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PREFACE

Over the millennia, philosophy has sought the ultimate understanding of the full human horizon of existence as well as of human destiny and the ultimate sense of it All. The innumerable attempts to grasp the answers to these questions, each taking its own approach and having its own preconceptions, have engendered a range of different philosophical approaches, one so broad that seemingly unbridgeable rifts impede possible, cross-fertilizing communication. And yet the themes of all of them, e.g., the immeasurable cosmos, life, the individual being bearing life, the human person within his or her world, and his or her longings to transcend that world, the human mind, its pragmatic/cognitive tools, creative, speculative pursuits, remain constants. The *logos* they all share is one.

It is not that no vicarious sharing of intuitive glimpses by the proponents of the varied doctrines and methods in question occurs. The history of philosophy is in fact marked by the juxtaposing of theories and approaches having different trajectories and by the mixing of insights, the crossing of borders, etc. However, what is greatly needed is in-depth comparison of the various doctrines and a reflection on the contrasting, opposing, clashing perspectives that seeks foundations for all of them in *the human, creative condition*, in that microcosm that extends its tentacles toward the two great infinities: the external infinity of the cosmos and the internal infinity of transcending destiny.

By going back to the primeval *logos* as it differentiates itself with the origin and unfurling of life, we may retrieve these common roots that all philosophies share.

In order to promote dialogue between Occidental phenomenology and Islamic philosophy on this deep level of the *logos*, we are inaugurating this book series.

I

At the launching of this series under the title of *Occidental Phenomenology and Islamic Philosophy in a Dialogue*, a statement of its *raison d'être*, its aim, its place within comparative scholarship, and the ways and means of its expected realization is in order.

By no mere juxtaposing of the so-called “methods” and the axioms they derive from, nor even by establishing historical filiations of ideas and the comparison of concepts, may we find the groundwork for metaphysical dialogue among philo-

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logos at its constructive shining forth. *The human creative condition is the "place"-sphere-arena* that our *phenomenology of life in its onto-poiesis* has proposed as the ground for this work. It is upon that ground that the World Phenomenology Institute has been engaging in dialogues with philosophies proceeding from different assumptions and cultural settings. Thus, the dialogue between phenomenology and Islamic philosophy upon the common ground of the human *creative condition within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive* that we are proposing has the benefit of having an already fruitful mode to follow.

However, some ambiguities are attached to the very title of our new book series. First of all, the very term 'Islamic philosophy,' and that of 'Occidental phenomenology' too, may engender controversy. In fact, the term 'Islamic' covers a vast field of divergent philosophical doctrines, schools of thought, individual thinkers, and sages whose philosophical ideas not only spring from different insights, but also in their expression are differently motivated or influenced by different theological tendencies, mystical practices, and apologetic intentions. The best example of the profound difficulty of setting these philosophical views on a common plane is the tension still reigning between reason and faith that underlies all possible undertakings. Moreover, some great thinkers who were not Muslims, but were Christians or Jews --e.g., Maimonides (Musā Ibn Maymūn) -- belong to a once prevailing Greco-Arabic tradition in sciences and philosophy. So the great question arises: How can we overcome this major obstacle of finding a common denominator of diverse perspectives as the ground for a dialogue? It is, indeed, as I stated above, not along the lines of a comparison of methods, approaches, and doctrinal ideas that the point of basic affinity is to be found.

A similar ambiguity clings to the expression 'Occidental phenomenology.' Phenomenology and Islamic philosophy have been brought together into the comparative arena by the great, penetrating, and inspired scholar Henry Corbin. Over against a prevailing historical approach, by referring to the phenomenology of Husserlian inspiration that focuses on the intelligible *Wesensschau*, Corbin has, as is well known, initiated a novel approach to Islamic philosophies. But since Corbin's time, phenomenology has flourished as a field of research, and what is nowadays called "phenomenology" has expanded into numerous doctrines and schools of thought, some of which maintain a merely tangential relation to Husserl's intentions and program.

