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Ibn al-'arabī's concept of dreams

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Abstract

As a universally experienced phenomenon which transcends time, place and people the dream has perplexed humankind over the ages. Much thought and research have gone into discovering its nature and causes, the role it plays in societies as well as interpreting its content. The same preoccupation with it can be said to be found among Muslims who view it as a rich source of knowledge. The article looks at one of the greatest Muslim sages Ibn al-'Arabī's contribution to understanding the dream (ru'yā) which he conceived as an imaginal (mithāl; khayāl) reality manifested in both the objective and subjective realms of existence (wujūd) and hence has an intermediate (barzakh) nature. His conception of dreams is thus grounded in metaphysics. It is based on the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as veritable sources and is considered to be one of the most profound ever expounded on the subject. It contrasts with the modern Western perspective which focuses on the psychological, sociological and historical aspects of the phenomenon. It brings into question the weakening power of the human faculty of imagination (khayāl) in the modern era as a source of knowledge of the metaphysical and spiritual realms, represented by symbols and images (amthāl) in the cosmos, the world of Images (ālam al-mithāl) and the human soul. Hence, the science of the interpretation of dreams (ta'bīr) is significant in revealing

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