

THE ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION IN PERSIA. SURREY: CURZON PRESS, 1996.

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This book is a collection of essays on the Islamic intellectual tradition in Persia written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the renowned Islamic thinker and scholar, over a period of forty years and which were published in various books and journals, some of which are no longer easily available. The editor, Mehdi Amin Razavi, a former student of Nasr, has brought together in a single volume these twenty-four essays, several of which were originally written in Persian and are now translated into English. The editor did so not only to make these essays more accessible, but also to present this collection as a major study of philosophical activities in Persia and of the contributions of Persian philosophers to the Islamic intellectual tradition generally and the philosophical tradition of *Falsafa/Aikma* specifically.

The book is divided into six parts: Part I Islamic Thought and Persian Culture, Part II: Early Islamic Philosophy, Part III: Suhrawardâ and the School of Ishraq. Part IV: Philosophers-Poets-Scientists, Part V: Later Islamic Philosophy and Part VI: Islamic Thought in Modern Iran.

It is evident from the divisions of the book that these essays cover a long period of philosophical activities in Persia, extending from its inception to the present day. It also represents a major study of the various important aspects and dimensions of the Islamic intellectual tradition as it developed in Persia, as well as the thoughts and contributions of its outstanding thinkers and philosophers. In Part 1, for example, the essays 'Mysticism and Traditional Philosophy in Persia, Pre-Islamic and Islamic' and 'The Significance of Persian Philosophical Works in the Tradition of Islamic Philosophy' are included and in Part VI an essay on 'Islamic Philosophical Activities in Contemporary Persia: A Survey of Activity in the 50's and 60's' is found. There are also various essays dealing with the thoughts and contributions of Persian luminaries such as Ibn Sina Bârênâ Suhrawardâ, Na'âr al-Dân ñësi 'Umar Khayyãm Âadr al-Dân Shârçâ and Mulla Hçdâ

Sabziwærâ. The works of these figures cover several important areas of Islamic thought, including natural philosophy, cosmology and cosmography, mathematics, epistemology, psychology and metaphysics.

The essays collected in this book provide the reader with a comprehensive survey and overview of the nature, history and phases of development of philosophical thought in Persia and the tremendous contribution of Persian philosophers to the various aspects of Islamic thought and learning. Since Persia was the intellectual and philosophical center of the Islamic world from the twelfth century onward, to know the history and development of Islamic thought and philosophy in Persia is also to gain an understanding and appreciation of the history of Islamic thought and philosophy itself, particularly post-Averroes Islamic philosophy.

Until rather recently, scholars of Islamic philosophy in the West believed that Islamic philosophy terminated with Ibn Rushd in the twelfth century. Nasr's study on the Islamic intellectual tradition in Persia, particularly essays contained in Parts III to VI, dispels this inaccurate view by disclosing to the reader the nature and development of Islamic philosophical thought from Suhrawardi onward. Suhrawardi's particular understanding of philosophy or hikma as a synthesis of discursive philosophy and intellectual illumination which is the result of spiritual purification, marks a turning point in the history of Islamic philosophy. From Suhrawardâ onward, philosophers emphasized and relied on the immediate and illuminative knowledge of Islamic revealed principles and doctrines rather than on rational and speculative philosophical principles only.

The essays on Afial al-Dân Keshânâ, Na'âr al-Dân ñesi, QuÇb al-Dân Shâkzâ and Rashâd al-Dân Faïlallah in Part IV are especially important in providing invaluable information on the revival of intellectual and philosophical activities in thirteenth century Persia. It is a period which is greatly neglected in the history of Islamic thought but which is particularly significant for the later intellectual history of Islam. According to Nasr, the thirteenth century witnessed the revival of Ibn Sina's philosophy, the elaboration of Suhrawardi's *ishraqâ* doctrines and the more systematic expressions of Sufi metaphysics and also the beginning of a rapprochement between the different schools of thought. There were many thinkers between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries who were interested in synthesizing the perspectives and principles of the different school of thought and their

works laid the foundation for the grand synthesis of Mulla Âadra the seventeenth century Safavid Mull« Âadr«'s philosophical works are often regarded as a remarkable synthesis of *mashsh«'â* (peripatetic) and *ishr«qâ* (illuminationist) philosophy, kal«m (theology) and (gnosis).

Nasr's essays, first published in the 1960s and 1970s. are among the earliest comprehensive and authoritative discussions of post Ibn Rushd Islamic philosophy available in the English language. Thus. they help to fill in the lacuna in literature available in the West on the structure, history and development of post-Averroes Islamic philosophy.

The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia demonstrates Nasr's profound and extensive knowledge of the Islamic intellectual tradition and his exceptional scholarship which is the result of a rare combination of a traditional Islamic intellectual training and a Western education. It is also a witness to his tremendous contribution to studies on the structure, history and development of Islamic thought and philosophy which is of great importance and value to scholars and students of Islamic thought and philosophy both in the West and in the Muslim world.

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