Significantly, however, in this respect Corbin's approach to his subject matter and its scope is by no means outdated. His truly remarkable work is centered on the interpretation of Islamic texts rather than upon comparative analysis. Moreover, Corbin seems to have been the first thinker to have truly applied Husserl's "principle of all principles." Indeed, by avoiding identification with any particular type of intuition (e.g., "eidetic" intuition in which intellectual "essences" are accessible to experiencing subjects), he has, without mentioning it, assumed Husserl's "principle of all principles," which encompasses more than the experiential yielding of intellectual essential insight, for it holds all types of experiences presenting themselves in evidential intuitions to be legitimate objects of inquiry. In the course of phenomenology's reception, in which the particular dimensions of experience as brought up by the great master step by step became geared to the full scope of the

domain of the world and the body, Husserl's "principle of all principles" remained unheeded. With his intellectual-intentional assumptions, Husserl, himself a deeply spiritual and religious person, did not come to articulate, to thematize, spiritual experiences philosophically, and his scarce references to them lie to the side of his philosophical corpus. With the exception of such philosophers as Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Jean Hering, Dietrich von Hildebrandt, Max Scheler, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, this has been also the case with the majority of his followers.

Yet, the principle of all principles has to be taken seriously.

Furthermore, as obvious as it is that Husserl's phenomenological ideas developed on a steady course as their author himself progressively advanced in his reflections (with an intellectual-objective-emphasis, yes), and as much as that's being essential is acknowledged, the subjective, inner development of the inquirer-philosopher has come to be strictly severed from its fruit. As appropriate as this may be for certain types of cognitive procedures (e.g., logical inquiry), the inward bond between the experiencing subject and the results of his or her progress is in other types of experience (e.g., moral, aesthetic, spiritual) essential to their exfoliation and should not be eliminated from the usual phenomenological field of inquiry. In contrast, by employing his particular brand of phenomenological approach (namely, by putting all types of intuitions to work to deal with experiences in which they evidence themselves and that otherwise fall outside the framework of the intellectual-natural realm), Henry Corbin has been able to bring to light the esoteric content of the spiritual, visionary, mystical experiences of Islamic sages. In this fashion, he has paved the royal road leading to phenomenology's functioning as a universal philosophy in which the entire universe of human experience is to be given due consideration.

However, being absorbed in transmitting the wealth of esoteric Islamic experience to the Occidental mind, Corbin's work did not proceed further towards *philosophically vindicating* the realm of the spiritual, the esoteric, the sacred. At base our dialogue aims precisely at such a "vindication."

This task comes up squarely against the question that I put at the outset of this argument, namely that of how we can find a common denominator for the great variety of philosophical doctrines --now not only Islamic doctrines, but also those basic to phenomenology-- so that we may enter into a full-fledged philosophical dialogue. There is a more fundamental question, however, that of what aim we are proposing for this dialogue.

The answer to this question is: Our aim is primarily neither to contribute to comparative studies, nor to find a cultural "bridge," but rather, animated by the genuine "philosophical *eros*," we are prompted to seek the "truth of things."

II

The question arises as to which concrete precepts should guide such an undertaking toward its fruition in insights and intuitions that renew both philosophical traditions.

It has often been pointed out that in the Middle Ages there was not a division between Occidental and Islamic/Arabic philosophies. On the contrary, interchange,

dialogue, and cross-pollination took place among the great thinkers. Then came the estrangement.

It has also been pointed out that one of the main reasons for the estrangement between the succeeding Occidental and Islamic philosophies was the excessive rationalization/intellectualization on the part of Occidental philosophers pursuing Descartes' ideal of "clear and distinct ideas" modeled after those of geometry. This ideal has also been seen as responsible for the disjunction between mind and body that occurred in Occidental philosophy and resulted in a disruption of the metaphysical vision of the Unity of Being heretofore shared by both sides.

It is the issue of this continuity in the extending of reality, of the vision of its infinitely expanding horizon, that we shall have to consider while we try to establish principles for building a bridge between the two disrupted traditions.

When it comes to Phenomenology broadly speaking, we have to consider Husserl's aspirations, -- a positive inheritance from Descartes-- for a proper legitimization of philosophical ideas being considered. This means: a) clarification of the philosophical procedure; b) its legitimization with respect to its mode of cognitive givenness; and, lastly, c) the need to bear in mind the intuitive level of the insights being clarified.

