Abstract: For Avicenna, God’s attributes expressed by sacred texts, are the attributes of the Necessary Existent. Though the majority of Avicenna’s writings demonstrate a Positive Theology, there are surprisingly some phrases in his works that show his tending to a Negative Theology. These phrases express the conceptual sameness of Necessary Existent’s attributes. It means that there is no different, even conceptually, between Necessary Existent’s Power, Knowledge, and Life. Avicenna concluded his Negative Theology from three issues: meaning of the term ‘attribute,’ consideration for the meaning of ‘Necessary Existent’ as a particular, and, for extreme Negative Theology, ‘absolute simplicity’ of the Necessary Existent. By analyzing Avicenna’s writings about these three issues, this paper attempts to explain the reasons for the Avicenna's opinion, with a linguistic analysis approach.

Keywords: Negative Theology, Necessary Existent, God’s Attributes, Particular Meaning, Avicenna

1. Introduction

From a general perspective, theology could be divided into two main categories: Positive Theology (PT) and Negative Theology (NT). The main difference between these two categories relates to the possibility or impossibility of understanding and talking about God’s attributes. Followers of the PT believe that God’s attributes can be expressed using human beings’ linguistic potentialities, and human beings can understand the meaning of these attributes from the language used to describe them. So, according to the PT, the phrases ‘Omnipotent God,’ ‘Omniscient God,’ and ‘Alive God,’ are meaningful phrases. Followers of the NT, vice versa, believe that God is such a great, indefinable existent that human beings cannot understand His attributes’ qualification, and also they are unable to talk meaningfully about these attributes. All God’s positive attributes expressed by the sacred texts, according to NT, negate the ‘defect attributes’ of God. On this basis, the phrase ‘Omnipotent God’ does not make sense, except as ‘God who is absolutely not unable.’ This phrase cannot say anything about the qualification of the God’s power. Similarly, the phrases ‘Omniscient God’ means only ‘God who is absolutely not ignorant,’ and ‘Alive God’ means only ‘God who is absolutely not lifeless.’ According to followers of NT the perceptual ability of human beings is so limited that they cannot understand the qualification of God’s knowing and living.

In general, Avicenna’s writings demonstrate an uncritical PT, in which the God’s attributes could be known by human beings’ understanding and could be discussed by natural languages [1]. But, some of Avicenna’s writings surprisingly lead us to the fact that he has also tended to the NT. In fact, these phrases have such ambiguity that ascribing an extreme NT to him is reasonable.

On this subject, Avicenna uses the philosophical term ‘Necessary Existence’ instead of the theological term ‘God’ in his most important quotation, but, in his philosophical structure these two terms have an identical reference [5].

The concepts of Aliveness, Omniscience, and Omnipotence, which are things attributed to the Necessary Existent (NE), are all one concept that are neither attributes of the NE’s nature nor part of its nature [2]. Although this paradoxical approach has been systematized by next Sufis and philosophers, such as Ibn Arabi [3], some like Mulla Sadra disagree with this understanding of the quote ‘The attributes of the NE (God) are the same as His nature,’ and insist on the conceptual distinction of the NE's attributes [4]. It seems that the difference between the
mentioned opinions of this issue from the greatest Islamic philosophers, in addition to exhibiting the difficulty in solving it, is a reason for the issue's importance. This is because choosing any of the views for or against the conceptual unity of the NE's attributes, and consequently for or against the NT, depends on one hand upon the thinker's whole philosophical structure and, on the other hand, results in certain consequences for the belief in God.

The followers of NT believe that sacred texts have used these attributes -considering human beings' perception- to make people ready to have a faithful relationship with God. Indeed, if people cannot imagine any attribute for God, they cannot believe in Him. So, these words are just in people's mind, not factually, considered attributes of God.

