or negative, will indicate the limitation of His might.

These are the questions. As regarding answering them, this is done once through generalization and once through details.

As regarding generalizing, the claim is that His might is relevant to what can be done by the Self. The contexts of these questions are not matters that are innately possible. Rather, they all are either impossible by themselves or something that requires such impossibility. The inability to undertake them is not regarded as an indication of a shortcoming in the doer. If a tailor cannot make a shirt out of bricks, and if the painter cannot paint a painting of a peacock on water, it is not regarded as a defect in the ability of either.

This is similar to our asking a skilled mathematician to let the result of 2 X 2 be five. On this basis, the question is not restricted to what is stated; rather, anything that is not possible by itself does not fall within the frame of might because this thing itself is faulty, whereas the might is not.

As regarding the detailed answer for these three questions, here is its explanation for you.

As regarding the first, demanding someone to create someone else similar to him is impossible to fit within the frame of one’s ability, and to demand it is to demand what is impossible.

In other words, creating a peer requires the combination of two opposites in one and the same thing. Since the hypothesis supposes the existence of someone similar to Him, Glory to Him, this becomes a must, not a probability, something timeless (that has already taken place) rather than incidental, unlimited, not limited.

Since might is attached to him, which is not attached to something which is non-existent, it must be incidental rather than timeless, probable rather than a must, infinite rather than finite. This is what we have said, that is, it requires the existence of two antitheses in one and the same thing.

Thus, the answer to the second question becomes obvious. The might being independent of making the big thing fit into the small thing is not from the standpoint of its being improbable by itself. Commonsense rules that the container must be greater than what it contains. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, making a big thing fit in a small container requires the doing of its opposite: the container is smaller than what it contains. Attempting to do such a thing requires doing one thing, the container or what it contains, being small and the same time big.

As regarding the third question, the supposition is impossible because it requires an impossibility by itself. Supposing the most Praised One is incapable of creating a thing which He Himself had created is not separate from impossibility, and here is an explanation for it.

Since the indicated thing is doable, it is (likewise) perishable. Since it is preconditioned to non-extinction, such condition is not possible. The issue becomes one thing being probable and a must, perishable and non-perishable, all at the same time.

In other words, its being created hinges on the ability of putting an end to it because what is made is sustained by its Maker. If the tie with the latter is severed, it will require its becoming non-existent. Its being non-perishable requires its being not created in the first place. What the question presupposes, if at all, is the presence of two antitheses.

Thus, the answers to questions similar to these become possible such as one may ask: Can Allah create a body which He cannot cause to move? This falls into the category of combining two opposites. The supposition that its having a beginning necessitates its having an end, that it can be mobilized. Yet, at the same time, we claimed that the most Praised One is supposedly unable to mobilize it!

These hypotheses and their likes do not harm the generality of His might. Rather, they only fool simple-minded people. As for people of distinction and perfection, they are greater than being ignorant of how to respond to them.

Misconceptions of Those Who Deny Might's Generality

You have come to know some details about this issue in the beginning of the research. It is now time to look deeply into it and analyze it in a way that suits the condition of this book.

Allah, Glory to Him, "Cannot" Do What is Ugly

Al-Nizami seeks to argue that the Almighty cannot do what is ugly, that had He been able to do it, He would have. Thus, He would be either ignorant of its ugliness or is in need for so doing, and both matters are impossible.

The answer to it is clear. What is meant by His ability to do something ugly is that such an ability is the same, whether in doing what is ugly or in doing what is good. Just as He is able to send one who obeys

Him to Paradise, He likewise is able to send him to hell. The issue here is not what "incapacitates" Him from doing it. Since this action violates His wisdom, Glory to Him, His justice and equity, He does not do it. An ugly deed is committed by a doer who is either ignorant of its ugliness or he is in need of doing it.

Both matters are not present with His sanctity. A big difference exists between the inability to do something in the first place and not actually doing it simply because there is no need to do it. A kind father can slaughter his son, but the motive to doing such a thing does not exist with him. Such an action is not done except by an ignorant wretch or someone who [for some reason] needs to commit it.

A Nizami individual has confused "inability" with the absence of a motive.

Almighty's "Inability" To Do the Opposite of What He Knows

Abbad ibn Sulayman al-Seemari claims that His might is not broad. He says that if Allah knows that something will take place, it definitely will, so its taking place is a must. What He knows that it will not take place does not at all take place, so it is prohibited from taking place. What is a must, or what cannot be, has nothing to do with might, since might is relevant to something which may take place or which may not. The thing, according to this man's knowledge, which is unilateral, having one definite status, does not fall within the scope of might.

Example: If He, the most Praised and Exalted One, knows that a man will be born in a certain period of time, that man's presence in that period will be definite and known. So, His might is not relevant to its not taking place, which is the opposite of what He knows. This is so because the supposition is that this man's presence became a must, while his non-presence became impossible, since His knowledge reveals the reality completely.

There are two ways to respond to this argument. First, the requirement of what he states is that His might is not relevant to a thing in the first place. This is so because a thing may either be known in His knowledge, the most Praised One, as being coming into reality, or He may know that it will not come to exist. The first must come to be, whereas the second will not. Everything enters into one of these two frames. This requires that His might must not be described as depending on anything at all. The theory is false, that is for sure.

Second, this son of Abbad did not make a distinction between what by itself is a must and what can be so by someone else. He also did not differentiate between what by itself is impossible to come to be and one which is made impossible to be by someone else. The objection to might being attached to something is the innate presence or non-presence, not the existence and non-existence as a result of others being attached to a thing coming into existence or not.

Explanation: Anything relevant to might must by itself be possible and in which the ratio of existence and non-existence is the same. Its existence probability, when the cause is present, does not get it out of possibility. Also, its being non-existent, in the absence of a cause, does not get it out of that limit either.

Therefore, His knowledge, though ranging between causing existence or non-existence, i.e. the necessity of existence compared to the presence of its cause, and the necessity of non-existence relevant to the absence of its cause, this necessity at both ends does not make a thing a must by itself or the contrary. Rather, even after the attachment of necessity or its absence, with regard to the existence or non-existence of its cause, is described through possibility, it does not depart from the limit of straight-forwardness.

In the supposed example, I mean the birth of someone at a particular time, it is relevant to His knowledge and will, Praise belongs to Him, that dominates His creation in that circumstance, and the opposite does not take place. But if it does not take place, it is not due to His being unable to cause it to happen.

Rather, it falls in the expanse of His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, whether He creates or does not create. Rather, it is due to being the opposite of what He knows and wants. A big difference exists between not doing something (not creating a particular thing/person) because it is the opposite of what He knows to be good and His inability to do it.

His "Inability" to Do Similarly to What His Servants Do

Al-Balkhi went as far as suggesting that Allah Almighty "cannot" do similarly to what His servants can, because it is either obedience to Him or disobedience or foolhardiness. Man's actions cannot depart from these three categories, and they are all impossible to apply to the most Exalted One. Otherwise, His actions would have been categorized as obedience, disobedience or foolhardiness.

The first two require that there should be someone who orders Allah Almighty, which is impossible. The last enters under the category of ugliness, which is (also) impossible to apply to Him, Praise belongs to Him. An answer has been provided about His "inability" to do what is ugly, so there is no need for repetition. As for the first two, we would like to say the following:

Obedience and disobedience are not among the true matters that stand by a thing itself. Rather, they are two matters which reason comprehends when comparing the action of the ordered one with his violation of it. It is then that we find no confusion about His ability, Glory to Him, to do similarly to what His servant does by way of similarity, such as His action, Praise belongs to Him, being united in essence and form with the deed and form of His servant.

