

- ON -  
AVICENNA'S TA<sup>c</sup> BĪR AL-RU<sup>3</sup> YĀ

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- by -  
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Thesis Submitted for Ph.D.

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### Introduction

Much study has been devoted to dreams since ancient times, so that a work on such a subject requires no apology.

This applies with special significance to Avicenna's *Ta'bir al-Ru'yā*, because its author is a famous philosopher and physician in Islam, and the 11th century in which he lived represents the climax of mediaeval thought.

*Ta'bir al-Ru'yā* is a brief study of dreams from the Greek and Arab points of view. It was necessary, in order to find out its source and influence, to see what the Greek and Arab authorities themselves said about the subject.

We must begin with Aristotle for two reasons; the first is that mediaeval thinkers in general and Avicenna in particular were students of this philosopher (Hughes, dictionary of Islam, p.452, London 1935), and the second is that Aristotle was the first philosopher who studied dreams from the scientific point of view (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.5, p.28).

From Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) until IBN Khaldūn (1332-1406) a period which covers about 1800 years, one observes the development of three schools of thought: those who attributed dreams to God (Ikhwan al-Safa, al-Ghazālī, and IBN Malkā), those who attributed them to nature (Aristotle), and those who believed them to result from the power of the human soul (Avicenna, al-Fārābī, IBN Rushd and IBN Khaldūn).



Almost all agreed that some dreams are merely the reflection of the physical environment while some are veridical. They differed only over the cause of veridical dreams, whether God, man, or coincidence.

What strikes one is that, while inquiring into dreams, the investigators often transferred the discussion into other subjects, such as revelation, knowledge, miracles, etc. They discussed whether the process of knowledge is merely "relative", or fills the soul with something poured in from outside, or is something produced out of the soul itself. Is there a source beyond the intellect from which man may acquire knowledge? Are miracles performed by God or by man? These different subjects which have been dragged in make one wonder whether they are unrelated to dreams, as they appear, or whether on close inspection they have some bearing on the subject.

I have the impression that these inquiries into dreams were not entirely objective and unbiassed. The investigators appear to have had preconceived ideas on the subject and their decisions were guided by those beliefs and philosophies which they already held. If one tries to pass beyond their words he will find that they held two attitudes. Some saw life in the universe subject to the law of "cause and effect", everything developing itself from stage to stage, and man, who represents the highest stage in this development, by means of his spiritual



power, achieving miracles and penetrating the future. Others believed that the universe is governed by a dictator whose power is unlimited and unbounded by law. He has complete freedom of action, works miracles, reveals the future and uses men like puppets. These two attitudes of man towards the universe, two diametrically opposite philosophies, run together in dream books, although sometimes beneath the surface.

It was for this reason that these different subjects have been drawn into dream books. Far from being separated, they are closely connected with each other on the one hand and with dreams on the other. Man's conceptions of revelation, dreams, knowledge and miracles depend on what he thinks of the universe, whether it is governed by law or by a dictator, whether man's position is superior or inferior. If one believes that man is superior, then one must believe that prophecy and miracles can be achieved by man.

It was not without reason that when the Greeks classified dreams, they started with the dream about man, his affairs, and what is related to him, while the Arabs began with those about God, the angels and the prophets. (The Ms. Ch. 39). The one pictured the world as a theatre in which "man" is the actor, and the other viewed it as entirely subject to God.

The history of dream books, in fact, is the history of the struggle between these two movements. One can easily see how



the Greek elements which were in conflict with Islam (as interpreted by orthodox Muslims), passed into the hands of Avicenna, who tried to compromise between them, and how he was attacked by orthodox Muslims. This conflict forced him sometimes to take refuge in obscurity of diction and sometimes in mysticism. For this reason, care must be taken in the interpretation of some words used by Avicenna, such as "God", "creation", "divine message". Maybe he did not think of the usual meaning of these words.

The method I have adopted is to present Avicenna's view and other philosophers' separately, followed by my comment.

The reader will find in Chapters 10, 12 and 15 and in the comments on Chapters 9, 11, 20, 31, 34, 44, 45, 46 and 47 some original ideas and criticism.

In conclusion, I would like to make it clear that (a) Avicenna represents the school which accepted the prophetic character of dreams through the power of the soul; (b) he adopted this theory, not simply because it is sound and logical, but also, and chiefly, because it is the only possible solution to the problem of dreams in a world in which everything exists for a purpose; (c) being a poet, Avicenna felt that neither philosophy nor science could solve the problem of life and that one has to use his imagination.



