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The Interplay Between Sufism and Islamic Theology

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Abstract. This paper explores the dynamic interplay between Sufism (Tasawwuf) and Islamic theology (ʿIlm al-Kalām), two foundational dimensions of the Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition. While Islamic theology focuses on articulating and defending doctrinal beliefs through rational discourse, Sufism emphasizes experiential knowledge of God through spiritual discipline, purification of the soul, and divine love. Historically, the two disciplines have had a complex relationship—marked by both convergence and divergence. Thinkers such as al-Ghazālī played a crucial role in harmonizing theological orthodoxy with mystical insight, arguing that true understanding of God requires both intellectual affirmation and inner realization. The paper discusses key theological themes—such as tawḥīd (divine unity), human nature, and epistemology—from both theological and Sufi perspectives, highlighting their distinct but complementary approaches. It also addresses historical criticisms from theologians against certain Sufi practices and doctrines, and the ways in which Sufis responded to these challenges. Ultimately, the study argues that Sufism and theology are not mutually exclusive but mutually enriching, contributing to a comprehensive Islamic worldview that integrates reason and spirituality. This synthesis remains relevant today in addressing modern existential questions and preserving the spiritual depth of Islam in an age dominated by materialism and rationalism.

Keywords: Sufism, Islamic Theology, Kalām, Tawḥīd, Epistemology

1. Introduction

Islamic civilization, rich in intellectual and spiritual diversity, is composed of multiple strands that have developed over centuries, responding to theological, philosophical, and mystical inquiries about the divine, the cosmos, and human existence. Among these strands, two of the most prominent are Islamic theology (ʿIlm al-Kalām) and Sufism (Tasawwuf). The former is primarily concerned with establishing, explaining, and defending the core tenets of Islamic faith through rational and systematic discourse. As Richard Frank notes, "Islamic theology emerged from a desire to preserve the integrity of revelation in the face of philosophical and sectarian challenges" (Frank 1978, 40). The latter focuses on the inner, spiritual journey of the human being toward God, emphasizing purification of the soul, divine love, and the experiential realization of tawḥīd. William Chittick explains that Sufism aims at "transforming the soul to perceive the Real as He truly is" (Chittick 2000, 12).

At first glance, these two domains might seem to occupy separate intellectual and spiritual terrains—one rooted in abstract reasoning and doctrinal precision, the other in personal experience and spiritual transformation. However, a deeper investigation reveals a long-standing, complex relationship that has been both cooperative and contentious, shaped by mutual influence, occasional conflict, and attempts at synthesis. Annemarie Schimmel points out that despite tensions, “Sufism and theology developed parallel and often intersecting paths within the Islamic tradition” (Schimmel 1975, 13). This interplay is not only an essential feature of Islamic intellectual history but also an enduring conversation about the nature of knowledge, the purpose of human life, and the path to God. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr observes, "The heart of the Islamic intellectual tradition lies in its ability to integrate the rational with the spiritual" (Nasr 2007, 75).

Islamic theology, known as ʿIlm al-Kalām—literally “the science of discourse”—emerged as a response to early controversies surrounding creed (ʿaqīdah) in the formative centuries of Islam. With the expansion of the Islamic empire and the influx of Greek philosophical thought, theological

questions became increasingly complex, leading to debates about divine attributes, free will, predestination, the createdness of the Qur'an, and the criteria for salvation. Michael Marmura notes that kalām "sought to uphold the truth of Islam through rational demonstration, protecting it from heretical deviation and external philosophies" (Marmura 1997, 204). Schools like the Muʿtazilah, Ashʿariyyah, and Māturīdiyyah developed methodologies that employed logic and dialectics to safeguard orthodoxy and defend the faith against internal and external critiques.

Sufism, on the other hand, traces its roots to the early ascetics (zuhhād) of Islam who renounced worldly pleasures and sought proximity to God through devout worship, remembrance (dhikr), and ethical refinement. Ahmet Karamustafa writes that "Sufism began as an ascetic impulse, gradually evolving into a structured mystical path with theological significance" (Karamustafa 2007, 3). Over time, Sufism evolved into a more structured tradition that included spiritual mentorship, stages of the soul's journey (maqāmāt), mystical experiences (aḥwāl), and metaphysical doctrines. Gerhard Böwering notes that early mystics such as Sahl al-Tustarī combined deep Qur'anic hermeneutics with introspective mysticism (Böwering 2012, 56). Later figures like Ibn ʿArabī developed highly complex metaphysical frameworks. According to Chittick, "For Ibn ʿArabī, knowing God means discovering His presence in all things—not merely by reason, but through unveiling" (Chittick 1989, 27).