The present paper, with a linguistic analysis approach to Avicenna's writings, attempts to explain why Avicenna holds the opinion that he does on the NT. As a preliminary matter, at first we will show that in Avicenna's philosophy of language, attributes are always considered with and for their nouns, otherwise they are not attributes. After showing this matter, particular and universal meanings will be discussed, and it will be shown that in Avicenna's opinion, the meaning of 'NE,' which is used instead of 'God' in philosophical texts, is particular. The result of these two steps will be that in the terms like 'Alive NE' the meaning of the word 'Alive' (as an attribute) is realized with and for the NE. Using these steps, it will be illustrated that in Avicenna's view the qualification of these attributes cannot be understood by human beings. Moreover, it will be discussed that what Avicenna intended probably is an extreme NT.

2. Clarification of the Terms ‘Attribute’ and ‘Concept’

In the analysis of the NT from Avicenna's viewpoint, first we must clarify the terms 'attribute' and 'concept' on the basis of his philosophical structure. Though the term 'attribute' has not been explicitly defined in Avicenna's works, this term can be defined thusly by quoting Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274), who is one of the most important commentators of Avicenna's works:

An attribute is something conceived [as a characteristic] for a thing, and it cannot be conceived unless with that thing and for it [6].

If we accept Tusi's definition of an attribute, we must consider that both of the conditions that he mentions -being with the (described) thing and being for it- are necessary conditions for considering a concept as an 'attribute.' In other words, if something is conceived with a thing but not for that thing as well, it is not within the definition of attribute and cannot be considered one.

For more explanation, consider the phrase 'the house wall.' Although 'house' is considered with 'wall,' in this phrase the house does not belong to the wall and it is not for the wall. So, the 'house' is not an attribute for the 'wall' based on Tusi's definition. Now, consider the phrase 'the white wall.' In this phrase, whiteness is not only conceived with the wall, but it also belongs to the wall and is for the wall. So, 'whiteness' (or 'white' as it used in the phrase) is called an 'attribute' for the wall.

Tusi himself, in explaining this issue, uses the relation between substance and accident. Accident, according to Avicenna and other of Aristotle’s followers, is a quiddity which cannot exist independently. It must be with and for a substance, such as ‘whiteness’ for the wall. In other words, actualization of ‘whiteness’ without a substantial matter (such as the wall) is impossible. Similarly, all attributes cannot be actualized unless they are considered with and for the corresponding things.

Tusi, however, extends ‘attribute’s’ dependency from the domain of facts into conceivable things. He insists that not only attributes require corresponding things for the actualization, but they also require those things to be conceived. It does not mean that we cannot conceive ‘white’ or ‘whiteness’ alone. But, it means that when we conceive these words alone, they are not considered as ‘attributes;’ they are ‘concepts’ in this case.

This meaning will be clearer when we consider that Avicenna insists that the words ‘omnipotence,’ ‘omniscience,’ and ‘life’ have conceptual sameness when they are considered in relation with the NE. When these words, however, are considered alone, they do not have conceptual sameness; but they are separate concepts:

But Life as an absolute thing (a concept), Omniscience as an absolute thing (a concept)...do not have the same meaning. However, things that are considered absolute are hypothetical, and so beings (which are non-hypothetical) are not absolute [7].

Some contemporary researchers have credited the differences between attributes in an absolute state and a relative state -mentioned from Avicenna’s quotation- to the difference between the necessary and the possible existents. They have argued as if an absolute usage of the attributes is intended in the possible existents:

This quotation of Avicenna demonstrates his consideration of the conceptualization of attributes on two levels, in expressing from referents: one level of conceptualization which is made by considering possible existents, and it inevitably produces multiple and flawed concepts. Another level of conceptualization that is done using the Necessary Existent. Because of its tight relation to the One and absolute simple instance, conceptualization in this level does not produce more than a single, complete concept [8].