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Chapter 1.

This work is based on Avicenna's Ta<sup>c</sup>bir al-Ru<sup>2</sup>yā, a Ms. This Ms. consists of 208 pages. Each page contains twelve lines, written in naskhi. It was copied in the fifth of Jumādā I, 1107 A.H (259 years ago) by <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Tūnī (Tūn is a city in Persia).(1)

The introduction occupies nearly four pages. Then comes the list of 127 chapters. The first 38 deal with the theory of dreams, classification and the general method of interpretation. The rest are concerned with dreams individually. The title of each chapter is written in red, followed by a brief synopsis of the subject matter of the chapter, emphasized by a red line.

The following is the introduction of the Ms:

"In the Name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate.

The chief elder, Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī Ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd Allāh Ibn Sīnā, may God have mercy upon his dear Soul, saith:

The water from the valley flows to the sea not because there is no water in it, nor because the sea is in need of more water, nor to give it qualities which it has not. But because it is natural for scattered waters to unite with each other just as parts merge into a whole and strangers yearn towards their home lands. The reason is that everything gathers strength from unity with its like and it is able to retain its character-

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(1) Yaqut al-Hamawi, Mu<sup>c</sup>jam al-Buldan, Vol.II, p.435(Cairo 1906)



istic in its natural place.

The object in writing this book is to render his High Court a service. It is not intended to increase his knowledge, wisdom, because he is not lacking in these as his High Court is a source of scattered virtues and a centre of gathering them. But because wisdom suits only the wise, delicate morsels are only for discerning palates, wearing apparel is enhanced when adorning beautiful women, and precious stones must be relinquished only to those who appreciate their rarity and value. So it is my duty to render the service to his High Court by dedicating this work in order to do knowledge justice by returning it to its source and placing it under his guidance.

There are many books written by ancient and modern, Greeks and Arabs, on the subject of dreams. It is very difficult to become acquainted with all of them and to understand them and to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Therefore, we decided to go through them and to peruse them carefully for every detail of the subject to offer and prove in this book what was right in them and cast away superstitious and unnecessary material and add to them my experience on the subject, quoting the choice of the writings of the wise. Then we shall discuss the obscure topics that the ancients did not explain, such as the definition of sleep, why do animals sleep, what does man see in his sleep and how he sees them, what are the energies he needs for his dream, and which faculty is



exercised in dreaming, and through what medium, what are the different kinds of dream, what made them so differ, and how each is interpreted, and how are we guided into each kind; and for its interpretation we shall employ the general rules in the explanation of the obscure topics.

Now we come to describe in detail and illustrate the different ways of interpreting dreams; briefly outline what an interpreter of dreams needs to know; quoting some of the wise and renowned sages' experiences, and adding to all that what experiences I had in this sphere. May this book be the fruit of all the volumes written in this subject. With the Blessing of God, the best guidance and support, we shall begin by giving a brief index of all the chapters of this book so that it will be easier for the reader to follow."

There are many indications that the scribe was Persian, since he made remarks and errors common to Persians when writing Arabic. For example, he was unable to differentiate between the masculine and feminine gender.(1) He emphasized both the subject and object of sentences by writing "subject" and "object" beneath each appropriately.(2) He connected the noun and pronoun by means of identical symbols such as a figure or letter,(3) and he made many errors in spelling.(4)

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(1) Ms. Ch. 1, 14, 16.

(2) Ms. Ch. 1.

(3) Ms. Ch. 4.

(4) Ms. Ch. 1, 2.



In spite of the strong legible handwriting of the scribe, there are many other mistakes which show his ignorance of Arabic. It seems that some of these mistakes were corrected by one with a better knowledge of Arabic and a worse handwriting (1) There is also evidence of a third person translating some of the Arabic words into Persian and making some comments. (2)

The Ms. came into the possession of three men who have written their names on the title page. The first was Ahmad Chulām who quoted Hāfiz of Shirās:

الأيا لها الساتى  
 كه عشق آسان نمود اول  
 أدركأساً وناولها  
 ولى افتاد مشكلها

and the following phrase:

واياكم والتفرق فاذا تزلتم فانزلوا جميعاً  
 واذا غشيتكم الليل فاجعلوا الرياح كفة ولا تدفوا النوم الا غراراً مضمضة

The second was Muhammad 'alī Ibn Hājjī Husain Walī al-Karbala'ī. The third was Muhammad Husain who acquired the Ms. in 1327 A.H.

