
Llull and the divine attributes in 13th century context

Llull y los atributos divinos en el contexto del siglo XIII

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Abstract: For Llull, one of the most important concepts of thinking and exploring reality is the notion of divine attributes: they serve as a means of understanding and ordering the world, contemplating God and dialoguing with thinkers of other religions. Even in Llull's early writings one can find an amazingly elaborate concept of divine attributes which Llull continued to use throughout his life.

Keywords: Divine attributes, analogy, gnoseology, inter-religious encounter.

Resumen: Uno de los conceptos más importantes de pensar y explorar la realidad es para Llull la noción de atributos divinos: sirven como medio para entender y ordenar el mundo, contemplando a Dios y dialogando con pensadores de otras religiones. Ya los primeros escritos de Llull muestran un concepto increíblemente elaborado de atributos divinos que Llull utiliza constantemente a lo largo de su vida.

Palabras clave: Atributos divinos, analogía, gnoseología, encuentro interreligioso.

RECIBIDO: ENERO DE 2015 / ACEPTADO: OCTUBRE DE 2015
DOI: 10.15581/009.49.1.139-154

ANUARIO FILOSÓFICO 49/1 (2016) 139-154

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THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN THE EARLY WORKS OF LLULL

In the famous fresco *The School of Athens*, which Raphael († 1520) finished in 1511 in the *Stanze della Segnatura* of the Vatican, Aristotle points to the earth and Plato to the sky. These two figures seem a good symbol of how Ramon Llull († 1316) deals with the subject of the attributes of God: The divine attributes do not only serve him to speculate about God, but also to make statements concerning the world and its qualities because the created attributes of the world are dependent on uncreated divine attributes. Llull's theory of the divine attributes therefore gives an answer to both questions: How to speak of God? And: How to talk about the world?—a fundamental philosophical questioning of his time which is still relevant today.

Already in his first major work, *The Book of the Contemplation of God (Liber contemplationis in Deum)*,¹ Llull designs a sophisticated theory of God's attributes. Relevant here are above all chapters 4-102 and the summarising chapter 178. In the latter Llull explains on the basis of the attribute of *infinitas* that he arrives at determining the attributes of God by the method of inference from *qualitates finitas*, that is to say by means of finite properties in the created world. What is true for *infinitas* is transferable to all attributes because God expresses himself in his creation in the way he really is in himself. In chapter 4, for example, God's being, according to Llull, is so great that human beings would never even imagine that God could be finite.² The attributes characterize God in such a way that he could not be conceived without them or he would no longer be God.

If we compare the divine attributes of chapters 4-102 with those listed in chapter 178 of the *Liber contemplationis*, Llull's lists of the divine attributes already vary within the *Liber contemplationis* and all the more in comparison with his other works. In the *Liber de gentili et tri-*

1. Written probably during the years of Llull's autodidactic theological formation and intensive meditations that accompanied this period and finished approximately about 1273.

2. Cf. R. LLULL, *Liber contemplationis in Deum* (henceforth *LC*), ch. 4, 8, MOG IX (Häffner, Maguntia, 1740) 8: "quod tuum esse sit tam magnum quod non possit cadere in intellectum hominis, quod tu sis finitus".

bus sapentibus, for example, only the following seven divine attributes are mentioned: *bonitas*, *magnitudo*, *aeternitas*, *potestas*, *sapientia*, *amor*, and *perfectio*. In the *Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem* the number of attributes has been expanded to 16, whereby *virtus* now is a separate attribute and not anymore a generic term for ‘divine attribute’. Lull understands his lists of attributes as open lists to which attributes can be added or omitted, according to what Lull wants to underline in his argumentation. In the *Liber contemplationis* both lists show the distinction between the divine attributes *quoad Deum* (in relation to God) and the divine attributes *quoad nos* (in relation to us).

Among the attributes *quoad Deum* there are classic divine properties such as infinity (*infinitas*), eternity (*aeternitas*), unity (*unitas*), wisdom (*sapientia*), goodness (*bonitas*), and perfection (*perfectio*) that are attributed to the divine being also by other philosophers and Christian thinkers. The attributes *quoad nos* are attributes that “we recognize in you with respect and in relation to the creatures”.³ Lull defines them as “those qualities by which your works are perceived”.⁴ As an effect of these attributes *quoad nos* the attributes *quoad Deum* become immediately tangible for human beings; they even become their own human qualities which they possess *qua* creature. Yet, and this is the main difference, the essential properties in God manifest themselves in the creature as only accidental.⁵ For Lull not God is the exception to the rule, but the human being is deficient.

ANALOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF ATTRIBUTES AS INSTRUMENT OF UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

Lull was by no means the first Christian thinker who intensively grappled with the doctrine of attributes. The first chapter of *De*

3. LLULL, *LC*, ch. 178, 13, 424: “quas intelligimus in te secundum respectum et relationem ad creaturas”.

4. LLULL, *LC*, ch. 178, 14, 424: “illas qualitates, per quas percipiuntur tua opera”.

5. Cf. LLULL, *LC*, ch. 178, 18, 425: “intellectus intelligit ipsam [scil. creationem] quoad te non habere ullum accidens, cum aeternaliter et infinite sis illa res, per quam es creator, sed creatura quoad se venit accidentaliter in esse per hoc, quod receperit principium”.

divinis nominibus of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite († ca. 500) may pass for a classical Christian example for creating a list of attributes.⁶ Why is Llull so fascinated by the concept of divine attributes? Which insights does he gain from them?

Firstly, this concept serves him as a grid, as a scheme of order for viewing the world. This corresponds to the direction in which Aristotle points in the *Scuola d'Atene*. In Llull's thinking, creation befits a particular key role. It establishes the world's causal dependency from God. God is the sufficient reason for the world's being the very way it is, because he has passed on to it his properties in a weaker form. This leads to an analogous relation, whereby 'analogous' refers to the ontological process of ascent and descent. Robert Pring-Mill illustratively asks: "Given this conception of the universe as a Ladder of Being whose levels were wholly congruous with one another, if one but knew all that there was to be known about one level, could one not argue validly from that level to the other *per analogiam*?"⁷ Different levels of being correspond to different degrees of perfection. The divine characteristics manifest themselves at all levels of being to varying degrees. In his logical writings, Llull defines nine levels of existence (instrumental, elemental, vegetative, sensitive, imaginative, human being, heaven, angel, God).⁸ Therefore, for Llull all reality is relational and analogical. Llull can operate with a relation of similarity, since for him creation has a representative function. In it, in a mirrored form, the omnipresence of the divine perfection is reflected. This very point constitutes the peculiarity of Llull's approach, for here lies the main difference between the Aristotelian (and scholastic) predication, which examines language in order to formalize it and to explore the structure of propositions, and the Llullian relations,

6. Cf. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De divinis nominibus*, in B. R. SUCHLA (ed.), *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, "Patristische Texte und Studien" 33 (De Gruyter, Berlin, 1990).

7. R. PRING-MILL, *The Analogical Structure of the Lullian Art*, in S. M. STERN (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition* (University of South Carolina Press, Oxford/Columbia SC, 1972) 315-326; 316.

8. Cf. R. LLULL, *Logica nova*, dist. I, ch. 1, n. 2, ed. CH. LOHR (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 2002) 8.

which investigate the (platonically understood) reality to fathom its ontological structures.⁹

The divine attributes turn out to be at the same time *principia essendi* and *cognoscendi*. As a basic principle analogy applies; thus an ascent or descent to the different levels is possible. Depending on whether one focuses on the order of being or the order of knowing, the use of the metaphor ‘ascent’ or ‘descent’ is appropriate. Colomer emphasizes the alignment from top to bottom and advocates an ontological-metaphysical perspective which highlights the order of being.¹⁰ This corresponds to the traditional position of Hugo of St. Victor († 1141) that the human mind descends to the visible by viewing the invisible.¹¹ The fact of creation undoubtedly refers to a causal relationship between God and the world. Gayà emphasizes this causal relationship that he apostrophizes as the basis for Llull’s so-called ‘exemplarism’ when he speaks about the Lullian doctrine of correlatives.¹² Yet one can go even one step further, as Platzek explains: “When good brings forth good, the generating good is not only causally connected with the good brought forth, but also united regarding its quiddity due to its goodness. In the concrete good the goodness appears as it were as a real binding force.”¹³ On this