As regarding His action, Praise belongs to Him, not being described as obedience or disobedience, in this case, it does not harm His ability, the most Exalted One, to do similarly to what man does because the criterion in similarity is the reality of the action, its outer truth, not the labels, be they symbolic or extractive, which do not affect the reality of the thing.

In support of what we have stated, *allama* al-Hilli says the following as he explains abstraction: "Obedience and foolhardiness are two characteristics which do not require the variation of the

essence."[17] Let us suppose that someone built a house in obedience of an order he received from his boss. Allah, Praise belongs to Him, can create the likeness of that house without a difference from it as much as one hair.

While the servant's action is characterized as obedience, His action, Praise belongs to Him, is not. But this does not cause an essential difference between both actions; rather, both actions are united in essence and in form.

Yes, there are actions made by man directly. They stand through him similarly to an explanation provided for a topic, such as eating and drinking. Their being not done by Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is due to their being among the material actions that stand by the material topic, and Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is above matter, so He is not characterized by these actions.

Nevertheless, man and his direct actions are all due to His assistance, Praise belongs to Him, to His might and means, so much so that if the outpouring from the Lord stops, man and his actions would all become things of the past.

The Almighty's "Inability" to Do Exactly What His Servant Does

Both Jubais have concluded that there is an absence of the expanse of His ability, Glory to Him, just as others have, as we indicated above, but they provide a different explanation. They say that the Almighty *cannot* do exactly what His servant does. Otherwise, there would have been a requirement for both antitheses to be present if Allah wills something while His servant abhors it, or vice versa.

An explanation of inherence: What is decreed will come to pass on the call of the One Who can make it happen, and it stays in the world of nonexistence where it is kept from happening. Had there been two decrees actualized by two able ones, and if we suppose that one of them has a reason to bring it into being while the other, at the same time, does not have such a reason, this will require looking into that cause. It remains in the world of nonexistence in as far as the one that does not want it to come into being is concerned. Hence, it becomes existent and nonexistent; such are contradictions.

The answer is as follows.

First: Nonexistence is not relevant to only the way mentioned by both Jubais, i.e. the one in which one of them (the able person) has a cause to bring it into being, whereas the other keeps it from happening in the world of nonexistence. Rather, the prevention (from it coming into existence) takes place if the will of each one of them is relevant to bringing into being the same decree, its exactness. This would require two complete causes combined for the sake of one effect.

Second: His (supposed) "inability" to do exactly what His servant does is due to the fact that it is relevant to what can be done through possible means. If it becomes impossible, might is not relevant to it. Its dissociation from what is impossible does not at all mean that it is limited.

The images supposed by both Jubais, or what we have added to them, do not prove anything more than an action coming up under those circumstances being impossible. This is so because it requires the combination of two antitheses, according to the supposition of the two Jubais, or on the combination of two perfect causes into one effect, according to our own supposition, which is impossible and out of the frame of might; it is not even labeled as inability.

Third: What do both men mean when they say, "exactly what the servant of Allah can do"? Do they mean the thing before its existence, or do they mean after its existence? If they mean the first, there is no specificity here, there is no particular circumstance. The thing in this phase does not go beyond being a totally inclusive concept. If they mean the second probability, the fact that might is not attached to it due to being the likeness of bringing about what is already doing so, which is impossible, and what is impossible is outside the framework of might.

Fourth: The reference they both (Jubais) stated about the will of the servant of Allah hinging on first creating him, whereas the will of the most Praised One hinges on its opposite, is a concept of dualists which found its way to Islamic circles. It depicts the action of a servant as his (own) creation rather than being a creation of Allah, Glory to Him, through causation, and that there are two independent doers (Allah and His servant). Each of these doers has his own particular sphere. In this case, the will of the servant is not attached to the will of Allah, Glory to Him, through any means.

But this is false, as we will explain when we discuss the Unity of Allah in His creation. Every doer, be it a doer out of his own self-will or not, does not do anything except when the most Praised One enables him through His own will. If a servant wants something, he does so through the will of Allah and His might in a way which does not require coercion or out of a need, as we will explain with the permission of the Praised One.

1. The difference between an adjective and a name is that the first is not understood as a subject: Nobody would say, "Zaid came to know." This is the opposite of the second: It is dealt with as such, so it is said, "Zaid knows" (or he is a man of knowledge). Hence, this [rule] is applied when dealing with His Names and Attributes, Glory to Him. Knowledge, potence and life are [linguistically, according to Arabic] adjectives, while "the all-Knowing", the "Omni-Potent" and the "Living" are His Names, the most Exalted One.
2. Thus, you have come to know that describing Him, the most Praised One, as being the Omni-Potent, which means stripping Him of being restricted by either side, is in synch with describing how the option is all His, Praise to Him, and you will come to know its discussion later if the Praised One so permits.
3. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 1.
4. Ibid., Sermon of Images No. 91.
5. Ibid.
6. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 165.
7. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, p. 91.
8. His name is Ibrahim ibn Sayyar ibn Hani al-Nizam. He died in 231 A.H./853 A.D. The century in which he lived was rich with foreign translations of opinions that were imported into Islamic lands. It is thought that he was influenced by those views and ideologies.
9. He is quoted as having said that the evidence of pronouncements is self entitative, not created. We could not find his biography in lexicons. Allama al-Hilla mentioned his theory about the might of the Almighty, Praise to Him, in his book titled

Nahjul-Mustarshidin. Refer to Irshad al-Talibin ila Nahj al-Mustarshidin, p. 189.

10. His name is “Abul-Qasim” al-Kabi, and he died in 317 A.H./929 A.D.

11. They are: Sheikh “Abu Ali” Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab who died in 303 A.H./916 A.D. and his son, “Abu Hashim”, Abdul-Salam ibn Muhammad, who died in 321 A.H./933 A.D. Both were among heads and pillars of the Mutazilites, and they have opinions which contradict those of all their mentors.

12. The discussion of the beliefs of dualists will be stated in the chapter on Tawhid in [the subject of] creation.

13. We will state how the doctrine of the dualists is wrong when we discuss the Oneness of Creator and the falsehood of the Mutazilites’ claim when we discuss determinism and empowerment.

14. For the full meaning of this word, refer to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). –Tr.

15. Al-Saduq, Al-Tawhid, pp 76, 131.

16. Ibid.

17. Al-Hilli, Kashf al-Murad, p. 174 (Said edition).

Life

Scholars of divinities have agreed that life is one of His Attributes, and that “al-Hayy”, the Living, is one of His Names, the most Praised One. But applying this name to Him, Glory to Him, depends on how much one understands this “life”, and how it can be applied to the One Who brought forth existence.

We say that undoubtedly, every human being makes a distinction between the living existent and the non-living (dead) existent, realizing that life is the opposite of death. Yet, despite this general knowledge, nobody can realize the truth about life in living existents.

Life is the most obvious of conditions, yet it is the most difficult to comprehend, the most complex to define.

