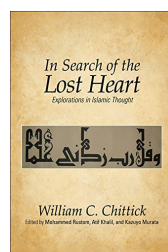


In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought

*By William Chittick,
edited by Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil,
and Kazuyo Murata
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Reviewed by Syed A.H. Zaidi



In their selections of essays from William C. Chittick's most seminal works, Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata capture not only the breadth of the author's scholarship, but also his intellectual trajectory. In this book, we find Chittick's essays addressing Islamic mysticism (Sufism), philosophy, and culture. Furthermore, this anthology captures essential dimensions of his thought framed in a manner that allows the reader to understand the subtle nuances of the philosophical and spiritual positions and the issues he addresses. This volume serves as an epistemic-ontological overview of philosophical Sufism is not only an anthology of some of Chittick's best works, but also a key reference to the dimensions of Islam that can be used as an excellent introductory textbook for a class on Islam, Sufism or Islamic philosophy. This work is divided into four parts with several key appendices. Each part provides a clear and comprehensive approach to the dimension of Sufism at hand.

The first part is on the relationship of Sufism to the Islamic tradition. These essays capture the intimacy that has always existed between the roots of the Islamic religion (*usul*) and Sufism. The first essay introduces us to the various meanings of the word Islam, and captures its meaning

in-depth by recounting and explaining the ḥadith of Gabriel, in which he appears as a man and summarizes Islam to the Prophet with several of his companions as witnesses. Chittick approaches Islam not only as a matter of faith, but also as a source of profound knowledge. He defends his understanding with references not only to eminent Islamic jurists, but also famous Sufis such as al-Ghazali and Ibn al-'Arabi. We see the same approach in his following essay on the most rudimentary exoteric mandate for the Muslims, the Salat (which is performed five times a day), in which he looks at how each movement corresponds to elements of the ascension of the Prophet from the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to the Throne of God (*al-'Isra' wal-Mi'raj*). This section then covers ancillary areas of the exoteric dimension of Islam, such as how weeping and love are understood through verses of the Koran and various *abadith*, along with the writings of Ibn al-'Arabi, Ruzbihan Baqli, and Rashid al-Din Maybudi. Finally, the essay selected on Shi'ite Islam describes the intimate exchange that occurred between Shiites and Sufis, who hesitate in using the term Sufism despite the fact that it was quite influential in the later development of Shi'ism.¹ Chittick has made significant contributions that introduces the Western intellectual community to Shi'ite Islam, and this essay demonstrates the intimate relationship between these two dimensions of Islam in ways that are not often seen so clearly. Finally, this section closes with an exploration of the relationship of the Koran to Islam, as not only the scripture for Muslims but as the “Word of God, and God’s own Self-expression with the purpose of guiding those whom He loves” (59).

In the second part of this work, we see the heart and scope of Chittick’s academic interests, including his lifelong investigation into Ibn al-'Arabi’s philosophical Šūfi thought. In the first essay, Chittick addresses the history of the term *Wabdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Being) and its roots in 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Ma'ruf al-Karkhi. He then recounts the history of the concept throughout all of Ibn al-'Arabi’s thought, as well as the use of the term by his intellectual successors, such as Ibn Sab'in and Qunawi. This essay is particularly important because it also examines supporters and opponents of the concept, and the logic behind arguments on both sides. The following essays continue to focus on Ibn al-'Arabi’s thought,

¹ For more information on the historical relationship between Shi'ism and Sufism, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1972), 104-123.

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