

# BOOK REVIEW

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**Book: *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue*  
An Anthology of Contemporary Philosophy: Western & Islamic,  
London: ICAS Press 2014**

*The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue* is an edited collection of essays in comparative philosophy which presents the reader with an engaging dialogue between the famous philosophers of the Western and Islamic philosophical traditions. The philosophers discussed in the book are all pivotal figures of the Eastern and Western intellectual and spiritual heritage. They include great thinkers such as Al-Ghazzali, Thomas Aquinas, Averroes, Suhrawardi, Mulla Sadra, Avicenna, Leibniz, Meister Eckhart, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Popper. Both avid readers of philosophy and the general readership will find something here to enjoy and engage with. The variety of the topics in each section and the range of the philosophers whose views are discussed makes the book appealing to a wide range of readers with different philosophical tastes. The significance of *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue* lies in the fact that it helps to broaden the intellectual horizons of the readers by inviting them to examine and explore issues whose importance is not merely historical but contemporary, as they deal with substantive problems which belong to the sphere of the human condition. The book, through its different chapters and by highlighting the views of thinkers from the East and from the West, shows the reader how interconnected the two philosophical traditions, the Islamic and the Western, are. It also helps to dispel many simplistic accounts of the status, calibre, potentials, and the historical evolution of Islamic philosophy. According to one such account, Al-Ghazzali was responsible for the 'closing of the gates of ijtihad' in Islam.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, each dealing with a series of important philosophical questions from the viewpoints of two or more philosophers from the Islamic and the Western traditions. The chapters in the book comprise (in the order they appear in the book): 'Aquinas and Mulla Sadra on the Primacy of Existing' (David B. Burrell), 'Ghazzali and the Philosophers: The Defence of Causality' (Lenn E. Goodman), 'Averroes' Aristotelian Soul' (Roy Jackson), 'Mulla Sadra and Martin Heidegger: a Philosophical Turn' (Muhammad Kamal), 'Parmenides and Mulla Sadra: the Mystical Journey to Being' (Muhammad Kamal), 'On the Very Idea of Comparative Philosophy: Some Preliminary Remarks for a Meta-Theory' (Mahmoud Khatami), 'Ibn Al-Haytham and the European Renaissance: a Question

of Influence' (Oliver Leaman), 'Necessity, Causation, and Determinism in Ibn Sina and His Critics' (Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen), 'The Possible Worlds of Avicenna and Leibniz' (Sari Nusseibeh), 'Scepticism and the Problem of Acquiring Genuine Knowledge: Ghazzali and Popper' (Ali Paya), 'Man the Image of God According to Meister Eckhart and Mulla Sadra' (Latimah-Parvin Peerwani), 'On Being "Useless" Yet "True": Plato, Farabi and Ibn Bajja on the Condition of Philosophers in the Context of the Corrupt State' (W. Craig Streetman).

The chapters compare and contrast the ideas and philosophy of the scholars and succeed in introducing the reader to the world of comparative philosophy. The book in this sense not only manages to cater to a readership which is well read in philosophy, but also the general reader who may not be as familiar with the names discussed in this book with its relative accessibility. The articles delve into the details of each philosophical tradition, which assists the reader who may not be readily knowledgeable about the intricacies of each philosophical thought. As an example, in his article 'Averroes' Aristotelian Soul', Roy Jackson explains in detail what Aristotle meant when he discussed the soul or psyche in his philosophy, so that we have a better understanding of how this was interpreted and expanded upon by Averroes in the two philosophers' textual dialogue. Similarly, in Muhammad Kamal's chapter discussing the philosophical aspects of being through the lens of ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides and Muslim philosopher Mulla Sadra, we get to learn the philosophical positions of both philosophers in detail within the context of the time and milieu they lived in. At the same time, the reader also gets to learn about each philosopher from a wide range of angles as some of the philosophers are introduced and discussed in more than one chapter, such as Mulla Sadra and Al-Ghazzali.

The book's strength lies in its ability to explore a wide range of thinkers from both the Eastern and the Western philosophical traditions and provide the reader with original comparisons and thought-provoking parallels. One relative weakness of the book is the lack of a list of terms used in the book, although an index of names that are found in the book is included. This somewhat restricts the relative accessibility of the book; this can, however, be understood in a book which delves into several philosophical discussions with a plethora of terms which would necessitate a complete lexicon of terminology as a separate companion volume. In the meantime, the index of names gives the reader an opportunity to have easier access to the important concepts and individuals discussed in the book. However, the pages each entry refers the reader to do not always give a definition for the entry in question but provide context, as is the nature of an index of names.

In summary, *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue* is a prime example of an academic work that engages the reader with a dialogue between two philosophical traditions that have long been interconnected and introduces the general reader to the

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world of comparative philosophy. As stated in the introduction of the book, comparative philosophy is a relatively new discipline, although it has arguably existed without a name since the beginning of philosophy, and this book is a perfect introduction to the long-running dialogue between the Western and Islamic philosophical traditions. By shedding light on this long neglected and often misunderstood dialogue between the Western and Islamic philosophical traditions, *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue* fills an important gap in the literature.