

Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology
in Dialogue 7

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka
Nazif Muhtaroglu
Detlev Quintern *Editors*



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The Logos of Life
and Cultural Interlacing

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VOLUME 7

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When Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka inspired the establishment of the book series Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue in 2000, the dawn of the second millennium went hand in hand with a new spirit of cross-cultural philosophy, widening the philosophical horizon towards a seminal and very productive dialogue. The so far seven volumes of the book series published by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka broke fresh ground for the sprouts of a New Enlightenment. The primeval logos as it differentiates itself with

the origin and unfurling of life, we may – wrote Anna Teresa Tymieniecka – retrieve these common roots that all philosophies share. As the soul plays the role of the microcosm for both Islamic thought and phenomenology of life, and as the soul does not know boundaries in space and time, we will – as she used to say – continue our dialogue, thereby gratefully commemorating Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka as our teacher.

Acknowledgements

We present here a collected volume of essays read at the World Phenomenology Institute's symposium, "Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue", on the topic: "The Question of Divinity in the New Enlightenment?" This symposium took place at the American Philosophical Association's Eastern Division Conference Meeting, in Boston, December 27–30, 2010. I first of all owe thanks to the authors who offered us their essays for this beautiful collection. My Co-editor, Detlev Quintern was an invaluable help in organizing the volume. The members of the Editorial Board, Nader El-Bizri and Olga Louchakova-Schwartz also deserve thanks for their assistance. As usual, we thank Louis Tymieniecka Houthakker and Jeffrey Hurlburt for their help in organizing the symposium and this volume.

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

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Introduction

Detlev Quintern

The Logos of Life and Cultural Interlacing, the seventh volume of the series *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue* (IPOP) is the most recent addition to an initiative that seeks to promote cross-cultural understanding and a cross-cultural dialogue in an increasingly divided world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Such a division caused by epistemological and cultural constructions of difference, for example the polarity of the Western and the Islamic world, can only intensify the ongoing segregation of the world and is therefore debatable.

In addition to the manifold historical testimonies of long-standing Islamic influences on Western philosophy, sciences and culture, Islamic communities, including scholars established not only in Europe and North America as a result of the ongoing global migration processes, continue to enrich contemporary intellectual debates. But, while the world becomes denser, the nurturing of mutual understanding has not followed suit. It is therefore one of the main objectives of the IPOP initiative and the CENTER FOR THE PROMOTION OF CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, founded 2009, not only to bring together philosophers and scientists from various backgrounds, but also to instigate a continuous and hopefully flourishing dialogue.

The (old) Enlightenment with its starting point in eighteenth-century Europe was advancing in splitting the unity of human beingness and furthermore the unity of life. Besides the fragmentation of humanity into hierarchically ordered races, from the nineteenth century onwards an understanding of sciences had broken ground according to which nature has to be forced into isolated objects of research. Life, including human beings, became an object of experimental-empirical verification in the laboratories of modernity. The laboratory, in which mathematical modeling resulted in the replacing of life by formulas, ascended undoubtedly to a producer of

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scientific evidence, whereby validity depended on the conditions of the experiment. But these conditions were constructed by the explorer himself. Likewise, it was the mathematization of life that was transferred to certain theories and methods of social sciences, economics, psychology etc. while in the meantime metaphysical search for wisdom became increasingly marginalized. By doing so, truth had to be verified by the deflection of a pointer as in the case of natural sciences or a statistic as a result of empirical evaluation in social sciences. As it is arguably impossible to construct a laboratory, simulating the communication and interplay of life's oneness, the vision of truth beyond the touchable or the visible, so to say beyond the measurable became unscientific.

The positivistic-empirical and apparently non-ideological theory of sciences on the one hand and the ideologization of philosophy and the history of mankind on the other hand, which according to Marx and Marxist approaches, was bound on certain inescapable laws of nature, hidden in the pathway of societies, had much more accordance than discordance.