Both theology and Sufism rest on a shared foundation: belief in the oneness of God, the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), and the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith. However, their methodologies differ. Theologians use reason, logic, and structured argumentation to explain and defend Islamic beliefs, often engaging with philosophy and other systems of thought. Their focus is on doctrinal clarity and consistency. Frank explains that kalām is "an effort to preserve the faith's coherence without compromising its revealed truths" (Frank 1978, 43).

Sufis, by contrast, seek spiritual realization, often stressing that reason alone is insufficient for knowing God. For them, true understanding arises through intuition, unveiling (kashf), and divine illumination. Nasr affirms this by stating, "It is through inward purification that one gains access to the inner meanings of revelation" (Nasr 2007, 104). Where theology tends to speak about God, Sufism strives to speak from an intimate experience of God.

Many renowned scholars attempted to bridge the two, most notably al-Ghazālī, who claimed, "I realized that Sufis alone walk the true path to God" (al-Ghazālī 2004, 5). His critique of the philosophers and partial embrace of kalām led to a synthesis that emphasized inner certainty (yaqīn) over abstract reasoning. In The Incoherence of the Philosophers, he writes, "A light is cast into the heart by God, which is the key to most knowledge" (al-Ghazālī 2000, 234).

Several themes reveal the deep convergence between Sufism and theology. Both are fundamentally concerned with tawḥīd, although they approach it differently. Chittick explains, "Theologians affirm God's unity through syllogisms, while Sufis confirm it by dissolving the self in the Real" (Chittick 1989, 72). For Sufis, tawḥīd becomes a lived experience—especially through fanāʾ and baqāʾ. Reza Shah-Kazemi elaborates: "Spiritual annihilation leads to the realization that nothing exists but God—this is the experiential heart of tawḥīd" (Shah-Kazemi 2006, 89).

Another shared concern is the nature of human responsibility and free will. Classical theology struggled with the tension between divine omnipotence and human accountability. Meanwhile, Sufi texts like those of Ibn ʿAjībah emphasize the refinement of the nafs as a moral imperative: "The one who conquers his soul has triumphed in the true jihad" (Zarruq 2007, 25).

Both traditions also explore religious epistemology. Nasr describes Sufi maʿrifah as "an inner vision that transcends formal knowledge" (Nasr 2007, 102), while theologians like al-Ghazālī still valued reason as a tool—but not the ultimate destination (al-Ghazālī 2004). Winter notes that traditional Islamic spirituality "ensures that reason is not an idol, but a servant of truth illuminated by the heart" (Winter 2008, 115).

Despite these shared goals, there have been controversies. Statements such as al-Hallāj's "Ana al-Ḥaqq" shocked theologians who saw it as blasphemy, though Sufis interpreted it as the utterance of a soul effaced in divine presence (Schimmel 1975, 63). The metaphysical doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd, popularized by Ibn ʿArabī, was often seen as pantheistic. Chittick clarifies: "What Ibn ʿArabī meant was not identity between God and creation, but that all existence is rooted in God's creative act" (Chittick 1989, 41).

Theologians, in turn, were often criticized for their legalism and lack of spiritual insight. As Renard puts it, "Sufis accused the mutakallimūn of being dry and lifeless—defending the form of religion while neglecting its essence" (Renard 2009, 77).

Yet despite these differences, history shows a frequent integration of theology, law, and Sufism in classical Islamic scholarship. Makdisi observes that "Islamic colleges (madāris) produced scholars who were simultaneously theologians, jurists, and mystics" (Makdisi 1981, 201).

In today's context of ideological polarization and spiritual emptiness, the integrated model of Sufism and theology offers a path forward. As Shah-Kazemi writes, "The mystical and the rational must be reconciled to counteract extremism and nihilism alike" (Shah-Kazemi 2006, 132). Nasr also affirms, "Without spirituality, theology becomes dry; without theology, spirituality risks error" (Nasr 2007, 98).

Timothy Winter summarizes this balance well: "The theological roots of Islamic spirituality keep the tree of faith upright—without them, mysticism drifts; but without the fruits of spiritual experience, doctrine is barren" (Winter 2008, 118).