There are two other copies of this Ms. The first one was found in Rampur (India) (3) and the second in Persia. (4)

IBN Abī Usaibi'ah (5) called Avicenna's book Ta'wil al-

(1) Ms. Ch. 3, 4, 5, 6.

(2) Ms. Ch. 1, 4, 8.

(3) Brockelmann, the History of Arabic Literature, 3. Vol. I, p. 821 (Leiden 1937-1942).

(4) Y. Etessamy Vol. II, p. 478, Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts (Teheran 1933).

(5) 'Uyūn al-Anbā Fī Tabaqāt al-Atibbā, Vol. II, p. 20 (Cairo 1882).



ru'yā instead of Ta<sup>c</sup> bīr al-ru'yā. The words Ta<sup>w</sup>īl and Ta<sup>c</sup> bīr are synonymous. Both occur in dream books and are interchangeable. Some authors (among them Avicenna), however, distinguished between them. They considered that the word Ta<sup>w</sup>īl applied only to revelation, while the word Ta<sup>c</sup> bīr was restricted to dreams.(1) A similar differentiation was made by Avicenna between the word "Ru'yā" and the word "hulm". He applied the first only to veridical dreams.

Al-Khūnsārī (2) said: "Avicenna made a remarkable study of dreams. The author of Al-Ta<sup>c</sup> bīr al-Qādirī often quoted him. Avicenna wrote a large book in which he discussed the subject from the point of view of both Greek and Arab. He dedicated it to one of the princes of his time, probably 'Alā al-Dawlah". The Book Al-Ta<sup>c</sup> bīr al-Qādirī to which Al-Khūnsārī referred was composed for the Caliph Al-Qādir Billāh (1006) by Abū Sa<sup>c</sup>d Nasr Ibn Ya<sup>c</sup>qūb al-Dīnawarī.(3)

Apart from all external evidence, the book resembles other work of Avicenna. It was written by a man of encyclopaedic mind, "of clear and comprehensive style, and of a philosophy based on Aristotle."(4)

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- (1) Avicenna, Risālah Fī Al-Fī<sup>c</sup>l Wal-Infī<sup>c</sup>āl Wa Aqsāmihimā, p.6 (Hyderabad Deccan 1353 A.H).  
 (2) Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, p.244 (Teheran 1888).  
 (3) Hājji Khalīfah, Vol.1, p.417 (Constantinople 1941).  
 (4) Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Vol.1, p.709 (London 1931).



The final point to be discussed is

^ The prince to whom the work was dedicated. This point, apart from its historical significance, shows a stage in the development of Avicenna's philosophy. Avicenna in his introduction to the work, gave a description of the court of the prince to whom this book was dedicated, praising him for his wisdom and devotion to learning. These sentences eulogising the person to whom the work was dedicated were common to mediaeval authors, especially when the person concerned might give influential support to art.

The fact that Avicenna was in contact with many princes complicates the matter. At Bukhārā he was with Nūh Ibn Mansūr, at Khawārazm with ʿAlī Ibn Maʾmūn, at Khurāsān with Shams al-Maʿālī, at Ard al-Jabal with the Buwaihid princes, Majd al-Dawlah, Shams al-Dawlah, Tāj al-Dawlah and ʿAlā al-Dawlah.

In the eleventh chapter of the work the death of Fakhr al-Dawlah (387 A.H) is mentioned. This implies that the work was written while Avicenna was with the Buwaihids at Ard al-jabal.

Abū ʿubaid al-Jūzajānī, Avicenna's pupil, who wrote the biography of his master, gave a list of some of Avicenna's works. He ended his list by saying: "The rest of Avicenna's works were composed at Ard al-jabal." (1) This also indicates that this work was written at Ard al-jabal. This, however, does not solve the problem because Ard al-jabal (2) is a very large area in which Avicenna was in contact with more than one prince.

(1) Ibn Abī Usāibī ʿah, ʿuyūn al-Anbā Fī Tabaqāt al-Atibbā , Vol.II, p.5 (Cairo 1882).

(2) Ibn Aiyūb, Taqwīm al-Buldān, p.408 (Paris 1840).



Al-Khūnsārī (1) was the only authority who identified the prince with <sup>c</sup>Alā al-Dawlah, though he did not produce reasons for his statement. The following points support his view:

(i) Avicenna's description of the court of the prince to whom he dedicated the work is like that of <sup>c</sup>Alā al-Dawlah, as depicted by Ibn Abī Usaibi<sup>c</sup>ah in <sup>c</sup>Uyūn al-Anbā .(2).