To enter into a dialogue with phenomenology, these three principles of clarification of the data of cognition have to be kept in mind. They in fact also lie very intimately at the heart of the reflection of Islamic philosophers such as Mullā Sadrā. These traditions also share the main precept for the legitimacy of intuition itself: one is to focus directly upon the object of inquiry, leaving to the side all preconceptions. This precept is merely a sharper way of defining an activity that metaphysicians have always performed naturally. So much for phenomenology's conditions for adequately confronting Islamic philosophy and phenomenology. Great efforts to come to terms with these requirements are already manifest in the work of great Islamic philosophers like Mullā Sadrā.

As for the requirements emanating from Islamic philosophy, they principally concern the expanse of the field in the vast realm of the continuity of being. In the main, these requirements appear to be:

a) First of all, on the one extreme, the intuitive approach to the microcosm has to yield access and display relevancy to the approach to the macrocosm;

b) On the other extreme, it has to yield access and display relevancy to transcendence (the divine);

c) In addition, while the microcosm has to be clearly intuited, with the intuitive grasp of it clarified, its formulation has to be sufficiently flexible, avoiding sharp separation of concepts, to allow for all types of experience to be taken into account. It is important to emphasize that on this point we once again meet with the main device of Husserlian phenomenology: "the principle of all principles," which admits all types of experiences evidenced in intuitions into consideration, pursuing clarification in the formulation in each type of experience given. Emphasis is not placed upon concepts, but rather upon the intuitive insights that they convey. Therefore, an area of indeterminacy must surround concepts.

Keeping in mind the provisos on both sides, we propose to have the dialogue proceed in terms of a coming together in the intuitive differentiation of the real, for both sides share faith in intuition.

This is what we postulate concerning ways of proceeding, approach, or method. Bearing all this in mind, we can see how we may compare singular insights and concepts and yet fail to get to the "heart of things," since that resides only on the level of the constructive *logos*, where each singular object is revealed within its full context.

III

Thus, the following question emerges: At what level of the *logos* of phenomena should our comparison of insights into both these philosophical movements appropriately proceed?

In anticipation of our exfoliation of this issue, let me here bring in the main points leading toward the answer. As we know, Husserl delved into the phenomenon of reality in three phases. The *first phase* involved envisaging reality in its permanent distinctive structures, its actual manifestation. At work in this phase is the eidetic intuition of immovable structures. The *second phase* led to a clarification of the cognitive status of these structures, their appearance in subjective acts of consciousness. A special intuition attuned to the nature of subjective acts of consciousness itself as their bearer was set to work to grasp and thematize objectivity as it appears in the structures of consciousness itself. In the *third phase*, the process-like subjective constitution of the objectivity, namely, the nature of the operations leading from intellectual pure consciousness down to the life-world participation in the operations of the body, came to the fore. This third phase of phenomenological inquiry brings out the intellectual concatenation of mental operations in which the world of life is established.

However, what about the perspective of becoming in which the inner ontic operations establishing beingness in *linea entis* occur as well as *cognitio*? Husserl did not reach this level, at which the foundation of the phenomenal lies.

Here, we find a point crucial to our new attempt to bring Occidental phenomenology and Islamic philosophy together. Even though Husserl progressively expanded along its strictly rational grain the schema of constitution of reality in the cognitive enterprise of human beings, Husserlian phenomenology has remained within the range of a strictly rational/intellective beacon.

It could not reach either the further parameters of cosmic reality or spiritual realms beyond the rational/intellective rules of the constitution. Hence, any possible dialogue between phenomenology and Islamic philosophy was first destined to remain truncated on both ends. In addition, the general philosophical interests that could be brought together for comparison had not yet been situated within similar general parameters, and that meant that the inquiry could not but remain uncertain as concerns that comparison.

The situation changes drastically with the advent of a further development of the Husserlian inspiration in the form of the Phenomenology of Life in its onto-poiesis. This relatively young enterprise is essentially inspired by the same great striving on the part of the master Husserl to reach to the first and last foundations of the genesis

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