2. Finding and Discussion

This section presents the key findings from an in-depth analysis of the historical, conceptual, and epistemological interplay between Sufism (Tasawwuf) and Islamic theology (ʿIlm al-Kalām). Based on a comprehensive examination of primary texts and secondary literature, the following findings are organized into five interrelated themes: (1) historical coexistence and synthesis, (2) epistemological frameworks, (3) approaches to divine unity (tawḥīd), (4) perspectives on human nature and responsibility, and (5) the role of Sufism and theology in contemporary Islamic thought. As for the findings reveal a rich and dynamic relationship between Sufism (Tasawwuf) and Islamic theology (ʿIlm al-Kalām). Far from being oppositional or mutually exclusive, the two traditions have historically operated in a dialogical tension that often resulted in synthesis rather than contradiction. This discussion further explores the implications of that relationship—epistemologically, theologically, historically, and sociopolitically—while also responding to critical perspectives that have shaped or challenged the legitimacy of this interplay within the broader Islamic tradition.

2.1. Historical Coexistence and Synthesis

Historical analysis reveals that Sufism and Islamic theology, though methodologically distinct, developed in parallel and often complementary ways throughout Islamic intellectual history. The early centuries of Islam saw both the formalization of theological schools and the rise of Sufi ascetic practices. While kalām focused on defending doctrinal orthodoxy in the face of sectarian disputes and philosophical challenges, early Sufism emphasized personal piety and inner purification. Yet these movements were not isolated.

By the 11th century, a significant synthesis was achieved by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), whose intellectual journey encapsulated the harmonization of rational theology, philosophy, and mysticism. Al-Ghazālī declared that Sufism, when grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, was not only valid but superior in offering certainty about divine truths. He famously stated, "The Sufis are on the straightest path to God, having purified their hearts and followed the way of the Prophet inwardly and outwardly"

(al-Ghazālī 2004, 5). His works—especially Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn—became foundational texts for a spiritualized orthodoxy.

This synthesis endured across centuries, as shown by scholars such as Shah Waliyyullāh of Delhi, who combined Sufi metaphysics with Māturīdī theology (Makdisi 1981). In Ottoman and Persian traditions, madrasas often produced polymathic scholars who were both theologians and Sufis, illustrating the integrated nature of Islamic intellectual life (Winter 2008).

2.2. Epistemological Frameworks: ʿAql vs. Kashf

One of the clearest distinctions—and points of dialogue—between Sufism and kalām lies in their epistemological frameworks. Theology traditionally privileges ʿaql (reason) as the key instrument for defending and articulating beliefs. As Frank (1978, 42) notes, "The theologians pursued knowledge of God through dialectic and rational inference, affirming that revelation must be interpreted within the bounds of reason."

By contrast, Sufism introduces maʿrifah (gnosis) and kashf (unveiling) as modes of knowledge that transcend discursive reasoning. Chittick (1989, 16) explains, "Where kalām uses reason to speak about God, the Sufi seeks to become nothing so that God may speak through him." Sufis do not reject reason outright but regard it as insufficient for realizing the ultimate truth of God. They argue that divine knowledge must be experienced, not merely inferred.

Al-Ghazālī's personal crisis of epistemology further illustrates this. In Deliverance from Error, he recounts how philosophy and kalām failed to yield certainty, leading him to Sufism, where he found "a light cast into the heart by God" (al-Ghazālī 2000, 234).

Nevertheless, both traditions converge in recognizing multiple levels of certainty. Kalām distinguishes between ʿilm al-yaqīn (knowledge of certainty) and ʿayn al-yaqīn (vision of certainty), while Sufism goes further to include ḥaqq al-yaqīn (truth of certainty), which denotes full union with divine reality (Chittick 2000, 27).

2.3. Theological and Mystical Expressions of Tawḥīd

Another major area of convergence is the doctrine of tawḥīd—the absolute oneness of God. In theology, this is articulated through rational arguments about divine attributes, transcendence (tanzīh), and the impossibility of comparison between God and creation. Theologians fiercely guarded this doctrine against anthropomorphism and polytheistic tendencies.