(ii) <sup>c</sup>Alā al-Dawlah was the last prince with whom Avicenna was in close contact. Since the perfection of the work and its style suggests that it was composed in a later period of Avicenna's life, it may have been dedicated to <sup>c</sup>Alā al-Dawlah.

(iii) The last sentence of the work is almost identical with that in which Avicenna dedicated "Dānish nāmah <sup>c</sup>alā 'ī"(3) to <sup>c</sup>Alā al-Dawlah.

### Chapter 2

The human body, its parts, powers and souls.(4)

Man is not simple ( معنی واحد ) He is composed of two substances, ( جوهرین ) soul and body. The soul is like a directing force ( الموضوع ) and the body like an instrument which is utilized by the soul for its different purposes. The

(1) Rawdāt al-Jannāt, p.244 (Teheran 1888).

(2) Vol.2, p.6 (Cairo 1882).

(3) p.161 (Teheran 1315 A.H).

(4) Ms. Ch. 1.



body, however, is not an instrument which is entirely foreign to the soul, as the sword to the fighter. In man the soul and the body are united. The soul builds up the body, supports its life, and uses it for its needs.

This body consists of many parts and different powers. These parts are of two kinds, organs (الاعضاء الآلية) such as the head and legs, and the parts which are not organs (الاعضاء المتشابهة) such as the veins, nerves and muscles. The former are composed of the latter.

There are four natural powers (قوى طبيعية) in the body, heat, moisture, coldness and dryness, and four humours (أربعة أخلاط) the blood, the bile, the phlegm and the black bile. These four humours are the substance of the body and what enable it to exist, (قوام)

There are also three souls (أرواح) in three different parts of the body:

- (i) The vegetal soul (الروح النباتي) is situated in the liver. Its function is to transform food through the veins and build up the human body.
- (ii) The animal soul (الروح الحيواني) is situated in the heart. Its function is to initiate life in the human body through the arteries.
- (iii) The human soul (الروح البشري) inhabits the brain and distributes sensation by means of the nerves over the whole body.



The body has three spirits ( نفوس ) which correspond to the three souls. The relation between the spirit and the soul is like that of form to matter.

(i) The natural spirit ( النفس الطبيعية ) which is in the liver.  
 (ii) The animal spirit ( النفس الحيوانية ) which is in the heart.  
 (iii) The controlling ( النفس المدبرة ) spirit, or the sensitive ( الحساسة ) spirit which is in the brain. This spirit is sub-divided into three powers:

(i) The impelling power ( القوة المحركة ) which is responsible for voluntary movement in the body.

(ii) The perceptive power ( القوة المدركة ) which directs the five external senses. These senses are the spies and the servants of this power.

(iii) The intellectual power ( القوة العقلية ) This power is also sub-divided into three:

(i) ( القوة المحيطة ) is that which pictures the sensible objects and retains their forms, even after they have disappeared.

(ii) ( القوة المفكرة ) is that which perceives the meaning of these forms and judges them.

(iii) ( القوة الحافظة ) is that which retains both forms and meaning.

The sensitive power is higher than both the natural and animal powers because the latter are only concerned with nutrition and creating life in the body. The intellect is the noblest part in man, since it is the only part which he does



not share with the vegetable and the animal.

(القوة المفكرة) is the noblest power among the three intellectual powers. In fact it is the only power which can justifiably be called "intellect", "reason", "mind", because of its superiority over the two others. That is why the philosophers said: "The intellect is a king and the body is his kingdom. The ideal society is that where the king is righteous and obeyed by his subjects and the ideal man is he who subjects his passions to his intellect."

**Comment:**

I. Avicenna believed that the soul is a reality and not merely a harmony of the elements. This theory had a great influence on ancient and mediaeval thinkers. In fact mankind as a whole held this theory from earliest times and it was left to the scientists of the nineteenth century to develop a philosophy which denies, or at least doubts, everything that cannot be seen with the eyes or touched with the hands.(1)

In the nineteenth century man was able to formulate a general theory of the universe. This theory, based on the mechanics of Galileo and Newton, pictured the universe as a vast machine and explained everything that happened in it in terms of the movements of pieces of matter. The explanation applied not

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(1) Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p.200 (London 1945).



only to all events that happened but to all that could happen, since any kind of event other than the movements of matter was, in the dominant contemporary scientific view, inconceivable. Owing to its experimental triumphs this hypothesis led increasing numbers of thoughtful people to accept materialism as a philosophy of life.(1)

The ancient view that the soul is the principle of life of the body, man's highest and noblest part, is no longer existant. From the standpoint of modern science, this conception of the soul is pure illusion. "When we speak of the immaterial", said a French writer, "it is obvious that we are speaking in a manner which is wholly devoid of meaning."(2)

Between these two extremes of ancient spiritualism and the materialism of the nineteenth century, evidence of a middle course is shown by the psychologists of the twentieth century, who admitted that there is justification for the old view of the soul as an objective reality.(3) Especially when we remember that Avicenna's conception of the soul, although sometimes expressed in a mystical way, i.e., Man's highest part, all he meant was that soul is merely a "power" or "energy". This is indicated by the fact that all the names given to the soul, its divisions and its faculties, include the word power.