For this reason, scholars’ opinions about explaining its reality have differed, and they have gone sundry ways. Yet according to the opinion of sciences of nature, the following conditions are part of what they describe:

1. Attracting and Thrusting

2. Growing and Maturing

3. Reproducing and Multiplying

4. Acting and Reacting

This definition of life points out to life’s effects, it does not explain its reality. These are effects shared by living members. Despite all of this, we see the vast distance between plant life and human life. The living plant includes the above-stated four characteristics, but life in animals adds to them sense and feeling, and this additional perfection, which is represented in sensing and feeling, does not make animals a

testimony that differs from life. Rather, it renders it a more perfecting testimony for it.

Also, there is a life that is higher and more honorable which is: In addition to the five characteristics, the living being has the attribute of the sense of knowledge, reason and logic.[1] Thereupon, the four characteristics make up a measure common among all levels of nature even though each level has its own qualities that distinguish it from others.

It must be known that naturalists have stated this definition. They were satisfied with it because they had no goal other than pointing out to the life that falls within the scope of their researches. As for the life that exists outside the world of nature, it was not submitted to them as they were busy researching nature.

Defining Life in Another Way

Undoubtedly, plant life is different from animal life. So are all high levels of life. But this does not render this word, life, a common term having multiple meanings. Rather, it is a common immaterial term applied in one meaning to all levels but through the process of development and completion.

Let us explain the above by saying that material life in plants, animals and humans, since the latter are animals, too, undertakes two functions.

First: Action and impression, influencing and being influenced, up to the end of the list that targets the four characteristics mentioned by naturalists, as we have explained. We can apply the term “activity” to this characteristic.

Second: Sense and realization lie in the simple meaning they convey. There is no doubt that it applies to all sorts of natural life, including plants. Naturalists have discovered the existence of sense in plants in general, and that primitive man knew about its existence in some of them, such as date trees and others. It is to this matter that we use the term “realization”.

The result is that what straightens life in nature, in its different levels, is activity and realization in their various degrees and complementing levels, and that it is not right to apply the term “life” to plants and animals except through development. This is due to the vast distance between both norms of life. What is absolutely correct to use in one sense is the process of development through eliminating shortcomings and impurities that are present in both plants and animals.

On this basis, it is accurate to use the term “life” to humans as humans, not as animals. The correction to the use of this term is the development process on which (life) stands. Otherwise, how can human life be measured by a lower type of life? Where is the action expected of rational life in man compared to the action of botanical and animal life? How can you compare man’s realization of whole matters and mathematical laws with the sense of plants and the feeling of animals?

Yet despite this vast distance between both lives, we find ourselves describing life as life, applying the

term “living” in the same sense to all of them. The one and the same meaning is only due to the existent being “active” and “realizing,” but his action and realization suit every level of life.

Briefly, the criterion for natural life is action and realization, and it is preserved in all levels but is continuously developing and perfecting. If it is right to use the term “life” in the same sense to all these various degrees, let it be right to apply to supreme living existents but in a perfect way.

Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is Living in the sense this word conveys, but it is “life” that suits His most supreme status by eliminating what is added or deleted, by taking the pith, the essence, the in-depth meaning. He, Praise belongs to Him, is Living in the sense He is a doer, He realizes. If you will, you can say that He is “effective”, and you can say that He “realizes” but not similarly to the way possible existents realize.

Example for Depicting Development in the Absolute

What we have stated about the reality of life, that after observing its levels, reason extracts a broad concept that applies to all of its forms, this is broadly applied. For example, the word “lamp” used to be used in the beginning to the burning twig, but it developed according to the development of civilization and sophistication, so it now is used to anything that is burnt by oil, gasoline, natural gas, and electricity, all in one and the same sense.

This is so because of the fact that such generalization is sound. The thing is evident by itself, showing itself to others, lighting what is around it. This reality, despite the difference in its levels, exists in all testimonies, and in the electrical lamp, in the most perfect way.

It is an illusion to explain the life of the Initiator of Life through the life that sees sense in plants, animals and man. It is also an illusion to imagine that His life is dependent on an action, a chemical or a physical reaction, etc. All these do not enter into the reality of life, although they have something to do with realizing some of its levels. Without these chemical or physical actions, life would become impossible in natural existents. But its existence in a particular level is not at all regarded as evidence in its impact on its reality.

Also, the lamp burning through the wick in many of its sections is not regarded as an evidence of the lamp’s reality although it is so with regard to some of its parts. We will then come up with this conclusion: What maintains life is that the Existent is knowledgeable, a doer, realizing and affecting, impacting and making others feel His impact, or you may express it however you please.

Evidence of His Being Living, Praise Belongs to Him

I do not think that you need, in order to describe Him as Living, evidence after you become familiar with two matters.

First: It has been proven with evidence that He, Praise belongs to Him, is Knowledgeable, Able, and this has already been discussed.

Second: The truth of life in supreme degrees is not beyond the One characterized by it who realizes, affects, knows and influences.

If these two matters are realized, the absolute result is that since He, Praise belongs to Him, is Knowledgeable, Able, realizes, effective, due to the fact that knowledge is inseparable from realization, and ability is inseparable from action, they are the same life during its development through the elimination of what is superfluous. For this reason, we see that men of wisdom derive evidence about His life by saying, "The Almighty is Living because it is impossible to say that someone is able and knowledgeable but is not living!"[2]

In fact, His life, Praise belongs to Him, is His being characterized by ability and knowledge, and you will come to know that all His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, though they are different in their concepts, unite in being factual, providing evidence.

Add to the above the fact He, Praise belongs to Him, created living existents that realize and are effective; so, it is impossible for One Who grants perfection to be without perfection.

His Being Living in the Quran and Sunnah

Allah Almighty describes Himself in the Holy Quran as being living a life for which there is no death saying,

"...And put your trust in Him Who lives and does not die, and celebrate His praise" **(*Qur'an, 25:58*).**

The term "living" (*al-Hayy*) occurs in the Holy Quran as one of His Names five times. The most Exalted and Great says,

"Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the self-Subsisting, the Eternal. Neither slumber can seize Him nor sleep" **(*Qur'an, 2:255*).**

Imam Muhammad son of Ali al-Baqir, peace with both of them, has said, "Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, was and there was nothing there with Him at all, a light in which there is no darkness, a truth in which there is no falsehood, knowledgeable who does not know ignorance, living who never dies, and so is He now, and so will He be forever."[3]

Imam Mousa son of Jafar, peace with them both, has said, "Allah, the one and only god, is always Living without 'how', a Living God without 'incidental life'; rather, He is Living on His own."[4]

So, like the rest of His attributes of perfection, His being Living is a must attribute not reached by nil, nor

does it know depletion and termination, because these things collide with its being a must, a necessity, and they do not suit its status; what is pre-supposed is the opposite thereof.

1. This scientific, logical and rational realization is a development of the sense that exists in animal life.
2. Allama al-Hilli, Kashf al-Fawa'id fi Sharh Qawaid al-Aqaid, p. 46.
3. Al-Saduq, Tawhid, p. 141.
4. Ibid.

Hearing and Seeing

One of the Attributes of the Praised One is hearing and seeing, and among His Names are: the Hearing, the Seeing. These two descriptions exist in the true Islamic Sharia. Describing the most Praised One as being Hearing and Seeing in the Quran and Sunnah is *mutawatir*, consecutively reported. But there have been differences in the reality of both of these descriptions according to statements the most significant of which are the following.