It seems that such an understanding of Avicenna's quotation is a bit distant from his text. If Avicenna's point in this quotation were to express the distinction between attributes of the necessary and the possible existents, his use of the phrase 'as an absolute thing' would be pointless. In addition, he has not mentioned the possible existents and has only compared the absolute state of the attributes, with the attributes attributed to the NE. Perhaps what led the respected researcher to such an understanding, is the part about ‘beings.’ But it seems that in the quotation, this word is used
to refer to the reality of beings and includes the NE’s being as well, and not merely possible beings. An evidence to this argument would be that Avicenna introduces absolutes as subjective and imaginary, and so he must consider a being, in contrast to these imaginary things, as objective and real. In which case the distinction between the necessary and the possible existents is not so significant.

Although this distinction between the attributes of the necessary and the possible existents is, in Avicenna’s view, sound and irrefutable, in the author's opinion, Avicenna's intent was really the distinction between the attribute in an absolute state and a relative state. As said, when a word like ‘whiteness’ is considered without relation to a noun, it will not act as an attribute, but merely a universal concept; this seems to be Avicenna’s point in ‘an attribute in an absolute state.’ So, here the distinction between the attributes of the necessary and the possible existents is not considered.

### 3. Universal and Particular Meanings

In many of his writings, Avicenna has divided meanings into two main groups: universal and particular. In his thinking structure, a universal meaning is abstracted from things which are common in that meaning. In other words, looking to some particular instances which are common in a property, this property is abstracted as a universal meaning:

Each of the forms are somehow present in mind, then mind abstracts [one] meaning (universal meaning), which is separated from its accidents [9].

For example, looking to Einstein, Newton, Da Vinci etc., the meaning ‘clever’ is abstracted. Although one may specify this attribute for each of these people, when the nature of this attribute is considered for the group as a whole, this attribute is found common and can be abstracted. Also, considering many people, the universal meaning of ‘human’ can be abstracted as a common attribute among all human beings, although the humanity of each - Einstein, Newton, Da Vinci etc. - is specified for himself.

On this basis if a term has a ‘universal meaning,’ anything which has this property could be under this meaning. Consequently, a universal meaning is a meaning that can be applied for two things or more. The universal meanings can be even mentally carried by numerous referents; it is not necessary that all referents are factual instances. A ‘particular meaning’ is, however, the meaning which applies for just one thing. This is in fact a conception, a mental image of a particular thing. For example, the meaning of ‘Einstein’ is a mental image of a specific instance called ‘Einstein,’ which is applicable only to Einstein. Grammatically (and logically), we refer to particular meanings using ‘proper nouns’ and universals with ‘common nouns.’ Avicenna emphasizes the distinction between these two types of meanings on several occasions [10].

Indeed, when it comes to the universal and particular meanings, mind is influenced from outside. It acts passively in regards to particular meanings. It means that in the face of a specific objective instance, mind receives an image of it that can be called the particular meaning or conception of that specific instance. But unlike particular meanings, the mind does not act passively toward universal meanings; it plays an active role. The mind, by abstracting common features of several particular instances, creates a universal meaning that, thereafter, is applicable to numerous referents.

Regarding the NT in Avicenna’s view, the matter of universal and particular meanings, and consequently proper and common nouns, is important because attributing terms to a proper noun makes the meaning of a compound ‘attribute-noun’ a particular meaning. This is because, according to last section, the attribute is for and with the proper noun, and it becomes particular consequently. Also, attributing terms to a common noun makes the compound a universal meaning. For example, the compound ‘clever Einstein’ has a particular meaning because in this phrase, the word ‘clever’ is considered for and with Einstein, not anyone else. However, the phrase ‘clever human’ has a universal meaning because the word ‘clever’ is considered for and with all human beings who are common in ‘cleverness.’ Therefore, for discussing NE’s attributes, it must be illuminated that ‘NE’ must have either a particular meaning or a universal one, or in other words, it is a proper noun or a common one.