(1) Joad, Guide to Modern Thought, p.29 (London 1947).

(2) Vulliamy, Man and the Atom, p.76 (London 1947).

(3) Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p.211 (London 1945).



II. Avicenna took the soul for granted, describing its divisions and functions without establishing its reality.

In his book "A Compendium on the Soul", (1) Avicenna said: "The most peculiar characteristics of spiritual properties are two - one of them is impulsion and the other perception. It is evident to us that motions over and above the natural motions - an example of natural motions is the sinking of the heavy, and the rising of the light - have moving causes which we call souls or spiritual powers, and that any body, in so far as it is perceptive, such perception by it cannot be ascribed to its body, except because of powers in it that are capable of perception". In Chapter three (2) of the same source, Avicenna established the fact that the soul does not originate out of a combination of the elements, but on the contrary comes upon them from outside.

These instances given by Avicenna are almost identical with those which Aristotle gave in his book "On The Soul". (3)

III. In the Ms. Avicenna divided the internal senses into three. In his book "A Compendium on the Soul" (4) he divided them into four powers.

(i) The picturing power.

(ii) The remembering preserving power.

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(1) P.21, translated from Arabic by Van Dyck (Verona, August 1906)

(2) P.31, ditto.

(3) P.43, translated by ~~W.S.~~ Hett (London 1935).

(4) P.46, translated by Van Dyck (Verona, 1906).



(iii) The imaginative power.

(iv) The conjecturing (surmising) power.

In his book Al-najāt(1) he considered them to be five:

(i) Composite sense (الحس المشترك)

(ii) Picturing (الخيال)

(iii) Imagining (المتخيلة) peculiar to animal and  
conjecturing (المنكرة) peculiar to humans.

(iv) Apprehending (الواهمة)

(v) Memory (الحافظة)

The composite sense is in the front ventricle of the front of the brain. It receives all the images passed to it from the five external senses, combining them into a single form. It functions during the waking state and during sleep.

The picturing faculty is in the back ventricle of the front portion of the brain. It retains the actual forms which the composite sense forwards to it. These forms remain even after the sensible objects have disappeared.

The imagination is in the middle ventricle of the brain. It combines and separates the forms which it receives from the picturing faculty. By this faculty the animal can imagine objects which it never perceived.

Apprehension is in the whole of the brain. It perceives the meaning of the sensible objects and helps to differentiate between right and wrong. It is a sort of analytic cogitation.

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(1) P.256 (Cairo 1331 A.H).



Memory is in the back ventricle of the brain. It retains and remembers the meanings of the sensible objects acquired by apprehension.

IV. In *Al-Ishārat wal-Tanbihāt*, (1) Avicenna explained why the faculties of the soul were created in different parts of the body.

V. As one studies the text, it becomes clear that the soul which stands in direct opposition to the body, passed through different stages. First it was associated with the air and food, then with the blood and finally with the intellect, which is the most divine thing in man, the most essentially human.

At the end of this chapter, Avicenna formed an analogy between the three divisions of the soul and the individuals, implying that there are three types of man, the lover of gain, the lover of honour, and the lover of wisdom. Then, he extended the analogy to the individual and society.

This tripartite division of the soul and the analogy between social and individual psychology bears a close relation to Plato. (2)

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(1) P.125 (Leyde 1892).

(2) Grube, *Plato's Thought*, p.130 (London 1935).



### Chapter 3

#### The Function of every Faculty of the Soul, Particularly Imagination.(1)

Imagination is distinguished by being more active than any other faculty of the soul. It can conceive of anything at any time and in any circumstance.

The external senses perceive a sensible object only when it is present, provided that it be in a special position. Sight, for example, sees an object if it be present and within the sphere of vision. If the object disappeared or if it removed far enough the sense could no longer perceive it. Imagination, however, perceives objects both present and absent, regardless of their position. In other words, this power works freely, unaffected by the limitation of space or time and unbounded by circumstances. Imagination in this respect differs from both the intellect and the memory. Mind cannot comprehend more than one object at one time, and it is beyond the power of memory also to recall the whole of the past. But all these activities can be exercised by the imagination.

