

# Preface of the Editors

The aim of this volume is to investigate the topic of *Substance and Attribute*. The way leading to this aim is a dialogue between Islamic and Western Philosophy.

Most of the collected papers in our book are results of contributions to a workshop, organized by the editors of the volume, as an integrated part of the 29<sup>th</sup> International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg, Lower Austria, taking place in August 2006. The general theme of this conference was *Cultures: Conflict – Analysis – Dialogue*. The organizational frame of the workshop and also of this edition is the partnership between the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran, and the University of Innsbruck in Austria—the first formal high-level academic partnership between an Iranian Institution and a European University.

Dialogue is our aim, but not speaking about dialogue. Our dialogue shall be a work in practice; and our practice is a philosophical one. Our project is motivated by the observation that the roots of Islamic and of Western Philosophy are very similar. There is a strong consensus among historians of philosophy that these roots are the same in substance, and the differences are only of accidental importance. Some of the articles in this volume are dedicated to the history of philosophy, in Islamic thinking as well as in Western traditions. Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas are authors to whom reference is made in most of the historical contributions. Through their elaborations, these contributions will make clear what is mentioned here roughly.

But the dialogue between Islamic and Western Philosophy is not only an historical issue, it also has systematic relevance for actual philosophical questions. In contrast to the historical dimension, this is not so well known and recognized, especially not in Western scientific communities. Here there is still much work to be done. Sadr al-Din Shirazi or Mulla Sadra, living in the 16<sup>th</sup>/ 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the contemporary philosopher ‘Allameh Tabatabai’i (just to mention two of the most prominent figures) deserve greater attention in Western philosophy. Perhaps one article or another in

our volume can make the reader curious to learn more about these outstanding Islamic philosophers.

Our leading idea is to focus on the common roots and to increase awareness of the chances of systematic philosophical dispute, with the aim to promote a substantial dialogue on an academic level. The topic we chose, *Substance and Attribute*, seems to be especially well suited for such a project: it has an important history in both traditions, and makes obvious the common roots; and it has systematic relevance for the actual ontological debate; but furthermore, it pertains also to special issues in the philosophy of mind and in the philosophy of religion, as the reader of our book will find out.

Our workshop in Kirchberg opened with a lecture by Michael J. Loux, “Substance, Nature, and Immanence: Form in Aristotle’s Constituent Ontology,” which offers insight into the compositional nature of individual substances in Aristotle’s metaphysics. In Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory of substance, individual substances exist when a form can be predicated of a parcel of matter. Nevertheless, the forms of particular substances are simple, in the sense that they are not themselves constituted from more fundamental components. Loux’s work prepares the ground for the academic dialogue between European and Iranian philosophers because a proper exegesis of the Aristotelian theory of substance is essential for an understanding of the subsequent developments in both the Western and Islamic philosophical traditions.

The historical study of how philosophers have understood the notion of substance is continued in the paper by Muhammad Legenhausen, “Ibn Sina’s Arguments against God’s Being a Substance.” Here we find a comparison of the arguments given by both Ibn Sina and Aquinas that God is not of the category of substance. Both philosophers rely on the Aristotelian definition of substance, and on the distinction between existence and quiddity as elaborated by Ibn Sina.

The argument of the paper by Daniel von Wachter, “God as Substance without Substance Ontology,” provides an alternative to the view of Ibn Sina as described by Legenhausen. Von Wachter gives reasons for considering God to be a substance in an intuitive way, as an entity that persists through time with certain essential characteristics, while maintaining that this view of divinity is compatible with a metaphysics that has no place for

substance as defined in some metaphysical theories, such as the theory of Ibn Sina.

Tomasz Kakol finds fault with the arguments of Aquinas that God does not have accidents in his “A Formal Analysis of Selected Proofs by Aquinas for the Uniqueness of God.” Kakol offers a carefully formulated analysis of some main arguments to be found in Aquinas for the view that God has no essence other than His existence. Since Kakol finds these arguments to be formally invalid, proofs for the uniqueness of God based on such arguments are also undermined.

The relation between the metaphysical systems of Aristotle and Ibn Sina is further explored in Shahram Pazouki’s, “From Aristotle’s *Ousia* to Ibn Sina’s *Jawhar*.” Pazouki argues that the reception of Ibn Sina in the West and East differ because Europeans often approached Ibn Sina through Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who considered existence to be an accident (in contrast to a substance), while in Islamic philosophy, following Ibn Sina, existence was held to be accidental in the sense of something that cannot be derived from a quiddity. Pazouki offers this difference as an explanatory hypothesis for the different paths Western and Islamic philosophy have taken, with Western philosophy tending to be *essentialist*, while Islamic philosophy emphasizes the fundamental nature of existence.