### 4. The Meaning of Necessary Existence

According to mentioned quotation of him,\(^1\) when Avicenna wants to negate God’s attributes, he does not use the word ‘God’ directly, but he uses the term ‘NE.’ Moreover, he insists that NE’s attributes are conceptually the same in addition to having the same referent. Indeed, according to Avicenna, the concepts of these words which are considered attributes, are the same with the concept of their referent, NE. After that, he concludes these words are not positive attributes basically. On this basis, from this very important quotation of Avicenna, two main points of view could be understood. Firstly, the words ‘life,’ ‘omniscience,’ and ‘omnipotence’ do not have meanings –except by reference to the meaning of the NE – so long as they are considered with and for the NE. Secondly, for Avicenna as well as for most Islamic philosophers, the NE is the same with God. Indeed, the term ‘NE’ is a philosophical alternative for the theological term ‘God.’ On this basis, when Mulla Sadra wants to criticize this Avicenna’s quotation, he insists that Avicenna’s opinion leads to ‘blasphemy,’ a theological term applied for someone who does not believe in God or His attributes:

And know that many sharp-minded scholars [he means Avicenna actually] have assumed that the quote ‘the attributes of Him (God) are the same as His nature’ means that the meanings and concepts of those attributes do not vary, but are all one in meaning, and this is a rotten belief... that results in stripping (God of) the attributes and blasphemy [11].

Therefore, the NE in the context of Avicenna’s thought,

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1 See: Avicenna, Al-Mahda wa al-Ma‘ad, 21
has a particular meaning such that God (or Allah in the Islamic context) has a particular meaning. But, some commentators on Avicenna believe that he considers NE as a universal meaning. So, more explanation is required for illustration of this issue.

Avicenna states that universal meanings can be divided into three categories:

Universal meaning is used in three ways: a meaning is considered universal if it has multiple existing referents, such as ‘human.’ And if it is allowed to apply to multiple referents, without inevitably considering them existing...And also if it is not forbidden to hypothetically apply it to multiple referents, but due to a certain reason (an external one, non-related to the meaning itself) it cannot apply to multiple referents. Such as the meanings of ‘sun’ and the ‘earth,’ which, so far as they are conceived, it is not forbidden for the mind to apply them to several referents; unless a reason is provided against it. And its forbidding must be due to an external reason and not due to considering meanings themselves [12].

So, if the meaning of ‘NE’ is a universal meaning, it must fall into one of these three categories. Therefore we will try to find an answer to the question whether in the mind of Avicenna, the meaning of ‘NE’ is placed in one of these three categories or not? If the answer to this question is yes, the meaning of ‘NE’ is universal, otherwise it will be a particular meaning.

To study this subject, first we state that the meaning of ‘NE’ is not placed in the first category of universal meanings. In some of Avicenna’s works, the unity of NE has been stated even before proving its existence, and based on this, it is clear that this meaning does not have multiple referents. It means that the meaning of ‘NE’ does not fall into the first category. Avicenna expresses this matter through a conditional proposition, such that: ‘if the NE exists, it is unique.’ He argues for this proposition in several of his works [13], [14], [15] and Mulla Sadra has reset a clear version of Avicenna’s argument [16]. Although some interpreters of Avicenna have doubts over the completeness of Avicenna’s argumentations [17], we can accept this statement from Avicenna as sensible, without further consideration. Furthermore, the main claim of this article is to study the NT according to Avicenna’s opinions, and in this position, accepting Avicenna’s statements, is permitted.

To separate the meaning of ‘NE’ from the second group (meanings that do not have referents on the outside but they can have), Avicenna has offered his argumentation based on the falsity of circular series and endless chains [18]. This argument is one of the most important arguments for the existence of the NE in the context of Islamic Philosophy, and there are many versions of this argument which is sometimes called Seddighin argument [19]. Using this falsity, Avicenna argues that the meaning of ‘NE’ has a factual referent in reality. After his argumentation, he says:

Every sequence of causes and effects – whether finite or infinite –if consisting only of effects, inevitably requires an external cause. And it was made clear that if there is something in the series that is not an effect, that thing is the absolute cause. So every series leads to a Necessary Existent [20].