Pictures represented by the senses are always true; they are real existence. But those represented by imagination may be false; they exist only in the realm of the imagination.

These false pictures do not correspond to external reality because they are impossible in themselves, or because they are

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(1) Ms. Ch. 2.



combinations which do not exist outside the mind, yet the elements of these false pictures must be real; they exist in ordinary life separately.

#### Chapter 4.

The nature of sleep, whether it belongs to the body or to the soul, and the reason why animals sleep.(1)

Sleep is a normal condition during which the bodily organs are at rest. Man is awake when his senses are awake, when he is conscious of movement either outside or inside himself. When his consciousness ceases, man is asleep. The waking state is positive and sleep is negative.

The necessity for animals to sleep is due to the way in which the soul and the body are related. Every animal is composed of soul and body. The soul is a directing force, while the body is its instrument. But the bodily organs cannot be permanently active, since they are living instruments; their energy and their power are limited. They function as long as they possess energy, but once this energy is run down, they are recharged with the energy which makes them function. Yet the energy of animals is not expended merely by direct acting, their energy is being taxed even while they are passive, for as long as they are awake, they are continually using up their

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(1) Ms. Ch. 3.



energy by seeing and hearing.

It is worthy of notice that the source of this energy is in food and the air. The faculty of digestion turns this food into blood. The fount of the blood is the heart, which distributes it to all parts of the body. When this energy reaches the parts of the body, it dissolves at once and requires constant replacement from its source.

From the foregoing we come to three conclusions. First, that sleep is negative. Secondly, it is peculiar to the body and not to the soul. Thirdly, animals have to sleep to recharge their energy expended during wakefulness.

**Comment:**

- I. Like Aristotle, Avicenna approached this subject from the point of view of a doctor. He stressed that sleep is part of nature's design to secure the life and health of the body.
- II. Avicenna considered that sleep is a phenomenon peculiar to animals, not vegetables.
- III. The three conclusions reached by Avicenna are almost identical with Aristotle's.(1)

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(1) On Sleep & Waking, p.313-315-339. Translated by Hett, (London 1935).



### Chapter 5.

Imagination functions more in sleep than in the waking state. (1)

As imagination functions independently of the body, it acts both during waking hours and sleep. In fact, it exercises its function more in sleep than in the waking state, since it is free from the influence of thought and the senses.

### Chapter 6.

Imagination sees things in different ways and combines pictures which have no reality. (2)

Because the senses and mind which direct imagination are only functioning during the waking state, imagination during sleep therefore becomes free. The pictures seen then by imagination are:

(I) Pictures perceived by the senses during the waking state and stored in the memory.

(ii) The ideas which occupied the dreamer's mind during the waking state.

(iii) The reflection of the four natural powers (القوى الطبيعية) which compose the body, heat, cold, moisture and dryness. When there is much heat in the body we dream of fire, when the body is cold we dream of snow, etc. Similarly, when the stomach is empty we dream of flying, when it is full, we

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(1) Ms. Ch. 4.

(2) Ms. Ch. 5.



dream of pressure by a heavy weight. The madman and those affected by fever see these pictures even during the waking state.

All these three pictures are the source of confused dreams.

### Chapter 7

Dreams originate from Divine Power, not from Man himself.(1)

- (i) During sleep, while the system is in a normal state, we see pictures with which we were never before acquainted.
- (ii) In wakefulness we meet the same, or similar things which we saw in the dream.
- (iii) There must be some power, therefore, which causes this picture to come in the dream.
- (iv) The cause might be attributed either to the dreamer himself, or to a power beyond the dreamer.
- (v) As these pictures have not arisen from any aspect of the internal or external life.
- (vi) They therefore must be caused by something beyond our power, which implies that the cause is divine power, since there is no power beyond man save God.

It is obvious that these pictures do not come from the senses and mind since these two are not functioning during sleep

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(1) Ms. Ch. 6.



Again, if these pictures are initiated from man himself then they should appear all the time or at definite periods.

All this goes to show that these pictures come from some outside power. All man does is to be receptive to these outside influences, that is why the dreamer should be in an harmonious condition, mentally, physically and in his environment; he should be free from fear, desire, etc., thus making him receptive of a clear picture.

The subject of these pictures must be either:

- (1) The future
- (ii) The present things unseen.