1. His (attributes of) hearing and vision, Praise belongs to Him, are not different from our describing Him as having knowledge. Rather, they are among the branches of His knowledge of what is heard and seen. Due to His knowledge of both of them, He is said to be Hearing, Seeing.

2. Both descriptions are senses-related that are different from the absolute comprehension of knowledge, but they are proper nouns that are relevant to what is beyond His absolute knowledge without a plurality of the self or a requirement for embodiment. This is so because He knows everything/every-one that hears and sees. Being aware of what can be heard is hearing, seeing what can be seen is vision, yet this is different from His absolute knowledge of general things that are not heard and not seen.[1]

If you become familiar with the statements, let us indicate an introduction here.

Hearing in the case of man takes place through natural equipment and tools. Voice waves reach the head, and from there to the material brain, then one realizes it.

Yet there must be an emphasis on something interesting here. Is the presence of these material tools a requirement for achieving vision and hearing in a special status such as for animal or man, or is it an intruder into their reality in the general sense? There is no doubt that these equipment and tools, which science explains in its own way, are only particularities relevant to material man who cannot hear or see without them.

If we suppose there is an existent that reaches the same thing which man reaches without these tools, it would be more appropriate for him to be hearing and seeing because the goal anticipated from hearing

and seeing is the arrival of the waves and images at the one that realizes them. Had the waves and images been present with an existent without a physical or chemical action, he, too, would be hearing and seeing because the goal is reached in a more perfect and in a higher way.

When researching the levels of His knowledge, it is proven that all worlds are present with Him, Praise belongs to Him. All things, what is heard and seen in particular, are absolutely His own actions and, at the same time, His own knowledge, the most Exalted One that He is. The world, in all its essences and manifestations, is present with Him. Thereupon, His knowledge of what is heard suffices to describe Him as Hearing. Likewise, His knowledge of what is seen suffices to describe Him as Seeing.

Yes, it is true, His knowledge of what is heard or seen is not the same like His knowledge, Praise belongs to Him, of totalities. Thus do you become familiar with the difference between the first statement and the second.

Answering a Question

If the presence of what is heard and seen with Him, Praise belongs to Him, serves as correctly describing Him as Hearing and Seeing, can this by itself be correctly describe Him as having the ability to touch, taste, smell?

The answer to this question is clear after we become familiar with the fact that His Names, Praise belongs to Him, are subject to one's own *ijtihad*. This is so because what is smelled, tasted, touched, etc. are all present with Him, Praise belongs to Him, similarly to the presence of what is heard and seen. Since He is the Living, the self-Sustaining, i.e. the One Who needs nothing/nobody to sustain Him, while He sustains others, what can be existent, in all its levels, stands through Him, Praise belongs to Him.

Thereupon, there is no difference in as far as labeling something as belonging to Him or describing a statement as being correct. But, since it is said that His Names, the most Exalted One, hinge on closing the door of all this commotion and hoopla in defining Him, Praise belongs to Him, it is absolutely wrong to apply touching, tasting, smelling, etc. to Him.

"The Hearing" and "The Seeing" in the Quran and Sunnah

He, the most Praised One, has described Himself as being the Hearing, the Seeing. The first is repeated 41 times and the second is repeated 42 times in the Holy Quran.

Among the objectives to which the Holy Quran guides us by way of His being described by these two names is to acquaint man with the fact that His Lord is all-Hearing; He hears whatever speech man utters; He sees whatever actions he does, so He will one Day hold him accountable for what He heard and saw. The most Praised One says,

"And in your oaths, do not make God's (***name***) ***an excuse for not doing good or acting rightly or***

making peace among others, for Allah is the all-Hearing, all-Knowing" (***Qur'an, 2:224***)***;***

"Then fight in the cause of Allah and be informed that Allah hears and knows all things" (***Qur'an, 2:244***)***;***

"And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees well all that you do" (***Qur'an, 57:4***)***,***

and

"Allah (***always***) ***hears the arguments between both sides among you, for Allah hears and sees*** (***all things***)***"*** (***Qur'an, 58:1***)***.***

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace with him, has said, "And He is the Seeing but not through the distinguishing of a tool, the Witness but not through coming in contact with things."[2]

He, peace with him, has also said, "One who speaks hears his articulation, and one who remains silent knows what he conceals."[3]

Imam Ali ibn Mousa al-Ridha, peace with him, has said, "Allah is and has always been, the most Exalted One, Able, Living, Timeless, Hearing and Seeing."[4]

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, peace with him, has said, "He, the most Exalted One, is Hearing and Seeing. He hears without a faculty, sees without a tool. Rather, He hears by Himself, sees by Himself."[5]

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, peace with him, has said, "He is Hearing, Seeing; He hears through what He sees, sees through what He hears."[6]

The previous tradition points out to the unity of His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, with His own Self, and the unity of each with the other in the position of the Self. The fact of hearing in Himself, Praise belongs to Him, is not different from the fact of seeing. Rather, He hears through what He sees, sees through what He hears. His essence is all hearing and seeing.

1. Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, pp. 421-23.
2. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 155.
3. Ibid., Sermon 182.
4. Al-Saduq, Tawhid, pp. 140, 144.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

Realization

Some scholars of logic have counted “realization” among His Attributes, and the One Who realizes, in the verb form, as being one of His Names based on this verse:

“No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp encompasses all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet He is acquainted with all things” (***Qur’an, 6:103***).

There is no doubt that the most Praised One, due to the previous sacred verse, realizes, but the question whether realization is a description of knowledge of totalities and particularities, or whether it is the equivalent and synonym of knowledge, or whether it is special knowledge, the knowledge of existents, of certain particularities, His realization, Praise belongs to Him, is witnessing external things and His full knowledge of them.

Allama Tabatabai says that the terms used in the Holy Quran in reference to the types of realization are numerous. They may be twenty such as knowledge, thinking, expectation, feeling, remembrance, Gnosticism, comprehension, *fiqh*, full knowledge, certitude, ideology, opinion, claim, memory, wisdom, experience, testimony and reason. Add to what is said verdicts and insights.

The meanings of these terms are not without intricacies of matter, movement, change, save five of them: knowledge, memorization, wisdom, experience and testimony. Because they do not require shortcoming and loss, they have been used about Him, Glory to Him. The most Exalted One has said,

“And Allah has knowledge of all things” (***Qur’an, 4:176***)***;***

“… And your Lord watches over all things” (***Qur’an, 34:21***)***;***

“He (***Allah***) ***is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom”*** (***Qur’an, 12:83***)

and

“Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses all things?” (***Qur’an, 41:53***).

Thus, it becomes obvious that His realization, Praise belongs to Him, is not something beyond what these verses indicate and which describe Him as knowledgeable, safeguarding, fully ware, wise and a witness. The closest is the latter, i.e. His being the witness, for His witnessing of existents, of their presence with Him, their being sustained by Him is the same literal sense of the Name: It means He realizes matters.

“No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp encompasses all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet He is acquainted with all things” (***Qur’an, 6:103***).

Freewill

Freewill is one of His characteristics/attributes, Glory to Him, and is one of the meanings of His Names, there is no doubt among the theologians at all about it. But they have differed about the reality of His freewill, the most Exalted One that He is. Therefore, we have to delve into two situations:

One: We must review the opinions submitted about explaining freewill in the absolute sense.

Second: We must explain the distinctions of the Divine Freewill.

What is the Reality of Freewill?