With the withdrawal of the meaning of ‘NE’ from the second group of universal meanings, only the third group remains for the NE to be considered; it means that if the NE is a universal meaning, it should have only one objective referent, but should also be logically applicable to many other hypothetical referents, and an external cause prevents it from being true for those hypothetical referents. To get the meaning of ‘NE’ into the third group, it must be examined whether this meaning is rationally (not in terms of objective and external instances) applicable to hypothetical referents, or just concentrating on the meaning of the ‘NE’ prevents it from having multiple referents.

Some commentators state that Avicenna believes ‘NE’ is like a universal meaning that has only one referent [21]. It means that Avicenna believes that just considering the meaning of ‘NE’ permits it to be applicable to multiple instances, and if there’s only referent in the outside world for ‘NE,’ it is because that something other than meaning of ‘NE’ prevents the substantiation of its referents. Probably, this misunderstanding has occurred because, in this case, Avicenna uses ‘sun’ and ‘earth’ as examples. These two names are apparently proper nouns, but they are actually universal meanings in mind, and just considering them does not prevent them from being applicable to multiple instances. So, it is understood from this statement that Avicenna does not mean ‘sun’ or ‘earth’ as the proper nouns, or in other words, he does not mean the specific Sun and Earth. It is possible to imagine two suns where each has similar characteristics to the other one, but after all, the sun (a) will be different from the sun (b) in mind. For Avicenna, NE is not like ‘sun,’ but it could be like ‘the sun (a)’ grammatically. It seems that Avicenna’s understanding of ‘NE’ is not applicable even to multiple mental referents, and even mentally can only be matched to a specific instance.

Avicenna’s argument for excluding the NE out of the third group could be discovered from his definition of NE:

The Necessary Existent is a being that, when its nature is considered, its existence is necessary [22].

On this basis, if ‘NE’ can be applicable to multiple mental referents, when considering their nature, their existences are necessary and they must exist. However, Avicenna has argued that the existence of two or more NEs is impossible. Therefore, the meaning of ‘NE’ is out of the third group, and consequently it is a particular meaning.

In addition to this argument, other statements by Avicenna can be used in a way for interpreting that to him, the ‘NE’ is a particular meaning, and the noun by which we refer to this meaning should be treated as a proper noun:

Therefore, the NE is, in every sense, the unit, unlike the kinds that are subject to genus. And it is united by number, unlike the kinds that are subject to one kind. Indeed, the NE is a meaning with its description of name belonging only to itself [23].

As seen in the above statement, Avicenna identifies the
description of name of necessary existent to only belong to itself. Whereas the description of name is a matter of knowledge and subjectivity, and when the description of name is a phrase belonging to only one thing that is called so, this belonging can also have a subjective aspect and will not only be related to objective areas. This means that to Avicenna, the necessary existent is closer to being a proper noun than to being a common noun, and this, by itself, means that the meaning of the NE is closer to particular meanings than it is to universals. As Mulla Sadra expresses in interpretation of this statement which is made by Avicenna, that ‘absolutely unique’ means that for His name there is no other possessor, nor is there anything which can possess His name’s concept for His identity. According to this statement by Mulla Sadra, it is clear that in his opinion, in Avicenna's philosophical structure, nothing similar to the NE can be imagined, not even in the sense of meanings. It should be added that in interpretation of this statement, Mulla Sadra uses the word ‘name’ which in additions to the objective aspect of the NE, contains the subjective meaning.