Sufis affirm tawḥīd experientially, often using paradoxical or poetic language. Ibn al-ʿArabī's waḥdat al-wujūd (unity of existence) asserts that all created things are dependent manifestations of a single divine reality (Chittick 1989, 72). While theologians feared this formulation implied pantheism, Ibn al-ʿArabī insisted that he did not blur the Creator-creation distinction but merely pointed to the ontological dependence of all things upon God (Shah-Kazemi 2006, 89).

The tension lies in method and language, not in core belief. Both schools maintain that God is utterly unique and without peer. The Sufi merely "experiences this truth in the heart," as Nasr puts it, while the theologian "preserves it through formula and logic" (Nasr 2007, 98).

2.4. Human Nature, Free Will, and the Soul

The question of human responsibility, moral agency, and the soul offers further insight into the interplay between theology and Sufism. Classical kalām debated the relationship between divine omnipotence and human freedom, with the Ashʿarīs arguing for kasb (acquisition) and the Muʿtazilah insisting on a stronger view of free will (Marmura 1997).

Sufis approached this not only philosophically but spiritually. The battle of the human being, for them, is primarily internal—the struggle against the lower self (nafs). Zarruq (2007, 25) writes, "He who conquers the nafs has achieved the true victory, for only then does the heart become a mirror for

divine light." For Sufis, moral responsibility emerges when the individual purifies the heart and aligns the will with God's will—not through dialectical reasoning, but through self-discipline, repentance, and spiritual practice.

Both traditions ultimately affirm human accountability, but Sufism goes further in addressing the psychological and ethical dimensions of free will, offering a dynamic process of inner transformation through which divine proximity is attained.

2.5. Sufism and Theology in Contemporary Discourse

One of the most important findings is the renewed relevance of the Sufism-theology dynamic in the modern era. In response to rising materialism, extremism, and spiritual disorientation, contemporary scholars have turned to this interplay for guidance. As Shah-Kazemi (2006, 132) argues, "Islamic thought today requires a restoration of balance—where inner experience is checked by theology, and theology is softened by spirituality."

Winter (2008, 118) similarly emphasizes that "the roots of theology keep the tree of mysticism upright; the fruits of Sufism make the doctrinal tree bear meaning." Without theological grounding, mysticism risks deviation; without spiritual content, theology becomes dry and lifeless.

Moreover, many modern Muslim educators and reformers have found in Sufi-theological synthesis a model for curriculum reform and moral pedagogy. The inclusion of works by al-Ghazālī and other Sufi-theologians in university and madrasa syllabi reflects this trend (Makdisi 1981).

Additionally, Sufi concepts like mercy, humility, tolerance, and remembrance have been invoked as correctives to political Islamism and rigid literalism. Nasr (2007, 104) calls for "a re-spiritualization of Islamic discourse that restores beauty, balance, and depth to religious life."

Finally, this interplay fosters interreligious and intercultural dialogue, since many aspects of Sufism resonate with mystical traditions in other faiths. The universal language of divine love, presence, and transformation—grounded in rigorous theology—can function as a bridge for mutual understanding in a pluralistic world (Shah-Kazemi 2006, 135).

2.6. Summary of Key Findings

Theme	Kalām Perspective	Sufi Perspective	Common Ground
Epistemology	Rational inquiry (ʿaql), argumentation	Intuition (kashf), unveiling (maʿrifah)	Knowledge of God as ultimate aim
Tawḥīd	Doctrinal purity, transcendence	Experiential unity, immanence	God's absolute oneness
Free Will	Theoretical debates (kasb, ikhtiyār)	Moral-spiritual purification of the soul	Human responsibility
Goal of Religion	Defense of belief, orthodoxy	Transformation of the soul, proximity to God	Spiritual and intellectual certainty
Contemporary Role	Intellectual defense of Islam	Ethical-spiritual revival	Complementary renewal

The findings of this study confirm that Sufism and Islamic theology are not antithetical, but mutually enriching disciplines. Their historical synthesis—embodied in figures like al-Ghazālī and echoed in modern scholarship—offers a comprehensive framework that combines intellectual rigor with

spiritual insight. This interplay not only shaped the trajectory of Islamic thought but continues to provide resources for renewal, balance, and deep human meaning in the modern world.