One being willing or unwilling reflects two psychological statuses, as is the case with all psychological statuses which man finds by himself without any intermediary like pleasure, pain, and such feelings. But the goal is to analyze this sentimental matter scientifically and coin it also scientifically. Here are the views submitted in this regard:

A. The Mutazilites have explained freewill to be the “belief in benefiting” and hating as “belief in harm,” saying that the ratio of the ability at both ends of the action and inaction is even. If the belief of benefiting happens in one of the ends, it is preferred and the doer becomes effective in its regard. One can notice that this explanation is quite incomplete. The mere belief of benefit is not the start of an effect, of an action, for quite often one’s belief in benefit exists in many actions, yet he does not want those actions. He may believe in its existence in them. Actually, he believes in the presence of harm, yet he seeks it in agreement with some carnal forces.

B. Another group has interpreted freewill as a psychological yearning that takes place in man after he believes in its benefit. One can notice that explaining the will to mean yearning is quite deficient, for there may be a will, but there is no yearning, as is the case when one takes bitter medicines for treatment. Confirmed yearning may be realized, yet there is no freewill that creates the deed, as is the case with a pious man facing prohibitions and banned inclinations. For this reason, the ratio is between the freewill and yearning in general.

C. Freewill is a psychological status that intervenes between positive knowledge and action, and it is described once as objective and as a determination, and once as resolve and a decision. This is not the objective behind yearning in both its sections, what is confirmed and what is not. Also, this cannot apply to knowledge despite its presence in the individual, as is the case with all other methodologies.

In short, the truth of the freewill is “an objective, a sure inclination towards carrying out a deed.”

These are some various explanations of the reality of the freewill, and there are other theories that we

have preferred to ignore.

At any rate, the Divine Freewill cannot be explained through the use of any of the above. As for the first, you have already come to know that explaining freewill as belief in a benefit requires the denial of the absolute freewill in the possible existents in addition to Allah, Glory to Him. This is so because they are rendered to knowledge of a benefit, although we find in ourselves something beyond knowledge and belief in a benefit.

One who advocates this theory proves science while denying freewill. If it is wrong to interpret freewill as belief in something beneficial in possible existents, it will likewise be wrong to interpret His freewill, the most Praised One, too. You will come to know that one who explains the freewill of Allah, Praised is He, as being knowledge of what is the best, is influenced by this explanation. But he substitutes knowledge of what is apparently beneficial to the individual with knowledge of what is the best which suits His status, Praise belongs to Him, which aims at looking after the interests of His servants, so consider.

As regarding the second explanation, I mean eagerness or anxiety, the sure yearning, had it been applicable to man, it would have been non-applicable to Allah, Glory to Him, because He, the most Praised One, is above sentimental yearning, anxiety. Yearning for something is the doing of a doer who is deficient and who wants to come out of his deficiency towards perfection, so he definitely yearns for something.

As regarding the third explanation, whether it is explained as an objective and determination, or resolve and decision-making, its reality is something that comes into existence after having been non-existent. In this sense, it is impossible for it to describe Him because doing so requires His being subject to eventualities.[1]

Since these definitions do not fit Him, Praise belongs to Him, the theologians have been divided into two groups: One group tries to make them among the attributes of the self but in a different meaning. The other group makes them attributes of an action, concluding that the freewill, such as creating, sustaining, etc., are derived from His action, Praise belongs to Him, from the impacts of His might. This group has relieved itself of the burden of confusion about their being self-attributes. Let us now talk about the theories of both of these groups.

Explaining Particularity of Divine Freewill

Since freewill in the previously stated meanings does not suit Him, Praise belongs to Him, while, on the other hand, freewill and the doer comprise a willing one, in contrast to being non-willing, is His perfection, whereas its absence is a shortcoming. Men of wisdom and critics have tried to describe Him, Praise belongs to Him, in a meaning that properly suits Him, and here is an explanation of this attempt in a different way:

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, is His Knowledge of the Best System.

His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, is His knowledge of the most suitable, the most perfect and the most complete system. They have explained it through the above descriptions because they fled away from describing the most Praised One by something that is incidental and sequential, descriptions that require action and sentiment, as is the case with the human freewill.

Mulla Sadra has said, "The meaning of His having a freewill is that He, Praise to Him, is wise, knowing the system of goodness that is present everywhere through Him, and how each system came to be. System is undoubtedly present and overwhelming."[2]

He has also said, "His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, by itself is His knowledge of the most perfect system; He Himself is the One Who bids (and forbids) while nobody else does."[3]

The critic al-Tusi has said, "His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, is the knowledge of the system of everything in the most perfect way. If ability and knowledge are the same thing, requiring the existence of what is likely to exist according to the most perfect system, ability, knowledge and freewill would be the same thing in His Essence, varying according to rational considerations."[4]

Discussing Theory

Undoubtedly, the most Praised One knows by Himself, is knowledgeable of the most perfect, complete and suitable system. But to interpret His freewill reverts to denying the freewill reality in Him, Praise belongs to Him. Denying it, when it comes to (discussing) Him, leads to denying His perfection.

There is no doubt that a willing doer is more perfect than a doer who is motivated by his own desire. If we interpret His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, as being His knowledge of the system (of all systems), we will have denied His perfection and identified Him as a doer similar to one who is obligated to do what he does. Thus, looking into the statement by al-Tusi the critic, we see that he imagined that ability and knowledge are one and the same when applied to Him while being different according to rational considerations.

Due to the inaccuracy of this explanation, we see that the Imams from among the Ahl al-Bayt, peace with them, deny interpreting it as being knowledge. Bukair ibn Ayan has said, "I said to Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq (as), 'Are His knowledge and freewill different from each other or are they the same?' He (as) said, 'Knowledge is not freewill. Do you not see how you say that you will do something *if* Allah wills, whereas you do not say that you will do it IF Allah *knows*?!'"[5]

If you will, you can say that freewill is a characteristic applied to one of two options: doing or not doing something. This applies to all times, all aspects of an action, whether it is to be done or not. So, it is not the same as freewill that opts for one, treating ability as being equally applicable to both options.

As regarding knowledge, it is one of the principles that are distant from freewill. Freewill is a principle that is close to an action. It does not make sense to regard both of them as being one and the same.

Yes, His knowledge of what is good and bad applies to one of the options. Although this can be regarded as being rational, it cannot be called freewill even if it has something in common with freewill in the outcome which is the following. The doer applies his might to undertake one of two options. Sharing the result does not necessitate knowledge to be regarded as freewill, and it suffices to apply perfection to it, that is, the freewill.

Question and Answer

It may be asked, "Why should the reality of freewill be the same as His knowledge, the most Praised One? Had the reality of the first been different from that of the other, this would have required plurality within Him, Praise belongs to Him. And plurality is the tool of composition, while composition depends on probability because each part needs the other parts, and the Almighty is above all of this."

The answer is this. It means that the attributes are united with one another, and the whole is united with the self. He, Praise belongs to Him, is all knowledge, all might, all life. These attributes, in their realities, are present in the Self by way of simplicity. It is wrong to say that some of them are life and others are knowledge, whereas a third is might because this requires composition in the Self. This is not meant to render the reality of one of the attributes to the other by saying, for example, that His knowledge is His might. This will end up denying all attributes and proving only one.