Being ‘NE’ a particular meaning leads us, according to previous sections, to knowing the terms ‘Omnipotent NE,’ ‘Omniscient NE,’ and ‘Alive NE,’ specific meanings in which the attributes are considered only with and for the NE, and they even are not mentally considered for anything else. It is like that in term ‘clever Einstein’ the word ‘clever’ has its specific meaning related to ‘Einstein,’ not anyone else. Of course, the meaning of ‘clever’ as an absolute and a universal meaning, is a meaningful word and could be meaningfully applicable on other people.

5. Avicenna on the Negative Theology

Based on the mentioned Avicenna’s quotation,² studying NT from his perspective has two levels which are related to each other. In one of them the regular NT, and in the other level the extreme NT will be discussed. Before all, how we can know and understand the NE’s (God’s) attributes must be illustrated. Generally, it seems that there are two ways for knowing and understanding the attributes of a thing. These ways could be named direct and indirect ways. The first way (direct way) is analyzing the considered thing itself and discovering its attributes. The second way (indirect way) is considering other things which are common in some level of attributes with the considered thing. Of course, the indirect way is not as accurate as the direct way, but sometimes it is the only way to obtain the understanding of attributes. For example, if Einstein’s information is available, we can analyze it and obtain the attribute of ‘clever’ for and with Einstein. This could be a correct, accurate understanding of the compound ‘clever Einstein’ because we obtain this understanding from Einstein directly. Now, consider we do not know anything about Einstein, but we know Newton and we have enough information about him. And, suppose we just know that Einstein’s abilities about physics and mathematics is similar to Newton’s, and they are common in being talented in these areas. So, according to this information, we can conclude that Einstein is ‘clever’ by analogy to Newton. It is clear that, however, this is not an accurate understanding of ‘clever Einstein’ because the attribute of ‘clever’ is applied for Einstein based on his similarities and common points with Newton, not analysis of Einstein himself. In fact, this is based on what is mentioned about universal meanings. The universal meaning (or concept) of ‘clever’ has been abstracted in our mind from many people who are common in ‘cleverness’ property, and now we can apply this universal meaning for Einstein, because we consider him who has this common property too.

On this basis, to answer the above question, we must answer two more detailed questions: can we analyze the NE itself to understand his attributes? If not, does the NE have any common property with other things that an attribute can be understood comparing to them?

As we tried to show, Avicenna believes that ‘NE’ is a particular meaning, and so all the words considered its attributes are specified for NE. Regarding this matter, on the one hand, because NE is an infinite existent in all aspects, its attributes, which are only with and for NE, are infinite following their referent. So, it is not possible to know the qualification of the NE’s attributes exactly, considering the NE itself. In other words, since knowing of infinite things for limited existents (human beings) is impossible, the direct way to understanding NE’s attributes is closed.

On the other hand, NE is not such as Einstein and Newton, who have some similarities (such as cleverness) while they have particular meanings (or proper nouns). The NE, Avicenna argues [24], has no similarity with any existent in any aspect. Therefore, not only its attributes are just specified for itself (as a particular meaning), but they also cannot be shared as a common property between two things or more. In other words, Avicenna believes, the NE’s attributes are not like universal meanings which are abstracted from instances with common properties. Therefore, ‘common properties between the NE and possible existents’ in the context of Avicenna’s thinking, is a meaningless phrase.

On this basis, Avicenna’s thinking structure has closed both ways to know NE’s attributes: abstracting as common properties and analyzing the NE itself. Consequently, understanding NE’s attributes and discovering their qualifications with human’s limited perception and language, is impossible. This is that which we called the first level of the NT. For example in the term ‘Alive NE,’ the qualification of ‘Alive’ is absolutely vague. It is clearly wrong for someone to consider the NE to be alive like human beings or animals. ‘Alive’ is only for and with ‘NE’ (as a particular meaning) and, for two reasons, cannot be known by human beings: it cannot be known by considering a similar thing (because there is not any similar existent with NE) and it cannot be known by considering NE itself (because it is infinite and our perception is limited). Similarly, the qualification of NE’s knowledge is absolutely vague, based on the two mentioned reasons. The NE’s knowing is not such

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as human being’s knowledge. The NE does not have brain or mind, so any analogy in this case is wrong. 

