



Seminar

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The Four Stages of the Mystical Journey in the Sufism of Ibn al-Arabi and His School

Tuesday, 28 May, 2019, 2:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
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S W E D I S H
C O L L E G I U M
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ABOUT SALMAN BASHIER

Salman Bashier was born in 1964 in Israel. He studied sociology and philosophy at the University of Haifa and received a master's degree in philosophy with a thesis on the concept of contradiction in Kant and Hegel. In 1994 Bashier was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to begin his doctoral studies at the University of Utah. He graduated in 2000 from the Middle East Center with a dissertation that was published in 2004 under the title *Ibn al-'Arabi's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World* and is considered one of the influential works in the study of Ibn al-'Arabi, the greatest of Islamic mystics (d. 1240).

Bashier was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, where he served as a visiting lecturer in addition to his work as a visiting lecturer at the University of Haifa. In 2007 he was awarded a one-year fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, followed by a five-year Polonsky Fellowship at Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. Bashier is the author of *The Story of Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Tufayl, Ibn al-'Arabi, and Others on the Limit between Naturalism and Traditionalism* (2011) and *Ibn al-'Arabi and Averroes on Imagination, Conjunction, and Knowledge of the Self* (2017, in Arabic). He is currently working on his new project: "An Islamic Account of the Four Stages of the Philosophical-Mystical Journey: Ibn al-'Arabi's School and the Completion of the Platonic Turn in Islamic Thought." The project presents a fully articulated and highly innovative interpretation of Plato's Allegory of the Cave from a liminal mystico-philosophical point of view, an interpretation Bashier believes is greatly significant for revealing an important layer of Islamic intellectuality and also contributes to understanding our contemporary philosophical investigations.

ABSTRACT

Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi, the greatest of Islamic Sufis, was born in Murcia (Spain) in 1165 and died in Damascus in 1240. He is the author of the encyclopaedic *Meccan Revelations and Ringstones of Wisdom* on which over a hundred commentaries have been written over the centuries. When he was thirty years old he wrote a short book entitled *The Contemplations of the Holy Mysteries* in which he provided his account of the stages of the mystical journey and in which he sought to epitomize a long history of Sufi thought on the theme of the grades of illumination and the attainment of mystical perfection. In doing this he adopted the model for the stages of the journey of the ninth-century Sufi al-Junayd who wrote only a small number of short and obscure treatises but provided in his writings a map for travelers in the Way to follow in their explorations. Between al-Junayd and Ibn al-Arabi Sufis were involved in a long and tiring struggle to attain social recognition and advance their realization of *walaya*, which is sainthood or friendship with the Reality. To enhance that realization they had drawn maps which describe their spiritual development and ascent in the journey. To read the maps and advance in the journey, the Sufi must be a lover of wisdom because only lovers have the understanding required for this kind of reading; non-lovers no matter how clever are not on this map. But there are types of lovers, and although all of them arrive at the Reality: some of them hardly arrive, some arrive but are lost in Her so that they do not return, some return but cannot separate themselves from Her so that their journey is complete but not perfect, and some return to themselves and their journey is complete and perfect. I chose the theme of love for presenting the Sufi journey. There are other ways of presenting it but this is the one which I thought is most appropriate for the occasion.