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9. Cf. A. BONNER, *Ramon Llull: relació, acció, combinatoria i lògica moderna*, “SL” 34 (1994) 51-74; 65.
10. Cf. E. COLOMER, *El ascenso a Dios en el pensamiento de Ramon Llull*, in P. WILPERT (ed.), *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter: ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung. Vorträge des II. Internationalen Kongresses für Mittelalterliche Philosophie, Köln, 31. August-6. Sept. 1961*, “Miscellanea Mediaevalia” 2 (De Gruyter, Berlin, 1963) 582-588; 582: “El movimiento de este pensamiento va más bien de arriba a abajo, que no de abajo a arriba; es decir, va de Dios con sus razones y dignidades al universo creado por el mismo Dios a semejanza y participación de sus propias dignidades”.
11. Cf. HUGO OF ST. VICTOR, *Exegetica II: Expositio in hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagitae*, lib. IX, cap. XIII, Migne *Patrologia Latina* 175, 1127BC: “et sic ‘a primis usque ad ultima descendens’ conducit illuminationem suam per singulas virtutes”.
12. Cf. J. GAYÀ, *El conocimiento teológico, como precepto, según Ramon Llull*, “EL” 18 (1974) 47-51; 47.
13. E.-W. PLATZECK, *Raimund Lull. Sein Leben-Seine Werke*, vol. 1, “Bibliotheca Franciscana” 5 (Schwann, Düsseldorf, 1962) 152: “Wenn Gutes Gutes hervorbringt, so ist das hervorbringende Gute mit dem hervorgebrachten Guten nicht nur kausal, sondern auch washeitlich auf Grund der Gutheit

basis, i.e. a regeneration of essence, rest both, Llull's proofs of the existence of God and his predications of God. "Of God applies the *praedicatio in quid*. I can say that God is goodness. Of created things only the *praedicatio in quale* is valid, i.e. just the denominative statement: 'The human being has goodness' or 'The human being is good'. Llull's teaching here is in all quite traditional."¹⁴

GNOSEOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF ATTRIBUTES AS AN
INSTRUMENT OF CONTEMPLATING GOD

The ontological causal chain 'from top to bottom' is a prerequisite for the gnoseological movement 'from bottom to top'. This corresponds to the direction in which Plato points. This way of achieving knowledge which uses the divine attributes as *principia cognoscendi* is appropriate to the human intellect.

From contemplating the lower level of being, we ascend to the comparison with the higher level of being whereby the latter is not given to us immediately. We can only see from undeceiving systems of the lower level of being (whether this is the outside world or our own being does not matter at the moment) that they point clearly to a higher being as higher, they point necessarily, even point to it as the only origin of their being, from which all facilities and attributes of the lower level of being result.¹⁵

geeint und verbunden. Im konkret-Guten erscheint die Gutheit gleichsam wie eine real bindende Kraft".

14. *Ibidem*: "Von Gott gilt die '*praedicatio in quid*'. Ich kann sagen: Gott ist die Gutheit. Von den geschaffenen Dingen gilt nur die '*praedicatio in quale*', d.i. eben die denominative Aussage: 'Der Mensch hat Gutheit' oder 'Der Mensch ist gut'. Lulls Lehre ist hier in allem recht traditionell".
15. *Ibidem*, 136: "Von der Betrachtung der niederen Seinsstufe steigen wir zum Vergleich mit der höheren Seinsstufe auf, wobei wiederum diese letzte uns unmittelbar gar nicht gegeben ist. Wir können lediglich aus untrüglichen Anlagen der niederen Seinsstufe (ob diese die Außenwelt oder unser eigenes Sein ist, verschlägt im Augenblick nichts) ansehen, daß sie deutlich auf ein höheres Sein als Höheres hinweisen, und zwar notwendigerweise hinweisen

As ladder of ascent function the (divine) perfections.¹⁶ The brothers Carreras y Artau connect this basic structure of Llull's thinking explicitly with the Platonic doctrine of ideas, for God and the divine dignities are cause and archetype of created perfections, and things are nothing more than images of divine attributes, equivalents of the Platonic ideas.¹⁷

The idea of an ascent by means of the divine perfections cannot be found only with Llull, but also with Thomas Aquinas († 1274).¹⁸ The ability that allows this ascent is reason,¹⁹ and with its help man can make out a variety of attributes in God; as God understands many creatures in one act of understanding, so our intellect ascending from the multiplicity of creatures to God, understands that there are many notions relating imperfectly to one God.²⁰ The result of the ascent is indeed a recognizing, but only

und dazu als auf ihren einzigen Seinsursprung hinweisen, von dem alle Anlagen und Eigenschaften der niederen Seinsstufe herrühren”.