The changes that occurred in Aristotelian thought as treated by Muslim philosophers is also the topic of the contribution by Mohsen Javadi, “Aristotle and Farabi on the Definition and Priority of Substance.” Farabi sought to reconcile Plato and Aristotle by taking Aristotle’s side against the independent extra-mental existence of universals, but agreeing with Plato that human knowledge, even knowledge of primary substances, must always be through universal concepts.

In his “Substances, Attributes, and Modes: Substantial Structures in Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz,” Hans Burkhardt shows us how the concept of substance becomes blurred in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, Burkhardt is optimistic about the chances for the survival of substance based ontologies through the twenty-first century.

Attention is given to Islamic philosophy by several of our European contributors. Boris Hennig directly engages Islamic philosophy in his “Ghazali on Immaterial Substances.” Inspired by Ghazali’s critique of the Islamic Peripatetics, Hennig suggests that there is at least a very radical

difference between the ways that material and immaterial entities can be considered to be substances.

Hans Kraml takes Ockham as pivotal in his, “Reshaping the Concept of Substance: The Renegade Ockham,” but this paper discusses many more figures than Ockham. Kraml guides us through both the Medieval Western and Islamic traditions until we are able to take a much more nuanced view of how Western and Islamic philosophy developed different vocabularies and sought to frame and answer philosophical questions differently. Despite the difficulties for dialogue that accumulate after prolonged mutual isolation, Kraml also suggests several leads for further comparative research.

Erwin Tegtmeier also engages Islamic philosophy in his “Ibn Sina on Substances and Accidents.” Tegtmeier’s treatment is that of a systematic metaphysician who grapples with the problems of diversity and individuation and finds dialogue partners in this effort in both Ibn Sina and one of the Iranian participants in our workshop, Mohammad Shomali.

In his “Psychic Substance: A Meeting Point between Metaphysics & Spirituality,” Mohammad Ali Shomali addresses the issue of the substantiality of the soul from both theoretical and practical perspectives. He argues that the metaphysics of the soul advanced in Islamic philosophy is closely related to Islamic moral concerns and spirituality.

Contemporary Iranian thought on topics related to substance and attribute are reviewed by Narjess Javandel Soumeahsaraie in her contribution, “A Report on Graduate Work in Qom on the Problems of Essence/Attribute and Substance/Accident.” She reminds us that in the tradition of Aristotelian philosophy as it continues in contemporary Islamic philosophy in Iran, *substance* is not contrasted with *attribute* but with *accident*, while *essence* is usually paired with *attribute*. Iranian graduate work on these topics tends to focus on the theological doctrine of the identity of the divine attributes with the divine essence and on the philosophical teaching of Mulla Sadra about substantial motion.

Substantial motion is the main topic of the papers by the Iranian contributors ‘Ali ‘Abidi Shahrudi and Mohammad Fanaei Eshkevari. Both point out the connection between the philosophical content of the doctrine as introduced by Mulla Sadra and certain ideas propounded by Muslim mystics. In “Mulla Sadra’s Theory of Substantial Motion,” Eshkevari in-

troduces the basic terms and outlines the main features of the discussion. Shahrudi elaborates them further in his “Substantial Motion and Perpetual Creation.” The picture that emerges is one in which existence has a dynamism that links philosophical theory with the dynamics of spiritual practice.

The connection between the practical and the theoretical is examined in the context of Western debates about action theory and the problem of free will by Pedro Schmechtig in his “Substance, Causality, and Freedom – An Ontological Revision of the Theory of Agent Causation.” Schmechtig suggests a revision of the standard view of agents as substances that endure through time is needed if we are to salvage a notion of agent causation that can avoid determinism and the unpalatable thesis that our acts are the result of mere chance. As in the Iranian discussions of substantial motion, Schmechtig proposes revisions to the standard notion of how substances are temporally located that suggest that systematic metaphysics still has much to gain from the dialogue between Western and Islamic philosophy.

We thank the authorities of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute and the University of Innsbruck, the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, and our publisher, the Ontos-Verlag represented by Dr. Rafael Hüntelmann.

May our common efforts help to build bridges between our cultures, and facilitate substantial dialogue via philosophical analysis with many useful attributes.

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