Briefly, there is only one pure and simple fact that incorporates knowledge, life and ability in its reality without creating plurality and composition in the Self. This is not to say that the reality of His will is the reality of His knowledge because it will require a denial of the reality of freewill and resolve. This will end up denying the freewill (altogether). Also, to say that the reality of His might is rendered to His knowledge ends up denying the might rather than proving the unity. In order to explain what we mean, let us say the following.

We can derive many concepts from the simple thing, and each concept can be a reality without multiplying or composing. Take the outside man as related to Allah, Praise belongs to Him. All of man is the doing of the might of Allah, all of him is known by Allah. It is wrong to say that some of him came to be through His might, while some of him came to be through His knowledge. All (beings and inanimate objects) are there through His might while being, at the same time, known by Him. It is wrong to say that some of them are there due to His might while others are there due to His knowledge. All are decreed by Him and, at the same time, are known to Him. Despite all of this, the reality of what is known is not the same like that of what is decreed.

With this much can you find His essence, Praise belongs to Him, to be all-Knowing, all-Might, and every description has its reality without plurality or composition.[6]

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, Is His Pleasure With What He Does

His freewill, the most Praised One that He is, is the pleasure of His Holy Self with His deeds, His acceptance of them. Since He disseminates and perfects what is good, He is fully pleased. From this self-pleasure comes pleasure in the phase of the deed. When one loves something, he loves its effects and requirements, and this actual love is the freewill in the phase of the action, and it is the one to which reports have rendered freewill as being one of His deeds.

Freewill has two phases: a freewill in the status of the self, and a freewill in the status of the action. His self-pleasure is an innate will. His pleasure with His deeds is freewill taking the form of action.

What one can resign about the above is that it is a theory similar to the one that preceded it, and it does not produce a conclusion. The reality of the freewill is not the same like that of acceptance, and it is not the same like the reality of pleasure. To explain one through the other is denial of this perfection in His Holy Self, Praise belongs to Him.

It has already been stated that a willing doer is better and more perfect than his opposite: one who has to do something out of necessity. Such perfection in Him can never be denied. Rather, He must be described as such according to the particular development that we reviewed in describing life, and its details will reach you in the proper place.

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, Affects Might and Authority

When a group of logicians found out that the most Praised One could not be described as having "freewill", and it cannot be counted among His attributes, because there are confusions about it which you have already come to know, they made it one of the characteristics of action, such as His being the Creator, Sustainer, etc. They have said, "We cannot imagine a meaning for His freewill, the most Exalted One that He is, other than affecting might and authority."

Since the might of the Almighty is perfect from all aspects and directions, and no shortcoming can ever be imagined in it at all, naturally, the action is actualized in the outside. It is then that might is affected without relying on another introduction, as we understand from this verse:

"His command is, "Be," and it is!" (***Qur'an, 36:82***).

There are indications about it. Affecting might and authority, be it voluntarily as in His case, Praise belongs to Him, or involuntary, and there is no way for the second because it requires the Almighty to be forced to do something, and in this case He cannot be described as being Omni-Potent, Able.

Regarding the first, is it the role of His being a volunteer doer? Prior to affecting might and implementing authority, there has to be something that affects Him, since He is a voluntary doer. So, it is not sufficient to simply affect authority.

Briefly, simply affecting authority without proving that He has somehow chosen it by Himself is to no avail.

His Freewill, Praise Belongs to Him, is Equal Cause: Action Ratio

Allama Tabatabai has regarded this attribute of the Almighty as being one of the descriptions of His actions. The conclusion of his theory is this: The only attribute from among the self's, which man finds within him and which can be labeled as freewill, is that of "purpose". This "purpose", which is a mediator between knowledge and the actualization of an action is the doer's psychological inclination to undertake the action.

Freewill can never be described correctly as knowledge because we realize, with our conscience, that our will intervenes between our knowledge of the action and our actually doing it, not of the same knowledge.

Thereupon, if we want to describe the Almighty as having freewill, after stripping it of shortcomings, we cannot apply it to His knowledge because the essence and truth of knowledge is different from that of freewill. Stripping freewill of shortcomings does not, in fact, make it united with knowledge.

Also, once stripped of shortcomings, freewill becomes an actual attribute of Allah Almighty, similarly to the attributes of creating, bringing into being, granting mercy, etc.

Explanation: When all introductions and causes for creating an action are completed, the characteristics of the freewill will then be stripped, so the Almighty becomes "willing" and the action "willed" without the existence, in that case, of any description for the freewill other than the status of completing the causes behind it.

In other words, freewill, in as far as the Almighty is concerned, is an adjective derived from the combination of causes and requirements for bringing a thing into being. At that juncture, the perfecting of the action's introductions and their perfection is attributed once to the action and once to Allah Almighty. So, if it is attributed to the action, this status of "perfecting the introductions" is called "the will of the action" and the action itself as "the will of Allah". If it is attributed to Allah Almighty, this status is called "Allah's freewill" and Allah Almighty is called "the One Who wills it".

The *allama*, may Allah sanctify him, says, "The evidences which the men of wisdom have produced to prove that freewill is one of the attributes of the self do not prove more than this: All manifestations of existence rely on the might and knowledge of the Almighty of the best system. They do not prove that His will, the Almighty that He is, is the same as his knowledge or might."[7]

One may resign that had the factor for the absolution of freewill been the completion of the action, in as far as the cause is concerned, it would require the soundness of its absolution in case the doer is completely forced with regard to the action's cause, which you will come to see.

Moreover, the perfection of the cause, whether the doer is knowledgeable and aware, is a reality, while freewill is another reality. We have already said that the descriptions must be applied to Allah, Praise belongs to Him, after stripping them of the impurities of possibility and material nature while having reservations about its meaning, not stripping it of its truth and reality.

The Truth in the Matter

The truth is that freewill is one of the entitative attributes, and it applies to Him, the most Praised One, according to the progress which we mention in “life”. In order to explain our objective, we would like to make a useful statement about all His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him.

Every theologian, in the process of applying His Attributes to Him, Praise belongs to Him, must strip these Attributes of the impurities of shortcomings, space, etc., and must understand them in the sense that suits Him while being reserved about their facts and realities even after such stripping.

For example, we describe Him, Praise belongs to Him, as being all-Knowledgeable, and we apply it stripped of particularities, probable limits, but while being reserved about its reality which is: the presence of knowledge with the all-Knowledgeable One. As regarding His knowledge being entitative or an addition between the Knowledgeable One and what He knows, He is above such particularities.

The case with freewill is similar. Undoubtedly, it describes His perfection, Praise belongs to Him, and it is applied to Him stripped of the characteristics of taking place, eventuality, progression and termination once the objective is achieved, for all of these are characteristics of potential freewill. Rather, what is meant by describing Him as having freewill is that He is a doer by choice versus being a doer who has no choice. This is the basis followed in applying His Attributes, Praise belongs to Him, and here is its explanation for you in the freewill process.

The doer may either be effective by nature, not knowing his action, which is the natural doer, such as the fire when burning. Or he may know his action but not desiring it, becoming a doer without a freewill such as one’s shiver. Or he may be knowing, reluctant in doing his deed that he does because it is the lesser evil and the lighter harm, as is the case with a reluctant doer. Or he may be knowledgeable and willing, not hating his deed yet is pleased with it.

The last two types, though having in common a willing doer, but since the doer in the first division is overcome by an external factor, his deed is not regarded as a manifestation of perfect choice. Contrarily to the second, the doer has perfect choice and his deed is a manifestation of his choice.