16. Cf. D. BURRELL, *Beyond Idolatry. On 'Naming' the One-God*, in M. J. HIMES (ed.), *Finding God in All Things* (Crossroad, New York, 1996) 28-37; 29: “Those features of the world which we recognize to be perfections may be used to ascend to an imperfect understanding of their source because we know the world to be patterned according to divine wisdom”.
17. Cf. T. and J. CARRERAS Y ARTAU, *Historia de la filosofía española* vol. I (Asociación, Madrid 1939) 481.
18. Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* I^a q. 13 a. 2 co., in *Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia cum hypertextibus in CD-Rom*, R. BUSA (ed.) (Editoria Eletttronica Éditel, Milano, 1996): “Unde quaelibet creatura intantum eum repraesentat, et est ei similis, inquantum perfectionem aliquam habet, non tamen ita quod repraesentet eum sicut aliquid eiusdem speciei vel generis, sed sicut excellens principium, a cuius forma effectus deficiunt, cuius tamen aliqualem similitudinem effectus consequuntur; sicut formae corporum inferiorum repraesentant virtutem solarem.” Also *ibidem* a. 3 co.: “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, Deum cognoscimus ex perfectionibus procedentibus in creaturas ab ipso”.
19. Cf. E. COLOMER, *Ascenso* cit., 583: “El momento crucial del método luliano se encuentra en la dimensión de la inteligencia”.
20. Cf. AQUINAS, *De potentia* cit., q. 7 a. 6 ad 5: “Ad quintum dicendum, quod cum omnimoda unitas sit ex parte Dei, et multiplicitas ex parte creaturarum, sicut oportet quod in Deo intelligente plures creaturas sit una forma intelligibilis per essentiam, et multi respectus ad diversas creaturas; ita in intellectu nostro ex multiplicitate creaturarum in Deum ascendente, oportet quod sint multae species habentes relationes ad unum Deum”.

an imperfect recognition.²¹ Likewise Llull stresses one could recognize God, although with difficulty, something of God rather than nothing, but also not everything. As an obstacle during the ascent Llull especially emphasises the inadequacy of the human mind, which can never succeed in the transition from the finite to the infinite, rather than the being imprisoned in sin as Bonaventure († 1274) had done. Bonaventure presents a quite similar system: The pure perfections are realized only in God. Yet the creature participates in them by way of representation. Although these predicates, considered gnoseologically, are first found in the creature, they can only prevail as divine perfections, because they are attributed to God in their highest degree, and thus free from any form of only contingent realization. The essence of such an infinitely enhanced predication does not change regardless of whom it is predicated. Terms such as goodness or justice elude the definability of finite reason, because they are, when applied to God, absolutely simple terms.²² The constant essence of these terms serves Llull for stressing in the analogical relation more strongly the similarity than the ever greater dissimilarity.

The fact that in Llull's thinking the question of ascent or descent is not a matter of mutually exclusive alternatives is proved by writings such as the *Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus* (1304) or the *Arbor scientiae* (1295/6): "The philosopher loves it to know the truth of things so that he can take pleasure in that knowledge; [...] For his research he must ascend and descend from things above to things below, and of those below to those above, and in their effectiveness he has knowledge of them."²³

21. Cf. *Ibidem* q. 7 a. 5 co.: "Sic ergo dicendum est, quod quodlibet istorum nominum significat divinam substantiam, non tamen quasi comprehendens ipsam, sed imperfecte".

22. Cf. BONAVENTURA, *De mysterio Trinitatis* q. 3 a. 1 ad 6, V, 72ab QUARACCHI (ed.), in *Opera omnia S. Bonaventurae*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae (Quaracchi, Ad Claras Aquas 1882-1902): "[...] quia haec vere et perfectissime sunt in Deo, licet non diversificentur realiter inter se, sicut in esse creato".