### Chapter 8

How and why does Divine Power send dreams to man in two different ways?(1)

From the above, it becomes clear that there is a kind of dream which originated from a power beyond man and not from:

- (1) his senses
- (ii) his mind
- (iii) the reflection of his body

This dream, however, is caused by:

- (1) man's ability to receive this message

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(1) Ms. Ch. 7.



(ii) a high power, higher than man himself,  
sends this message to man, revealing good news  
(الرؤيا للمبشرة) or warning of coming evil (الرؤيا للندرة)

This dream comes in two different ways, clear and obscure.

The reason for this lies in the fact that the imagination of the dreamers varies, sometimes representing exact pictures and sometimes, not. In addition, when God sends his messages to man, He sends them either vaguely or clearly, according to the need of the dreamers.

It is evident that there is a noble power in this world protecting man's interests, (لها عناية بمصالح الإنسان) informing him of coming events before their occurrence in order to prepare man for these events. These events sometimes concern the dreamer himself and sometimes the community in which he lives.

### Chapter 12

Divine Power, what is it, its definition  
its function, its origin etc.(1)

The belief in the existence of a supernatural power which communicates with man in dreams is universal. Every nation, when it reached a certain stage of development, adopted this attitude, though they differed in the way in which they expressed it. The interest of this power is chiefly concentrated upon man, though its full purpose in the universe will only be

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(1) Ms. Ch. 8.



attained through the agency of all creatures. The reason for this lies in the fact that man is the noblest and most developed creature in the universe, so he naturally is more receptive to messages from the spiritual world. In addition man's life is more complicated and more exposed to danger so he needs more help and support. It is obvious that man is the only creature who is able to benefit by advice and instruction from the divine power.

This power is distinguished by the following:

(1) It is neither a natural nor a human power, because it functions independently of matter, while these two powers are entirely dependent on matter. Heat, for instance, is a natural power in fire but the latter cannot produce the former without being associated with a substance. The animal soul also originates movement in the body but this movement does not result unless the soul is associated with a body.

This divine power, however, is stronger, nobler, and more perfect than the natural and human powers, (أقوى وأشرف وأكمل منهما)

In fact it is higher and more perfect than any other power,

(وهي أشرف القوى والأكمل في ذاتها من كل قوة)

(ii) It is an actual being.

(iii) It is eternal.

(iv) It is immaterial.

(v) It exists also in the physical world, diffusing itself equally in the universe like sunlight in the atmosphere, not



like "form" in "matter" or "quality" in "quantity". It is absolutely self-subsisting.

(vi) It guards the interest of the world; everything should be good, nothing should be inferior, as far as possible.

(vii) In spite of its divine nature, it is not identical with God or even a part of Him.

(viii) Imagination can assume nothing beyond this power, save God.

(ix) Since man has no alternative definition of this power, one feels obliged to call it "something which proceeded from God".

In conclusion, this power is intended more to help and advise two types of people, namely, kings and scholars. They are the medium between God and man. The reason being that the world in general, its interests and affairs is dependent on kings and scholars, so if the world is deprived of these two then it would cease to exist, and that is not what the divine power intended. Because Divinity intended that human life should be continued and improved (استبقاء هذا العالم وعمارته)

The following is a list of names given by different nations to express their belief in the divine power:

<u>Nations or Sects</u>	<u>Names</u>
Brahmans	Al-Qadīm al-Mudabbir al-aqṣab
Greek Philosophers	Al-Faid al-Ilāhī wal- <sup>in</sup> ināyah al-ilāhiyah
Syrians	Al-Kalimah, which is <sup>in</sup> arabic, al-Sakinah and Rūh al-Qudus



Nations or SectsNames

Persians  
Manichees  
Arabs

Amshā Shubandān  
Al-Arwāḥ al-Taiyibah  
Al-Malā'ikah and al-Ta'yid al-  
Ilāhi

Comment:

I. It should be noted that the words "the divine power" are a literal but misleading translation of (القوة الإلهية)

We are not speaking therefore of the divine power in the English sense.

II. By the divine power Avicenna means a "dynamic" power which creates and makes, and not a "static" power which is merely the highest form of being.

III. He identified divine power with "the universal intellect" and that was confirmed in the ninth chapter of the Ms. This idea is not original.