From Avicenna’s writings, however, another level of the NT could be concluded, what would be called the extreme NT. Because of the ambiguity of Avicenna’s writings, we cannot be sure that whether this level of the NT has been considered by Avicenna; but some of his phrases such as ‘Life, Omiscience, and Omnipotence … are neither attributes of the necessary existent’s nature nor part of its nature’ cause the probability of this understanding from Avicenna’s writings. 

Followers of the extreme NT believe that the nature of the NT does not basically depend on the perceptual ability of human beings or limits of the languages. But, the essence of God is such that it rejects accepting any attribute. 

In Avicenna’s thinking structure, the extreme NT comes out from believing in absolute simplicity of the NE, in addition to all above argumentations. Being NE, the ‘absolute simple,’ means that the nature of NE is absolutely not composed by components, states, and even attributes. For more explanation, consider Einstein again. Einstein cannot be ‘absolutely simple.’ This is because we can suppose that the nature of Einstein is composed of two main components: soul and body. If someone wants to say ‘Einstein is just a body,’ this body is composed by many other components. And, even if someone wants to say ‘Einstein is just a simple soul,’ the nature of this soul is such that we can say that it is clever, sometimes happy, sometimes sad, etc. Therefore, although it is considered simple, the nature of Einstein is not absolutely simple; it accepts various states and is compound with these states. Especially, changing in these states –such as changing sadness to happiness– is a sign of non-absolute simplicity. An absolute simple nature, according to Avicenna’s definition, cannot accept any state and any changing in its nature. In a religious expression, having God have states that are subject to change, makes Him not a complete, perfect God. The states such as wrath, satisfaction, forgiveness, etc. are considered for a nature which does not have some things and wants to obtain them. God, however, is supposed an absolute complete existent who does not need anything to obtain; so He neither has any state nor is changing [25]. Even, followers of the extreme NT believe, the terms such as ‘Omnipotent God’ makes a duality in the nature of God: God’s nature and an aspect that the attribute ‘omnipotence’ is abstracted from. This duality gives rise to the nature of God as an absolute unity, which is taught by revealed religions. 

Avicenna negates multiplicity of direction or aspect from the NE; meaning that he introduces its simplicity in a way that different meanings and concepts cannot be abstracted even from the different aspects:

It is not permissible that there be multiple meanings, each different from the other, for one thing which is a unit and there is absolutely no multiplicity in it [26].

Thus, to Avicenna, because of the absolute simplicity and true unity of the NE, no other concept can be obtained from the NE other than the necessary nature, not only for human beings’ perception but also in reality.

6. Conclusion

Avicenna’s NT is based on a linguistic approach to this issue. According to his thinking structure, a word can have the role of an attribute when it is used with and for its noun. Moreover, the meaning of the NE does not fit in any of the varieties of the universal meanings and only considering it, if thoroughly and completely, prevents its adaptation to multiple things. Therefore, the meaning of the NE is a particular meaning and, words such as ‘alive’, ‘omnipotent’, ‘omniscient’ etc. when used in relation to the NE, are specified for and with it. Regarding this meaning, in Avicenna’s thinking context, we cannot understand the qualification of the NE’s attributes neither from direct nor indirect ways, and this leads us to describe Avicenna’s theology as a NT. This is because, on the one hand analyzing and knowing the NE itself is impossible because of its infinity. On the other hand, being a particular meaning, the NE is such that it does not have any similarity with anything, and its attributes cannot be understood by comparison to other things. Indeed, NE’s attributes are not universal meanings which can be applied for other things. Additionally, it is possible to result from Avicenna’s writings that since the NE is an absolute simple and has true unity, it could not have any attribute which makes the NE a dual nature. This reading places Avicenna in the group of the followers of the extreme NT.

References