23. R. LLULL, *Arbor scientiae, Arbor humanalis V De foliis* 6, 17, P. VILLALBA VARNEDA (ed.), ROL XXV, CChr.CM 180A (Brepols, Turnhout, 2000) 247: "Philosophus ueritatem rerum scire diligit, ut in illo scire delectationem habere possit; [...] Et eius inuestigatio consistit in ascendendo et descendendo ex causis superioribus ad

Richard of St. Victor († 1173) whom Llull certainly consulted for his doctrine of the Trinity²⁴ already described the contemplation of God on the basis of his essential attributes as a consequence of a general principle and emphasized: “It is therefore a guiding principle of every scholar and a common conception imprinted in the hearts of all to ascribe everything we regard as most valuable to God.”²⁵

THE DOCTRINE OF ATTRIBUTES AS TOPIC OF
INTER-RELIGIOUS EXCHANGE

This principle is repeated by Llull in his *Vita coetanea*, but in an expanded form that corresponds to its inter-religious horizon: “It is appropriate for every wise man to hold that belief which attributes to God in whom all sages of the world believe higher goodness, greatness, power, perfection etc.”²⁶ Regarding the doctrine of attributes there was a tacit consensus among the religions which John of Salisbury († 1180) formulated as follows: “There is now but one common principle for all religions which piety grants freely and

inferiora, et de inferioribus ad superiora, et in effectibus illarum habet cognitionem ex ipsis”.

24. Cf. H. MERLE, *Dignitas: signification philosophique et théologique de ce terme chez Lulle et ses prédécesseurs médiévaux*, “Estudios Lulianos” 21 (1977) 173-193; 184: “E. Longpré, dans l'article du Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique cité plus haute, écrit que Raymond Lulle, qui n'a pas reçu la formation classique, philosophique et théologique, des clercs de son temps, a cependant certainement lu Aristote et Richard de Saint Victor. De ce dernier, il ne pouvait ignorer le *De Trinitate*, dans lequel, comme S. Anselme, Richard veut prouver (*convincere*) l'existence du Dieu Un et Trine à l'aide d'arguments rationnels (*ex rationis attestazione*)”.
25. RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, *De trinitate* I, 20, G. SALET (ed.), Sources chrétiennes 63 (Édition du Cerf, Paris, 1999) 98: “Est itaque eruditus velut maxima propositio, est cunctis in commune velut communis animi conceptio Deo attribuere quidquid altius attingit humana aestimatio”.
26. R. LLULL, *Vita coetanea* 26, H. HARADA (ed.), ROL VIII, CChr.CM 34 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1980) 290: “illam fidem tenere decet quemlibet sapientem, quae Deo aeterno, quem cuncti credunt mundi sapientes, attribuit maiorem bonitatem, sapientiam, uirtutem, ueritatem, gloriam et perfectionem et cetera huiusmodi; et haec omnia in maiori aequalitate et concordantia. Illa etiam fides de Deo laudabilior est, quae inter Deum, qui est summa et prima causa et inter eius effectum maiorem ponit concordantiam seu conuenientiam”.

without any evidence, namely that God is powerful, wise, good, to be honoured and loved.”²⁷

All three monotheistic world religions at Llull’s time were up against similar problems concerning the predication of divine attributes. It was necessary first to clarify the question: Can God ever possess attributes? If so, there is another question: Can *many* attributes be possessed by *one* God? Or in other words: In which relationship are the multiplicity of the attributes and the unity and unicity of God’s essence to be thought of?

The first set of problems in the distinction between essence and attributes of God refers to a second, the multiplicity of the attributes. The main point here is whether the multiplicity of the attributes of God should be considered as really different from his essence, so as not to conceive of God as being composed and created. In light of this dilemma, in order to undergird the conviction of the non-createdness and transcendence of the divine being, a real distinctiveness of the attributes from the unity of the divine being was claimed. But this assumption of a real difference between the attributes and the essence of God is conceptually incompatible with speaking of the unity and simplicity of God. Therefore, the doctrine of attributes was reproached for making God complex by attributing one or more attributes,²⁸ since a distinction between God and his respective attributes was implied. This complexity is a violation of God’s *simplicitas* which is intended to guard God against division, corporeality and materiality and which assures God’s fundamental difference from the world.

The assumption that the divine attributes are only intellectually different, that their multiplicity would be revealed only in the

27. JOHN OF SALISBURY, *Polycraticus*, vol. VII, ch. 7, MIGNE *Patrologia Latina* 199, 650C: “Est autem unum omnium religionum principium, quod pietas gratis et sine ulla probatione concedit, Deum scilicet potentem, sapientem, bonum, venerabilem et amabilem esse”.

