

Hermopolis: The art of bridging the world with an idea

Mervat Abdel-Nasser MD, MPhil, FRCPsych
Founder & director of New Hermopolis

Abstract

It is false to say that frontiers do not exist. They do exist, temporarily. But at the same time there exists a force of creativity and truth uniting us all, in humanity and in pride at the same time. Albert Camus

Hermopolis is the name given by the Greeks to the city of 'Thoth' that lies in El Minia governorate, middle Egypt. It was named after 'Hermes', the Greek equivalent of 'Thoth', the lord of time, the guardian of thought and the ultimate communicator of art and knowledge. The sum of knowledge produced by the ancient Hermopolis (*Hermetica*) was brought to Florence in the 15th century and had a great influence on the philosophy of Europe from the renaissance till our present time. However, this was not the only route that this knowledge had travelled, some of the Hermetic scholars headed instead for the newly emerging Arab Moslem world and were the intellectual force behind the famous 'House of Wisdom' that epitomised the great days of Islamic learning and scientific achievement.

The focus of this presentation therefore is on the significance of this city as a 'generator of an idea' that influenced the progression of human thought regardless of the boundaries of the original physical space where it was created. The intellectual heritage of this site clearly goes beyond the territorial specificity of this city to include all the minds that were inspired and influenced by it and whose creativity informed and developed this tradition. Those intellectuals need to be seen as carriers and transmitters of this heritage and their body of work should be seen as bridging the gap between the local and universal to unite mankind through a chain of ideas continually produced and regenerated by humanity at large.

Dr Mervat Abdel Nasser MD, MPhil, FRCPsych

Consultant Psychiatrist, writer and researcher in Egyptology

Founder of New Hermopolis /www.newhermopolis.org

She is a graduate of Cairo Medical School and fellow of the Royal college of Psychiatrists; London. She holds a Master's degree in philosophy and a doctorate in psychiatry from London University. She also has two diplomas in moral philosophy and the history of medicine.

She served as a clinical psychiatrist and university academic in England from 1977-2007. Her clinical practice focused on general adult psychiatry with special interest in the field of Culture and Mental health.

She has as well a long-standing interest in Egyptology, particularly ancient Egyptian thought and its relevance to contemporary life.

She took an early retirement in 2007 from her job as a consultant psychiatrist and senior lecturer, Kings College London and returned to Egypt to pursue her dream of founding New Hermopolis and has since dedicated herself entirely to this cause (www.Newhermopolis.org).