



## Research Paper

# From the Lawfulness of Nature to De-Discrimination: Assessing the Theological Foundations of Ferasat-khah's Theory Regarding Divine Names and Actions

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## Abstract

How to reconcile the divine personal agency and the law-based system of nature is one of the fundamental theological challenges in the contemporary world. In response to this challenge, moghsud ferasat-khah, with a sociological motivation, has proposed the theory of reinterpreting divine names and actions into the law of nature. The present study aims to analyze and criticize the foundations and consequences of this theory, and evaluates it using a descriptive-analytical method and relying on Islamic theological and philosophical foundations. The findings show that the aforementioned theory, although it was formed with the concern of making religion more efficient and confronting popular perceptions, leads to challenging results by reducing concepts such as sustenance, healing, and guidance to the outcome of the functioning of the natural system. The most important of these consequences is the depersonalization of God and his transformation into an impersonal system, the emptying of concepts such as prayer and trust from communicative content, and as a result, the denial of the possibility of miracles and the answering of prayers, which is in conflict with the Quranic image of God. In contrast, this article shows that the model of the "longitudinal hierarchy of causes" in transcendental wisdom offers an efficient solution to the problem. By explaining the longitudinal relationship between divine agency and natural causes, this model both preserves the lawfulness of the world and establishes God's position as a living and sustaining agent, as well as the possibility of two-way communication with Him.

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## Extended Abstract

### 1. Introduction

In contemporary Islamic thought, one of the most pressing challenges is how to reconcile the personal agency of God with the apparent lawfulness and autonomy of the natural order as described by modern science. Within the Iranian intellectual context, Masoud Farasatkah has proposed an influential sociologically-oriented reinterpretation of divine action that seeks to purge “popular religion” of superstition and to bring religious discourse into harmony with scientific rationality. In his view, central theological concepts such as divine sustenance (*rizq*), healing (*shifā*), guidance (*hudāyah*), and the answering of prayers (*ijābat al-du‘ā*) should be understood primarily as the outcomes of stable causal regularities in nature and society, rather than as the direct interventions of a personal divine agent.

This proposal is situated against a wide background of classical *kalām* and Islamic philosophy (from Ash‘arite occasionalism and Mu‘tazilite rationalism to the metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā and Mullā Ṣadrā) as well as modern currents of religious reform and neo-modernist theology in Iran. While Farasatkah’s theory aims to protect the integrity of natural law and to critique magical understandings of religion, it also raises fundamental questions about the very image of God in the Qur’an and the Islamic tradition. Does such a sociological and naturalistic reinterpretation offer a coherent theological model? Or does it effectively reduce God to an impersonal system of laws, thereby undermining core elements of Qur’anic theism?

The present paper addresses these questions by examining Farasatkah’s

theory of divine names and acts, focusing particularly on his attempt to translate God’s agency into the language of natural and social regularities. It then evaluates his proposal in light of the Qur’anic portrayal of God as a living, personal, and responsive agent, and reconstructs an alternative framework based on the doctrine of the “vertical hierarchy of causes” (*tartīb-I tūlī-yi ‘ilal*) in transcendent theosophy (*ḥikmat-I muta‘āliya*).

### 2. Methods

This study uses a descriptive-analytical and critical method. First, Farasatkah’s theory is reconstructed through an examination of his discussions on lived religion, divine action, and the lawfulness of nature, with particular attention to concepts such as sustenance, healing, guidance, and prayer.

Second, these ideas are analyzed in dialogue with classical and modern Islamic theology and philosophy, including *kalām* traditions (e.g., al-Ghazālī, Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār), philosophical approaches (e.g., Ibn Sīnā, Mullā Ṣadrā, Muṭahharī, Miṣbāḥ Yazdī), and contemporary religious thought (e.g., Soroush, Mojtabeh-Shabestari).

Third, a comparative framework is applied by contrasting Farasatkah’s interpretation with the Sadrian model of the vertical hierarchy of causes, in which God is the ultimate cause while natural causes operate as genuine secondary agents.

### 3. Results

The analysis indicates that Farasatkah’s project aims to reform lived religion and reduce magical expectations of divine intervention by emphasizing the role of natural and social causes. However, when



considered as a theological model, several problems appear.

First, the reinterpretation of divine acts in terms of impersonal causal laws leads to a depersonalization of God, turning divine agency into the operation of natural systems.

Second, this view weakens the relational dimension of religious life. Practices such as supplication and trust in divine providence risk becoming merely symbolic when God's agency is reduced to natural processes.

Third, this interpretation creates tension with the Qur'anic image of God as a living, knowing, and responsive agent who hears prayers and actively governs the world.

Finally, the philosophical doctrine of the vertical hierarchy of causes provides an alternative explanation: natural laws function within a broader metaphysical order in which God remains the ultimate sustaining cause of all events.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Reconciling divine agency with the lawfulness of nature remains a central

challenge in contemporary Islamic thought. Although Farasatkah's theory seeks to reform popular religiosity and defend rationality, it risks transforming God into an impersonal system of causal laws. In contrast, the Sadrian doctrine of the vertical hierarchy of causes preserves both the stability of natural laws and the personal agency of God. This framework offers a more coherent explanation of the relationship between divine action and the natural order while remaining consistent with the Qur'anic understanding of God.

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#### **Authors' Contribution**

The author conducted the research design, textual analysis, theoretical evaluation, and manuscript preparation.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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## References

his analysis draws on a range of classical and contemporary sources in Islamic theology and philosophy of religion. For example: al-Ghazālī (1417 AH); Ibn Sīnā (1404 AH); Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (1417 AH);

Muṭahharī (1998); Miṣbāḥ Yazdī (2005); Davarī Ardakānī (2009); Nasr (2003); Soroush (1999); Mojtabeh-Shabestari (2000); and, centrally, Farasatkah’s own works (1995, 2012, 2016, 2019).