

Lecture five

Islamic Theology, Philosophy, and Mysticism and Their Influence on the West

- **A. The Development of Islamic Theology**

- **1.** Major schools of Islamic theology: The two major branches of Islam are Sunnism and Shi'ism, Sunnis comprising the majority.
- **2.** The function of the caliph in Sunnism is to protect Islamic law and the Muslim state, whereas the Imam of the Shi'ites is also the interpreter of the law and source of religious knowledge, both legal and mystical. The major branch of Shi'ism believes that there are twelve Imams.
- **3.** There are few legal differences between the Shi'ites and Sunnis, but there are varied theological schools within both branches.

- **A. The Development of Islamic Theology**
- **4.** The Mu‘tazilite school, born in the seventh century, had different beliefs than the Ash‘arite School, which developed two centuries later.
- **5.** Twelve Imam Shi‘ite theology developed in a systematic way in the thirteenth century and emphasized reason, more than Ash‘arism, the main Sunni theological school.
- **6.** Isma‘ili theology flowered in the city of Cairo and also in Iran.

B. The Rise and Development of Philosophy

- **1.** The translation of Greek and Syrian philosophical texts preceded the rise of Islamic philosophy.
- **2.** Islamic philosophy began to develop in Baghdad in the ninth century.
- **3.** The schools of Islamic philosophy include Peripatetic, Isma‘ili, Illuminationist, and the “transcendent philosophy.”

B. The Rise and Development of Philosophy

- **4.** Peripatetic philosophy was rooted in Aristotelian philosophy and became established in Andalusia.
- **5.** The last major school of philosophy was the “transcendent philosophy” of the seventeenth century.

C. Islamic Mysticism

- **1.** Its roots lie in the Islamic revelation and the person of the Prophet. Ali is also known as a progenitor of Sufism.
- **2.** The Sufi orders began to form in the twelfth century. Illuminative knowledge associated with Sufism has played a significant role in Islamic intellectual life.

C. Islamic Mysticism

- **3.** Sufism played a major role in the spread of Islam by way of example.
- **4.** Sufism helped to revive the field of ethics and breathed new life into the intellectual sciences and the arts.

D. Translations from Arabic into Latin

- **1.** Islamic philosophy and theology influenced Latin scholasticism and Jewish thought.
- **2.** St. Thomas Aquinas refers to Islamic philosophers over five hundred times in his writings.

D. Translations from Arabic into Latin

- **3.** When Muslims were driven out of Spain, the symbiotic relationship between Islam and Christianity on the intellectual level came for the most part to an end.
- **4.** The greatest Jewish philosophers first wrote in Arabic, and then later Hebrew, aiding the transmission of Islamic thought to the West.

E. The Influence of Islamic Mysticism in the West

- 1. The Middle Ages saw the troubadours and medieval mystical literature influenced by Islamic sources being passed along the European continent.
- 2. The architecture of Dante's *Divine Comedy* comes from Sufism, as does much of Raymond Lull's work.
- 3. Sufism's effect on Jewish mysticism and Spanish mysticism is seen in the work of Ibn Gabriel, St. Theresa of Avila, and St. John of the Cross.

E. The Influence of Islamic Mysticism in the West

- 4. The influence of Sufism in the Romantic period is seen in Goethe, Rückert, and the New England transcendentalists, as well as the English Romantic poets such as Lord Byron (*Oriental Tales*), Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Edward Fitzgerald, notably his *Quatrains of Omar Khayyam*, which gained widespread popularity.
- 5. This influence continued into the twentieth century, from Ezra Pound to Coleman Barks and twentieth-century French poetry.