

Epicurean Perspectives on Cultural Conflict

Post by “Daniel” of March 27, 2019 at 12:22 PM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

As an Epicurean, I'd have gladly lived in the Islamic world over Judeo-Christian world.



I couldn't disagree more with you on this point, Oscar.

All three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) have had to confront the ideas of Ancient Greece. Averroes tried to integrate Aristotle with Islam. Maimonides tried to integrate Aristotle with Judaism. Aquinas tried to integrate Aristotle with Christianity. All necessarily failed. Rationality cannot be integrated with faith; nor reason with anti-reason; nor, in philosophy, fact with fantasy.

In conquering parts of the Byzantine Empire, Arabs encountered Greek thought. Muslim scholars studied and were fascinated by the writings of Aristotle and translated them into Arabic. Avicenna and Averroes were superlative Aristotle scholars. The Arabs learned the method of observation-based rationality and, in a true golden age, made superb contributions to medicine, astronomy, mathematics, literature, and other fields. But it did not last. Due to the influence of Al-Ghazali and other reason-rejecting theologians, as well as a fundamentalism firmly entrenched in Islamic culture from its outset, faith ultimately crushed freedom of thought. Under orthodox Islam, the books of Avicenna, Averroes, and other great thinkers were burned in the 12th century. For eight hundred years since, the Islamic world has wallowed in a dark age.

Renan was the first to establish a connection between religion and ethno-geographical origin. He contrasted a 'psyche of the desert' found among Semites—'the desert is monotheistic'—with a 'psyche of the forest,' characteristic of Indo-Europeans whose polytheism appears to be modelled on a changing nature and a diversity of seasons. He observed that the intolerance of Semitic people is an inevitable consequence of their monotheism. Indo-European peoples, before their conversion to Semitic ideas, never regarded their religion as absolute truth. This is why there is found among these peoples 'a freedom of thought, a spirit of critical inquiry, and individual research.'