This true restriction, which revolves between negation and affirmation, drags us to say that His action, Praise belongs to Him, is according to one of the following norms:

He may be a doer lacking knowledge, or knowledgeable lacking freewill, or willing knowledgeable but hating his action because of the existence of a might subduing him, or he is knowledgeable, willing and

is pleased with his action. The action of the Creator, Praise to Him, is not one of these norms. The first three do not suit Him, Praise belongs to Him. Therefore, He has to be a doer who is willing, holding the reins of his deed and action, not being forced to create and bring into existence. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the freewill in the levels of probability never stops taking place, progressing and terminating after the goal is reached. It is known that applying it in this way to Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is impossible because it requires Him to be the object of His deed. So, if we apply it to Him, Praise belongs to Him, we must remove these impurities. The objective behind His freewill will then be His own choice, that He is not forced to do what He does, not falling under the pressure of a higher force.

If it is accurate to label this choice as “freewill”, it is a good objective. Otherwise, we have to say that it is one of the characteristics of action.

In other words, freewill is an attribute of perfection not because it is casual, and it terminates after the objective is reached. Rather, it is an attribute of perfection. This is so because it symbolizes choosing and is a characteristic of non-obligation, so much so that the reluctant doer has a share in making a choice. He chooses one of the ends of an action over that of the other following rational computations, so he prefers doing a deed over the expected harm it will bring.

If the goal and objective behind describing the doer as having the freewill is to prove his having the might to choose, that he is not forced, this describes Him, Glory to Him, as enjoying the ability to choose. He is not being overcome in His might. He is not being obligated to affect His might. Suffices to apply freewill to Him because He is the One Who chooses, who creates the perfect freewill in the most perfect way.

It has already been stated that there is a requirement when applying the attributes to abandon the principles and to stick to the direction of perfection. The perfection of freewill is not in being coincidental, fleeting after the objective is achieved, or due to the doer taking it out of might to the action, or from defect to perfection.

Actually, its perfection lies in its doer having the option, being in control of his action, holding the reins of his deeds. If such is the perfection of freewill, Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is apt to it in the most perfect way. He is the choosing doer, the One Who is not subdued in His domain:

“Allah has full might and control over His affairs” (***Qur’an, 12:21***).

Freewill in the Sunnah

It appears from precious narrations of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as) that His command and freewill are among the attributes of His actions, such as His being the One Who sustains, creates, etc. Here are excerpts from these narratives.

1. Asim ibn Humayd quotes Imam Abu Abdullah (al-Sadiq) (as) as saying, "... I (Asim) said, 'Does Allah ever cease to be willing (enjoying freewill)?' He said, 'Nobody who is willing is without an objective present with him. Allah never ceases to be Knowing, Able, then He wills.'"[8]

It seems that the freewill the narrator had in mind and about which he inquired is the freewill in the sense of determination to undertake an action, something that is never separated from a deed. So, the Imam (as) wanted to guide him to the freewill that has such a meaning, that it cannot be one of His entitative attributes because this would require what is anticipated to be timeless or the one who anticipates it to be temporal.

So that the narrator may receive an accurate meaning for freewill that suits his level of thinking, the Imam (as) explained freewill in the sense that applies to Him, Praise belongs to Him, in the station of the action. He said, "Allah never ceases to be Knowing, Able, then He wills," that is, then He creates. But the context of the narrative does not negate the freewill as being one of His entitative attributes in a way which does not require the objective to be timeless which is: He, the most Praised One, chooses by self, He is neither obliged nor obligated.

Thus, it is obvious there are two phases for His freewill just like His knowledge, and each has its own particular explanation.

2. Safwan ibn Yahya has narrated saying, "I said to the father of al-Hassan (as), "Tell me about the freewill from (the side of) Allah and from creation."

The Imam (as) said, "The creation's freewill is the conscience. The action that appears to them comes from the deed. As regarding it's being from Allah Almighty, His freewill is His creating and nothing else because He does not premeditates, nor does He intends nor contemplates. These actions are negated about Him, they belong to His creation. Allah's freewill is His action and is nothing else. He says, 'Be!' and it is without articulating or speaking or determining or contemplating, nor is there a 'how' for it. Also, there is no 'how' for His actions."[9]

This narrative is united with its predecessor in explaining and analyzing. The freewill that was discussed by both Imam (as) and narrator is the freewill in the sense of the "conscience" and what appears to the anticipator to be the event. It is known that the freewill in this meaning is the norm of happening, the indicator of a probability, and the most Praised One cannot be described as such. For this reason, the Imam (as) focused on negating it in this sense, in as far as the Creator is concerned, saying, "He does not premeditate, nor does He intend or contemplate."

But, so that the narrator could receive a sound concept of the freewill that suits the level of his mentality, the Imam (as) explained the freewill as the will to do an action. He (as) said, "Allah's freewill is His action and nothing else. He says, 'Be!' and it is..." While observing these aspects, it is not right for us to say that the Imam (as) was in the process of negating freewill as being one of the entitative attributes, not even in the sense that suits the most Holy One.

3. Muhammad ibn Muslim has quoted Abu Abdullah (as) as saying, “Freewill brings about an action.”[10]

The goal behind describing His freewill, the most Praised One that He is, as bringing about an action is to distance the narrator’s mind from interpreting it as the determination to undertake an action and making it a description of the Self. Interpreting freewill in this sense is not without faults, including the willing doer being timeless.

For this purpose, the Imam (as) explained freewill through one of its two meanings: freewill substituting the action. He said, “Freewill is His action,” an indication that His action takes place and is not timeless.

Thus, you can explain the narratives about the freewill. These narratives focus on its being a description of His action, Praise belongs to Him.[11]

There are questions here about His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, being an entitative attribute. You have already become familiar with what we have stated about it, so you can answer these questions. Here are some of those questions.

1. The scales in distinguishing the entitative attributes from the operative attributes, as stated by mentor al-Kulayni at the conclusion to the chapter about freewill, is that the first is not categorized within the frame of negation and affirmation; rather it is singly relevant. It is not said that Allah knows and does not know. This is contrary to the second which falls under the cycle of negation and affirmation, so it is said that Allah grants and does not grant. In the light of this, the freewill must be one of the operative attributes. It is the object of negation and affirmation. The most Praised One says,

“Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you” (***Qur’an, 2:185***).

The answer to this question follows two paths:

One: The freewill that is subject to negation and affirmation stands in the position of action. As for the freewill that stands in the position of the self, which we interpreted as the perfection of freewill, i.e. option, it does not fall within the frame of negation and affirmation.

Two: This question is also answered by Mulla Sadra who believes that Allah, Praise belongs to Him, has a simple freewill the essence of which is unknown, and that the object of negation and affirmation is the numerical particle will which undertakes the function of an action. As for the origin of the simple freewill, the most Praised One being a doer having freewill, is neither obligated nor forced, Allah, Praise belongs to Him, cannot be robbed of it.

The origin of confusion is mixing the simple will that undertakes the position of the self, which cannot be made plural or dual, with the numerical freewill which undertakes the position of action which can be plural, dual, etc., and it can be negated or affirmed.

Sadra said, “The difference between the detailed numerical will, which is relevant to a portion of natural

numbers, or to one of two ends of a probability, as is the case with able animals, and between the truly simple Divine freewill the comprehension of which wears out the minds of the greatest men of wisdom and others."[12]

2. Had freewill been the same as His Essence, Praise belongs to Him, the world would have had a beginning because it is united with the Self, and the Self is described by it, and it is inseparable from the objective.