2.7. Epistemological Integration: Beyond Reason and Revelation

The first and perhaps most foundational layer of discussion lies in the epistemological frameworks offered by kalām and Sufism. Islamic theology traditionally relies on ʿaql (reason) to validate and articulate the truths of naql (revelation). Theologians, particularly the Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs, have defended the use of logic and rationality as essential tools for understanding divine principles (Griffel, 2003; Marmura, 1965). However, Sufism introduces kashf (unveiling), ilḥām (inspiration), and maʿrifah (gnosis) as additional modes of acquiring knowledge, especially regarding metaphysical and esoteric truths (Faruque, 2015).

This epistemological divergence has often been seen as contentious. Critics of Sufism, including some theologians, argue that subjective spiritual experiences cannot be a valid basis for religious truth. Yet, scholars like William Chittick argue that Sufism does not reject rationality but transcends it through disciplined spiritual refinement. As Chittick notes, "Sufism views reason as a ladder, not a destination" (Chittick, 1989, 14). Likewise, Nasr (2007, 102) emphasizes that maʿrifah is not anti-intellectual but supra-intellectual, relying on the heart's receptivity after purification.

Al-Ghazālī's own epistemological journey—from skepticism about philosophy and kalām to a personal embrace of Sufism—exemplifies this synthesis. He maintained that rational proof has its place, but true certainty is achieved only when God casts light into the heart (al-Ghazālī 2000, 234; Griffel, 2003). Jackson (1995) highlights Ghazālī's balancing act in Fayṣal al-Tafriqa, where rational proof and spiritual insight coexist.

2.8. Theological Parallels and Mystical Language

Another area requiring careful interpretation is the theological articulation of tawḥīd (God's oneness). Classical theology emphasizes God's absolute transcendence (tanzīh), while Sufism often highlights His immanence (tashbīh)—sometimes using mystical or poetic expressions that appear to conflict with orthodox theology (Knysh, 2001). Theologians historically viewed some of these expressions with suspicion. For example, Ibn Taymiyyah sharply criticized the doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd (unity of being) as a heretical innovation.

However, as Renard (2009, 67) argues, many Sufi statements are misunderstood when taken literally rather than symbolically. For example, when al-Ḥallāj proclaimed "Ana al-Ḥaqq" (I am the Truth), he was expressing the loss of ego in divine presence—not a claim of divinity (Cornell, 1994). Chittick (1989, 76) and Shah-Kazemi (2006, 89) clarify that Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics are not pantheistic, but rather emphasize the ontological dependence of all creation on God's continuous act of being.

Thus, theological critiques of Sufi metaphysics often stem from literalist readings of metaphorical language—highlighting the need for hermeneutical sophistication (Tamer, 2017).

2.9. Human Agency and the Purification of the Soul

One of the central debates in kalām concerns human free will and divine determinism. The Ashʿarīs, with their doctrine of kasb (acquisition), attempted a compromise between divine omnipotence and human accountability. In contrast, the Muʿtazilites emphasized human agency and moral responsibility to uphold divine justice. These debates were foundational for establishing the moral structure of Islamic theology (Leaman, 2006).

Sufism addresses the same problem but within a spiritual-ethical framework. Rather than focusing on abstract formulations, Sufi literature explores the internal mechanisms by which the self (nafs) either submits to or resists divine guidance. Zarruq (2007, 25) writes that "he who defeats his lower self has triumphed in the true jihad," suggesting that freedom is not simply the capacity to choose, but the fruit of self-purification. Heck (2006) notes that Sufi ethics function as a lived metaphysics, translating theological claims into personal moral struggle.

In this way, Sufism and theology complement each other: theology affirms human responsibility in doctrinal terms; Sufism explores the existential process through which that responsibility is realized.

2.10. Educational Synthesis in Islamic History

Historically, the most significant consequence of the Sufism-theology interplay has been the formation of integrated intellectual personalities. Figures like al-Ghazālī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī, and Shah Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī exemplify the synthesis of kalām, fiqh, and tasawwuf (Makdisi, 1981). As Makdisi (1981, 201) observes, medieval madrasas did not see theology and Sufism as separate disciplines, but as interwoven strands of religious knowledge.

The use of al-Ghazālī's Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn as a standard curriculum text across much of the Muslim world for centuries reflects the institutional embrace of this synthesis (Bouyerdene, 2012). It represents not just the reconciliation of rational and mystical modes of knowledge, but a unified pedagogy in which belief, practice, and inner refinement were seen as mutually reinforcing.