28. Cf. A. BROADIE, *Maimonides and Aquinas on the Names of God*, “Religious Studies” 23 (1987) 157-170; 159: “To affirm anything whatever of God is to imply that He is complex, for to affirm an attribute of Him, even one attribute, is to imply a distinction between God, to whom the attribute is attributed, and the attribute He is said to have”.

human perception due to the manifold relations of God to the created world, preserves the simplicity of God, but also results in an *aporia*. The consequence of a purely imaginary distinctiveness of divine attributes would indeed be that the essence of God would ultimately be an indefinable something in which the All and One coincided. God's work in the world would indeed allow to assume the existence of certain attributes, but as purely imaginary ones they would never meet his essence. The exclusive emphasis of simplicity then carries the risk of making the divine nature ultimately inexpressible. Assuming that the divine attributes are given only in the human imagination, talking about God's nature remains an empty thought. In view of all this the general problem mentioned above becomes even more acute, namely: What is the relation between the one essence and the many attributes of God?

On the Muslim side, al-Ghazali († 1111), on the basis of the Quran, had written an entire book on the *Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God*.²⁹ Yet the Quran not only lists God's names which can describe divine qualities, it also speaks explicitly of attributes of God.³⁰ Therefore, the predicates of God are a topic of theological reflection from the very beginning of Islam. It is much debated by the two major schools of Muslim theology, the Mutazilites and the Asharites.³¹ For the Mutazilites God's unity, unicity and simplicity are so important that they already see true monotheism endangered by venerating the divine names. To assume eternal distinguishable attributes already looks like polytheism to them. The attributes of God can only be partial aspects of his essence. Wolfson analyses

29. AL-GHAZALI, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*, transl. D. B. BURRELL y N. DAHER (Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 2007).

30. For example in the so called throne verse Surah 2,255: "God, there is no god but He, the living, the self-subsistent. Slumber takes Him not, nor sleep. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. Who is it that intercedes with Him save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what behind them, and they comprehend not aught of His knowledge but of what He pleases. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and it tires Him not to guard them both, for He is high and grand", transl. E. H. PALMER (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1880) 40.

31. Cf. AL-GHAZALI, *On Divine Predicates and Their Properties*, transl. A.-R. ABU ZAYD (Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1970).

their reasoning as follows: “The Muʿtazilite argument against the existence of eternal real attributes in God falls into two parts. First, it assumes that anything eternal must be a God. Second, it assumes that the unity of God excludes any internal plurality in God, even if these plural parts are inseparably united from eternity.”³² Therefore, God and his attributes are one and the same, God is his attributes through and by himself, not by any *accidentia*. In order not to have to predicate anything of God which could be mistaken as an *accidens*, the Mutazilites attribute a negative meaning to every positive statement about God. God is described as knowing, because according to his nature he is not unknowing, as powerful, because according to his nature he is not weak etc.³³ Thus, they can explain the use of multiple terminologies. Avicenna († 1037) continued this anti-attributist position of the early Mutazilites, just as al-Ghazali continued the position of the Asharites. The latter are named after their first famous representative al-Ashari († 935) and form the later mainstream of philosophical-theological Islam. They advocate the existence of real, eternal attributes in God which are inseparable from his essence. *The Middle Path in Theology*, one of the major works of Medieval Muslim theology, written by the already mentioned al-Ghazali, contains a whole section on divine predicates and their properties. Al-Ghazali presupposes the traditional seven properties of God given in the Quran: power, wisdom, life, will, seeing, hearing, and speaking. But he also shows how to arrive at them by rational deduction. In the case of power the syllogism for instance reads: “Any masterly work proceeds from a powerful agent. The world is a masterly work. Therefore, it proceeds from a powerful agent.”³⁴ Concerning God’s wisdom he claims that God must know also himself, if it can be affirmed that he knows other

32. H. A. WOLFSON, *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Mass., 1976) 133.

33. Cf. the summary of the thinking of the Mutazilite al-Nazzam († 840) in AL-ASHARI, *Maqālāt al-islamīyīn* (Staatsdruckerei, Istanbul/Leipzig, 1929-1933) 486.

34. AL-GHAZALI, *Al-Iqtisād fī l-ʿitiqād/The Middle Path in Theology*, I. A. ÇUBUKÇU, H. ATAY (eds.) (University of Ankara Press, Ankara, 1962); trans. AL-GHAZALI, *Divine Predicates* cit., 1.

than himself;³⁵ at least there is much reason to suppose this, just as there is reason with a scribe who is capable of producing even lines to suppose that he knows the art of writing. The most important and decisive attribute of God is God's will, for his power or his wisdom could equally be directed towards opposite possibilities. Yet his will decides which option he chooses. Al-Ghazali thus explains the special qualities of each attribute and deduces some common characteristics of them. He insists that different attributes can be distinguished in God and that God's essence and attributes are neither identical nor different; this is, in fact, the shortest way of summing up the position of the Asharites.