The above can be criticized as follows:

First: The confusion is not restricted to those who made the freewill, in its true sense, as a description of His Essence, Praise belongs to Him. Rather, the confusion also reaches those who explained His freewill as meaning knowledge of what is the most fitting based on the existence of things to the knowledge of the most perfect system which is His own Self. It is impossible to separate the effect from the cause.

It is quite clear without any distinction between calling this knowledge freewill or something else. Had the most perfect system been rendered to His knowledge, with the supposition that His knowledge is timeless, the system itself would have been timeless, too, due to the timelessness of its causality.

Second: If we say that His freewill, Praise belongs to Him, means His being choosing, not obligated by either side, the world would then have to be timeless if He chooses to create the world at a later time.

Mulla Sadra and those who follow in his footsteps believe our ignorance of the reality of this simple unknown entitative freewill and how it functions deters us from knowing how His action comes up, and why He created an incident instead of doing so before then.

There is something very interesting here that needs to be brought up as a comment about this research after having drawn attention to time being a connected whole extracted from something's movement and change from one status to another, from one place to another, as well as from one quantum image to another. The sum of movement is time. Had it not been for the matter and its movement, time would have had no true meaning; it would have been a thing of the imagination.

The above has been proven by in-depth researches in time and motion. The ancients used to claim that time is born of the movement of the stars, the sun and the moon and other planets, but the fact is that every movement is tied to time that draws and generates it.

In a more precise statement, the alterations, be they elemental or ethereal, contain two matters. The first is the status of moving from the start to the end, whether this movement is in the description or in the self. The other is that this movement takes place gradually, it flows rather than thrusts.

According to the first matter according to which movement is described, and according to the other in which time is described. It is as though one thing that is named change, alteration, movement, becomes

the start of our extracting two concepts from it, each having its own consideration. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, matter is realized gradually, in stages, and it does not take place as a whole because its reality is fluid, gradual, similarly to the flow of water. Every material phenomenon takes place following a particular cause. Anything such as this is impossible to materialize as a whole, or a portion of it advances or lags behind. Rather, each part has to materialize within its own condition and place.

Accordingly, numbers and figures are similar. The number 5, for example, has no place to come to exist except between 4 and 6. It is impossible for it to advance before its position or to lag behind it. Thereupon, the causes and causations that result from a particular system are impossible to permit any of its portions to depart from its position and place.

If you come to know this matter, let us return now to explaining this interesting thing which is: What does one mean when he says that the entitative attribute of Allah, Glory to Him, requires the world being timeless? If he means that the world has to materialize in a time that precedes it and in a past period, this (theory) fails due to the first requirement. This is so because it is presupposed that there is no time before the world of matter since you have come to know that the matter's movement draws time and generates it.

If he means that some of its portions have to precede others, or that they precede the whole world, you know that this is impossible, and that getting each portion out of its frame is impossible due to its nonexistence.

In this regard, Mulla Sadra has made a statement that has a deep meaning. So, one who wishes to review it has to refer to him.[13]

1. You will come to know, in the discussion of the negative attributes, that His Essence, the most Exalted One, is not subject to events/incidents.
2. Al-Asfar al-Arbaa, Vol. 6, p. 316.
3. Ibid., p. 333.
4. Ibid., p. 331.
5. Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 109 in a chapter on freewill.
6. In his comments about sufficiency, the critic-mentor al-Isfahani makes statements in this regard which are very useful for you; so, refer to the conclusion of Al-Diraya, Vol. 1, pp. 116-17 (Tehran edition).
7. Our objective is to provide a clear report of what this holy person indicated as cited in Taaleeq al-Asfar, Vol. 6, pp. 315-16 and in Nihayat al-Hikma, p. 300.
8. Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 109, in a chapter about freewill, first tradition.
9. Ibid., tradition 3.
10. Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, in a chapter about freewill, tradition 7.
11. Refer to Al-Kafi by thiqatul-Islam al-Kulayni, Vol. 1, pp. 109-11.
12. Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 324.
13. Al-Asfar, Vol. 6, p. 368.

Perpetuity and Eternity

Perpetuity and eternity are among the attributes of the Praised One. Likewise, the “Perpetual One” and the “Eternal One” are among His Names. In their places, both “Timeless” and “ever-Present” may instead be used. The absolute timelessness, and so is ever-presence, are His attributes. He, the most Praised One, therefore, is timeless, perpetual, ever-present, eternal.

The first two names are applied to Him because He is the companion of the sum of all times that will come to be or those that have already been in the past. The last couple is applied to Him because He is the One Whose presence continues to be in the upcoming times, be they actualized or decreed. He may also be described as being the everlasting in the sense the One Who combines in Him the total of all periods, the past and the future ones.

Briefly, describing Him as the perpetual with regard to the past, and the ever-present, the eternal with regard to the future, is what scholars of logic have agreed about while explaining these names and attributes.

But this explanation suits one whose presence is timed, who accompanies realized or decreed times, the past or the future ones, whereas Allah, Praise belongs to Him, is above time and above accompanying it. Rather, He is the One Who created time, the past, the present and the future. He, therefore, is above time and place. Time does not surround Him, place does not contain Him.

Thereupon, what is right in making an explanation is to say that what is present by the self is one whose presence is not initiated by this self. Rather, it is preceded by void, and existence takes place due to a cause within him. The opposite to the latter is the One that creates existence, the One Whose presence is innate, a must by itself, the One that cannot be affected by nonexistence, nor is He affected by it. Such One is not preceded by void, so He is timeless, perpetual. Likewise, void never affects Him, so He remains eternal, ever-present.

Briefly, the need for existence and its imminence dismisses void forever, for good. Otherwise, His presence will not be a must but a probability, which is the contrary to the supposition.

As regarding the proof for these four attributes that follow the need for His presence, we have already explained it when we discussed the imminence of probable existents ending at a necessary must that stands by himself, on his own. Otherwise, the existents, what is possible of them, will cease to be; they will not materialize.

As regarding the inclusion of the Perpetual, Eternal, Timeless and ever-Present among His Names, Praise belongs to Him, this depends on saying that His Names, Praise belongs to Him, require a lengthy halt. The Almighty cannot be called except what the Quran and Sunnah call Him. The texts in this regard

narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams (as) indicate that the latter names, I mean the “timeless” and the “ever-present”, are the ones that are mentioned as you will come to know at the end of the chapter when we discuss His Names as they exist in the Quran and Sunnah.

Up to here, the research is completed about the positive entitative attributes which are not restricted to the eight ones we have discussed. Any perfection that is regarded as absolute belongs to Him, any shortcoming there is, He is above it. All His Names that exist in the Quran and Sunnah, point out to His perfection, the most Exalted One that He is. They negate His having any need or shortcoming, the Holy One that He is.

So, if we want to describe the most Praised One by one collective Name, it is the absolute perfection, or the pure independence. And if we want to explain this perfection and description that combines all the attributes, it suffices to apply the eight positive attributes that we discussed. Thus, the one single Name, from among all of His Names, which symbolizes the Self that incorporates all attributes of perfection is “Allah”.

All this discussion revolves round the entitative positive attributes, and we have already stated the difference among them. We are going to refer to them anew.