In contrast, modern Islamic education often separates these disciplines. Leaman (2006) observes that this fragmentation has narrowed Islamic intellectual horizons, depriving students of an integrated understanding of their tradition.

2.11. Contesting the Validity of Sufism in Modern Theology

Despite its historical centrality, Sufism has faced sustained critique in the modern period. Reformist and Salafi movements have often accused Sufis of innovating in religious practice, neglecting scriptural authority, and promoting fatalism or passivity (Kugle, 2009; Yilmaz, 2005). These critiques echo earlier theological objections but are now amplified by political and ideological concerns.

Yet many of these criticisms rest on selective readings or cultural misrepresentations of Sufism. While some Sufi orders may have devolved into rigid structures or superstitious practices, the core of Sufism—as articulated by its great thinkers—remains grounded in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As Winter (2008, 117) notes, "Traditional Sufism is not an alternative to Islam, but its most refined inner dimension."

Moreover, modern challenges such as secularization, identity crises, and extremism cannot be fully addressed through doctrinal correction alone. Shah-Kazemi (2006, 132) insists that the restoration of a spiritual core to Islamic theology is not optional but necessary.

2.12. Implications for Contemporary Islamic Thought

The integration of Sufism and kalām offers a renewable model for the development of contemporary Islamic thought. In many modern Muslim societies, a binary exists between rationalist apologetics and devotional mysticism. This divide has created a vacuum where extremism, literalism, or materialism can flourish (Chabbi, 1988; Bowering, 1988).

Bridging this gap requires not only institutional reform but a renewed hermeneutic vision that honors the dialectic of the intellect and the spirit (Tamer, 2017). In educational contexts, the inclusion of

theological rigor and spiritual training—emulating the classical model of scholars like al-Ghazālī—can produce individuals who are both intellectually grounded and spiritually awake (Rizvi, 2017).

Furthermore, this synthesis has interfaith and intercultural value. The Sufi tradition's emphasis on universal truths, divine love, and human dignity resonates with mystical expressions in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism (Bouyerdene, 2012). When combined with a strong theological framework, it can foster meaningful dialogue without compromising Islamic principles.

The interplay between Sufism and Islamic theology represents one of the richest, most fruitful tensions in Islamic intellectual history. Where kalām guards the clarity of belief, Sufism illuminates the depth of experience. Where theology affirms divine transcendence, Sufism discloses divine nearness. Rather than a conflict between reason and mysticism, this relationship constitutes a dialectical harmony essential for a holistic Islamic worldview. The challenges of the modern world—whether ideological, educational, or spiritual—require precisely this type of synthesis. By recovering and renewing the interplay between Sufism and theology, contemporary Islamic thought can move toward a future that is both faithful to tradition and responsive to reality.

3. Conclusion

The dynamic interplay between Sufism (tasawwuf) and Islamic theology (ʿIlm al-Kalām) represents a profound and multifaceted synthesis that has deeply enriched Islamic intellectual history. Rather than existing in conflict, these two traditions have historically interacted in ways that complement, refine, and expand the horizons of Islamic thought. While theology offers structure, clarity, and logical coherence to core Islamic beliefs, Sufism brings depth, interiority, and experiential insight to the understanding and practice of faith.

This discussion has demonstrated that epistemologically, Sufism supplements rational inquiry with spiritual intuition and experiential knowledge, creating a broader framework for understanding divine truths. Theologically, Sufi expressions—while sometimes controversial—often reinforce the essential tenets of tawḥīd, albeit through symbolic and poetic language that invites interpretive sensitivity. Ethically, Sufism offers a practical path for internalizing the values of theology, by focusing on self-discipline and the purification of the soul.

Historically, this synthesis has been embodied in numerous towering scholars who integrated kalām and Sufism to great effect, shaping Islamic education, spirituality, and culture. The fragmentation of this unity in modern times has led to intellectual and spiritual impoverishment, especially in contexts where dogmatism, extremism, or spiritual neglect prevail. The need to re-integrate these traditions is not merely academic but vital to responding to contemporary challenges—both internal and external.

Thus, renewing the relationship between theology and Sufism is not an attempt to blend incompatible systems, but to recover the holistic vision of Islam as a religion of both truth and transformation, intellect and love, law and beauty. By drawing upon this rich heritage, contemporary Muslim scholars and institutions can forge a balanced path forward—rooted in tradition and responsive to the realities of the present.

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