Similar thoughts and subjects kept the Jewish thinkers busy and debating. Here outstanding theologians like Moses Maimonides († 1204) openly denied the possibility of ascribing attributes to God which affect his essence. Maimonides gives three reasons for his position: First, God is not corporeal, his attributes would therefore have to be mere tautologies. Secondly, only God is eternal, there cannot exist several eternal attributes. And thirdly, God is absolutely one, there cannot be any plurality in him.³⁶ That we perceive God as having different attributes is only a shortcoming of our human perception. In reality, God only is his one and only essence. Like one fire can have different effects, so the effects of the one God are perceived in different ways.³⁷ To clarify his argument Maimonides distinguishes five classes of attributes,³⁸ the fifth are the so called attributes of action. They are the only ones that are predicable of God, for they neither affect his essence nor challenge his unity. In

35. Cf. *Ibidem*, 25: "that He knows His own essence and attributes if it be affirmed that He knows other than Himself".

36. Cf. MAIMONIDES, *Dux neutrorum/Führer der Unschlüssigen* I, 51, vol. 1, A. WEISS (ed.) (Meiner, Leipzig/Hamburg, 1923/1972) 157.

37. Cf. *Ibidem* I, 53, vol. 1, 171s.

38. The first class consists in predicating of a thing its definition (e.g. 'animal rationale' of a human being); the second means predicating only part of this definition (e.g. 'humans are rational'); the third class constitutes of attributes of quality which do not pertain to the essence of the thing in question; the fourth class are attributes of relation in local, chronological or relational respect (e.g. X is the father of Y). On these classes see *ibidem* I, 52, vol. 1, 169. Cf. also C. SIRAT, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985) 181.

fact, for Maimonides God's actions are not part of God's nature, but merely follow from it. The only way of predicating attributes of God, which Maimonides can accept, is the way of negation. For, if we said 'God is good', we would have to say at the same time with equal necessity that he is not good. This would be even more adequate, because there is no similarity, no analogy, no link between God and his creation. He is the absolutely Transcendent and Perfect. Therefore, naming God by negative attributes excludes any possibility of similarity and defect in him. Even if we use a positive term, we have to understand it in a negative way: "He is powerful, wise, and willing. By these terms we only want to say that he is not weak, not unknowing, not imprudent, and not negligent."³⁹ That does not mean that we can negate anything of God that comes to our mind, "for sometimes we deny something in a thing which cannot be attributed to it according to its nature, as, for example, if one says of a wall that it cannot see."⁴⁰ The existence of real attributes in God was not backed by Jewish philosophical theology.

However, Llull will have known exactly what was being debated in the shadows of the mosques and synagogues. He starts off by writing his first book on al-Ghazali's logic.⁴¹ Thus how does Llull conceive of the divine attributes in the inter-religious horizon of the 13th century in which he writes his first main theoretical tracts, the *Book of the Contemplation of God* and the *Art of Finding Truth*?

God has his attributes out of himself, out of his own power, not by way of other causes. They are in God in the most perfect way possible. God is perfect goodness, perfect greatness, perfect mercy etc., even perfect perfection. Perfection can be classified as a second order attribute. For this reason it crowns Llull's list of attributes in the *Liber contemplationis*. It indicates that in analogy to Anselm's ontological argument God for Llull is *id quo perfectius cogitari nequit*,

39. Cf. MAIMONIDES, *Dux neutrorum* cit., I, 58, vol. 1, 199.

40. Cf. *Ibidem* I, 58, vol. 1, 200.

41. Cf. R. LLULL, *Lògica del Gatzel*, S. Galmés, R. d'Alòs-Moner (eds.), ORL XIX (Comissió Editora Lul·liana, Palma de Mallorca, 1936) 1-62. In 1271/72 Llull wrote at about the same time the *Compendium logicae Algazelis* and the *Lògica del Gatzel*. The latter is a Catalan poem on al-Ghazali's treatise on logic.

