CALL FOR PAPERS

Speaking the Unspeakable –
The Attributes of God in Islamic Thought
In the series: Horizons of Islamic Philosophy of Religion, edited by Ahmad Milad Karimi

"Exalted is Allah above what they describe." (Quran 37:159)

What can we know about God? Or, to put it more accurately, can we know anything about God? Is the human being as subject capable of coming close to God, are we equipped with the epistemological instrumentarium required to be able to capture Him? Contrariwise, is God, distinguished by His (n.b.) absolute transcendence, reducible to an object of discursive knowledge? With which concepts and attributes is He to be described? How can these attributes be determined and apprehended? These and similar questions have been discussed intensively by Muslim theologians and philosophers throughout the history of Islamic thought. The various solutions they proposed in this regard led to the emergence and development of various schools of thought, which together represent a rich spectrum of radically different positions on the matter – from the radical apophatic positions, according to which even the "existent" (*al-mawǧūd*) and the "thing" (*al-šayʾ*) cannot be predicated on God (the position of *al-muʿaṭṭila*), to the radical cataphatic positions, which construed the concrete descriptions of God in Quran in a thoroughly anthropomorphic manner (as in the case of *al-muǧassima*).

The debate on God's attributes does not pertain only to the manner in which Muslims reflected on and conceptualized God, rather it provides the ultimate basis for many other disputes. For instance, the decisive and still very vivid dispute regarding revelation and its nature, which within this thought tradition is mainly considered as the very word of God (*Kalām Allāh*), has its origin in the way God's attribute of *takkalum*, i.e. speech, is grasped. In order to systematically and coherently conceptualize God's attributes some Muslim thinkers even moved away from the confined framework of Aristotelian binary logic and tried to define a new model, with a third instance between existence and non-existence (theory of *aḥwāl* of Abū Hāšim Ǧubbāʾī and theory of *ṯubūt* in Muʿtazila school). Also the concept of *bi-lā kayf*, which at first sight seems to be an explicit contradictory, was articulated as a solution of this problematics.

Despite the theoretical importance and centrality of this theme in the intellectual tradition of Muslims, many aspects of it have remained untouched until our time. The planned edited volume will be dedicated to this debate and is intended to fill this gap and providing a comprehensive and profound picture of the development and impact of this debate in the theology, philosophy and systematic mysticism of Muslims. Accordingly, we particularly invite contributions with text-based ap-

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proaches on individual thinkers, but also broader historical and theoretical accounts of this debate by various schools of thought (such as Muʿtazila, Ašʿarīya, Imāmīya, etc.).

Potential themes for this volume include, but are not restricted to:

- doctrines of God's attributes by various thinkers and thought schools
- the ontological, epistemological and cosmological significance of the attributes
- the political significance of particular attributes such as ʿadl
- the influence of Jewish and Christian theologies
- the actuality of the doctrine of God's attributes for contemporary discourses

The deadline for submission of abstracts, including the title, author's name and affiliation (approx. 400 words) is October 15th, 2020. Abstracts should be submitted via e-mail to the editors. In the event of a positive decision, submission of your paper will be expected by 29th May 2021. Publication is planned for the end of 2021. Contributions (7,000 to 8,000 words) may be in English or German.

Submitted papers must present original and unpublished research that is not currently under review for any other conference or journal. The volume will be published by Verlag Karl Alber as one of a series of books dedicated to Islamic philosophy and theology, edited by Prof. Dr. Ahmad Milad Karimi.

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