As the most radical version of the old Enlightenment, following in the footprints of the ideas of the French Revolution, according to Marxist thought, existing orders, values and traditions had to be overthrown fundamentally. The creativity of human beingness was then chained in a teleological determinism, which traced back to Hegelian ideas, including the stigmatization of Religion as opium for the people (*Opium für das Volk* – Marx). The branding of faith, metaphysics and spirituality as unscientific so became the common ground for seemingly contradicting schools. Here, the empiricist-positivistic and the materialistic tendencies founded their concord. When both of these ways of thinking ended in a crisis towards the outgoing twentieth century, the unknowability of the real broke fresh ground, deepening the crisis into a labyrinth of disorientation. Finally, a kind of post-modernist, post-structuralist and post-Marxist rebellion against the positivistic-empiricist-teleological certainties ended in hopelessness and pessimism.

While understandably throwing overboard all supposed certainties, postmodernities in the meantime remained trapped inside their self-chosen anti-spiritual emptiness and loneliness. A New Enlightenment is hence called upon in order to regain the human dimension in the *unity-of-everything-there-is-alive* (Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka). To coincide with the onto-poietic self-individualization of beingness, an isolated focus on specific cutouts of human beings' multifarious capabilities, be it the limitation to the cognitive-rational, the sensitive-emotional, the spiritual, the unconscious or the bodily-medical will not do justice to the symphony of life in which we are enmeshed. Human beings are using all their "tools" to communicate universally: sensitive, emotive, cognitive, rational and aesthetical at the same time. This constitutes a boundless treasury pointing to the driving force of the creative logos and beyond to the sacral quest, in what Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka called the human condition in the web of life.

Still, a recalcitrant non-awareness of being woven inseparably into this fine and vulnerable web of life, as it is the case with the anthropocentric boastfulness that still characterizes the empiricist euphoria in the aseptic laboratories of modernity, runs the risk of destroying mankind's condition fatally. For that reason, sciences

and their application need to be reintegrated into this harmonious web – a self-evidence which kept scientific approaches pillared over hundreds of years, a period on which the old Enlightenment looked down with disdain.

All of the above indicate why it has become such an urgent necessity to initiate a new critique of reason, that among others things, queries the notion of progress, which in itself, as a concept, has led to various ecological-human catastrophes. This includes a thorough critique of biologicistic neo-Darwinian theories. Placed in this context, the insights of the philosopher, astronomer and physicist Ibn al-Haitham (d. ca. 1049), who was nearly a millennium ago famed for his experimental optics appear almost prophetic for he states that “*however variable its aspects may be, the whole universe obeys a permanent law, and its elements, however variegated they may be, are governed by harmony*”.¹

In contrast to later “modern” approaches which succeeded in modeling a pseudo-reality mathematically, mathematics served in the flourishing period of Arabic-Islamic sciences for the deciphering of the harmonic and therefore symmetric structure in life, which found its most beautiful expression in Islamic art. And yet, the mathematics of the microscopic crystal structure which is characterized by groups of ions, atoms or molecules arranged in terms of periodic repetition models (periodicity) had only in the second half of the twentieth century been identified with certain old geometrical patterns that are to be found in Islamic ornamentation, as for example in the repetitive exquisiteness of Islamic tiles. Harmony, also strongly emphasized in music, which can be composed mathematically, is here to be understood as a key principle in the orchestration of life.

As the advancements of scientific progress with its aim to deepen knowledge, from the smallest nuclei of life, the self-replicability of the cell “*as a sort of prototype of the individual*”,² to the surface of the most distant planets, is beyond any doubt, the New Enlightenment will have to bring into accord the current state of research with ways of deciphering the ontopoietic process, the beingness’ creative networks of communication which are driven forth by the logos of life, a concept further developed by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka since the book series *Logos of Life* took its debut in 1988. Here, the potentials of an emerging pre-ontology or proto-phenomenology look ahead towards an area of post-metaphysics as outlined in the contribution by Daniela Verducci.

Moving on the question arises whether it is indeed possible to identify essentially certain geographical or cultural spaces with specific ways of thinking and philosophizing? In both, Western and in Eastern philosophies, e.g. in Islamic Philosophy, or in Confucian traditions and in Nietzsche’s body of work, one can find evidence of a radical reevaluation (*Umwertung*). In this context it seems not

¹ Ibn al-Haitham in Fuat Sezgin, *The Istanbul Museum for the History of Sciences and Technology in Islam (An Overview)*, (Frankfurt: Institut für die Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, 2010), p. 20.

² Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life*, Book 1, *The Case of God in the New Enlightenment*, Analecta Husserliana, The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research, Volume C (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), p. 93.