that in comparison to which nothing more perfect can be thought. The same attributes manifest themselves in less perfect ways in creation. Yet they are independent from creation, for, firstly, in God they pertain to God's essence and are thus essential, whereas in man they only manifest themselves as accidental. This is the main difference between the Creator and the created, between God and man: "Just like your attributes are essential ones in you, the attributes of man are accidental ones and different from the essence of man because of the defects that are in him."⁴² And, secondly, God is not dependent on his creation in order to enact his attributes. By their own intrinsic characteristic activities they become distinguishable. This means – as Llull points out in the definitions of the *Art of Finding Truth* – that God's goodness makes good, God's greatness great, God's eternity eternal etc. God's goodness, greatness, power call for a corresponding activity as their enacting. This activity of the divine attributes is essential.⁴³ It does not need the created world and it does not cause any gap between God's being and acting. In God there is something which is 'good making', which is 'good makable' and the 'act of good making'. For Llull this points towards the existence of the Trinity. Since this is true of every attribute, different predications like 'God is good' or 'God is powerful' still make sense, although in God all attributes are essentially one: "All that is called attributes in you, is one and the same thing, for your justice is your mercy and your mercy your justice, and the same is true of all your virtues, because whatever is in you is your divine essence."⁴⁴ Although the attributes are many, they are convertible among them-

42. LLULL, *LC*, ch. 178, 27, 426: "sicut tuae qualitates sunt in te essentielles, et omnes sunt una et eadem res cum tua substantia ratione tuae magnae perfectionis, ita qualitates, quae sunt in homine, sunt accidentales et distinctae a substantia ipsius hominis ratione defectuum, qui in eo sunt". Cf. also footnote 5.

43. Cf. E. COLOMER, *El problema de la relació fe-raó en Ramon Llull: proposta de solució*, in *Actes del Simposi Internacional de Filosofia de l'Edat Mitjana, Vic-Girona 11-16 d'abril 1993*, Actes núm. 1 (Patronat d'Estudis Osonencs, Vic, 1996) 11-20; 16.

44. LLULL, *LC*, ch. 178, 28, 426: "Omnes res, quae dicuntur in te qualitates, sunt una et eadem res, quia tua iustitia est tua misericordia, et tua misericordia est tua iustitia, et hoc idem est de omnibus aliis tuis virtutibus; quia, quidquid est in te, est tua substantia divina".

selves and ultimately they even coincide in God's essence.⁴⁵ There can be neither composition nor *accidens*, neither createdness nor corporeality in God, for Llull combines the convertibility and co-possibility of the divine attributes with their essential identity and intrinsic activity. Colomer explains this further:

According to their *context of discovery* the dignities are transcendental terms which can be predicated of all that is, be it created, be it uncreated. According to their *context of existence* they are attributes of God, identical with his essence, in which the created can only partly partake. Thus the dignities are terms of relation which can be predicated of both, God and the world, since they mean God in his relation to the world.⁴⁶

With such a concept Llull is perfectly capable of entering into dialogue with the philosophical strand of Muslim theology. Nevertheless he does not hold the view that the divine attributes can be known thoroughly and ultimately. He insists: "Nothing is sufficient to recognize all your goodness".⁴⁷ This may seem to bring him closer to the apophatic view of Maimonides. Yet in fact it aligns him with the theosophic Kabbalah of his days. On the basis of the divine attributes Llull enters into dialogue with the Judaism and Islam of his time. Beginning with his early writings the doctrine of the divine attributes is for Llull an instrument of viewing the world and contemplating God as well as a common topic for the exchange with thinkers of other religions.

45. See LLULL, *LC*, ch. 180, 1, 431: "omnes tuas qualitates sint una res in te, licet quoad nos demonstrentur multae".

46. É. COLOMER, *Nikolaus von Kues († 1464) und Ramon Llull († 1316): ihre Begegnung mit den nichtchristlichen Religionen* (Paulinus-Verlag, Trier, 1995) 86 ss.: "Dem Erkenntnisursprung nach sind die Grundwürden (= *dignitates*) Transzendentalbegriffe, die auf allgemeingültige Weise von jedem Seienden, sei es geschaffen, sei es ungeschaffen, ausgesagt werden können. Dem Seinsursprung nach sind sie Eigenschaften Gottes, die mit dessen Natur identisch sind, vom geschaffenen Sein aber nur geschieden partizipiert werden. Demnach sind die Grundwürden Relationsbegriffe, die, da sie Gott in bezug auf die Welt meinen, von Gott und von der Welt ausgesprochen werden können".

47. LLULL, *LC*, ch. 19, 6, 39: "nihil est sufficiens ad cognoscendum totam tuam bonitatem".