



Mysticism and Aesthetics

A Look at Shafi'i Kadkani's Aesthetic Theory in Defining Mysticism

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Abstract

Shafi'i Kadkani's perspective on defining mysticism and explaining its connection is based on aesthetics. According to him, mysticism is nothing more than an artistic understanding of religion from an aesthetic standpoint, presented through imagination, symbolism, and allegory. This article critically examines and evaluates this viewpoint's foundational and structural aspects by referring to fundamental discussions such as the nature of religion, religious experience, mystical experience, and the relationship between mind, language, and reality. From the critic's perspective, this theory is based on a purely formalist approach, focused on style and centred on language. Furthermore, it lacks a proper analysis of the relationship between cognition (mind) and language, the connection between mystical knowledge and reality, and the relationship between mystical knowledge and language. The theory also suffers from reductionism and includes errors such as the fallacy of confusing essence with its expression, ultimately stripping mysticism—a multifaceted phenomenon with various dimensions—of its most important aspect, which is its cognitive and epistemic dimension.

Keywords: Mysticism, Mystical Experience, Language, Formalism, Semantics, Aesthetics.

Introduction

From Shafi'i's perspective (a purely formalist one, supported by evidence from semantics and semiotics), mysticism is nothing more than an artistic understanding of religion's aesthetic dimension, presented through imagination, symbolism, and allegory. He believes that even mystical revelations are the creation of new spiritual realms through language; in other words, the domains of language both create spiritual experiences and, through exploration of these realms, generate new uses of language.

Research Findings

Shafi'i Kadkani's definition of mysticism as an artistic expression of religion or an aesthetic and emotional interpretation of the mystic's feelings and experiences is a purely formalist and stylistic view, focused on language rather than content. In his view, the world outside of language is devoid of meaning. His theory posits that formal discovery and the creation of new spiritual realms occur through language.



Conclusion

Shafi'i's theory has several shortcomings, including reductionism, neglecting certain aspects of mysticism such as its epistemic content, an incomplete understanding of mystical experiences, and an incorrect analysis of the relationship between mystical experience, mind, and language, as well as the relationship between word, form, and meaning.

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