Anaxagoras, from whom Socrates professed to have learned the pre-eminence of mind in creation, was the first to assume the existence of the nous, or universal mind. He defined it as a substance which enters into the composition of living things and distinguishes them from dead matter. Mind has power over all things that have life; it is infinite and self-ruled and is mixed with nothing. Mind is the source of all motion. It causes a rotation, which is gradually spreading throughout the world and is causing the lightest things to go to the circumference, and the heaviest to fall towards the centre.(1)

(1) Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p.82 (London 1947).



IV. Avicenna's conception of the divine power is the basis of all his philosophy. He maintained(1) that all existing being fall into one of two categories, spiritual or corporeal. The whole world emanates from God, who is above all things. God created the first spirit (the universal mind) and from the first spirit emerged two things, the second spirit and the first body (the outermost sphere). In the same way from the second spirit emerged the third spirit and the second body and so on. Thus the process goes on in succession down to the tenth spirit which controls the lowest sphere (the ninth sphere) that of the moon.

In the hollow of the heaven of the moon, lies our world. In this world Avicenna put form and matter under the condition of growth and decay (عالم الكون والفساد) (creation and annihilation) which caused the creation of the four elements: fire, air, water and earth. Then as a result of the influence of the stars on these four elements emerge the worlds of mineral, vegetable, animal and man. In this realm are countless powers, the chief grades of which, from the lower to the higher, are the forces of nature, the energies of plants, the faculties of animals, and human souls. These four grades of faculties developed one into the other in succession. Minerals under the process of evolution reached the stage of the plants which are the first bodies possessing souls. The soul of the plant is composed of three powers; the nutritive, the growth promoting, and the propagating power. Through these three powers the

(1) See (a) Furūghī, Translation and Comments on Al-Shifā, p.16 (Teheran 1319 A.H) (See over:



plant is superior to the mineral. But when the plants had attained more perfection, offspring resulted and the manifestation of the animal world took place. This world, bringing with it the faculties already possessed by the plants, added to them two others, the perceptive faculty and the power of voluntary movement (impulsive). This latter is sub-divided into two faculties, the power to attract and the power to repel, while the perceptive power is sub-divided into ten branches, the external senses; and internal senses.

Then man came into being, bringing with him all that existed in the minerals, plants and animals, and adding to them the capacity for abstract concepts (mind) which gives completeness to the soul. In fact, there are two kinds of mind (reason), the practical and the theoretical, the latter having three stages.

- (1) العقل الحيواني - the intellect while only potential.  
 (ii) العقل بالملكة - the intellect trained in the principles of knowledge.  
 (iii) العقل بالفعل - the intellect at the moment when it is active.

The transition from the first stage which is no more than capacity for thought, to the second and third stages may be attained either by the help of masters, and laborious study, or by connection with the active mind (العقل الفعال) (the spirit of the last sphere), which controls our world through revelation or dreams.



V. The list which Avicenna gave has special significance. It suggests that man's conception of the divine power and its communication with this world through dreams, began in the East, although this needs more investigation.

The words Al-Qadim and Al-Mudabbir mean the "eternal" and the "regulator" respectively. The word Al-Aqrab means "immanence" which has two meanings.

(i) When Pantheistic idealists affirm that God is immanent in nature, they mean that nature is a phase, if not a perfect and complete expression of God's being.

(ii) To the Theist it means that God brings the world into being as an utterance of himself and continually sustains it by the energy of his will. God in his operation is continuously present to nature: for the universal medium, which is the basis of all interacting things and spirits, is in direct and constant dependence upon his will. Human souls share the dependence of the medium in which they interact, and their activity is conditioned by the divine activity.(1)

The word Al-Faid means "emanation". Some believed that the world emerged from God like water from a spring.(2)

Al-<sup>c</sup> inayah al-Ilāhīyah which is called al-<sup>c</sup> inayah al-

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(1) Galloway, The Philosophy of Religion, p.475 (Edinburgh 1945)

(2) The same source, p.471.



Azabiyah is God's knowledge.(1) Al-Kalimah is the word of God, the logos. This logos as applied to Christ is similar to that which was developed at about 500 B.C. by Heraclitus, one of the most original of Ionian philosophers.

Heraclitus believed that, by exploring his own mind and searching out his own nature, he could discover the Logos, the divine truth by which all things come to pass. His belief rested on the assumption that man is, as it were, a small-scale representation of the universe. His Logos was the thought which is the divine life of the universe. In this universe all things flow. Change is perpetual; but the Logos, disclosed in wisdom and order, remains.(2)

Al-Sakinah (tranquillity or confidence) is used in the Quran several times with its usual meaning, except that in Surah II, it means the Old Testament.(3)

Ruh al-Qudus (the holy spirit) is the angel who carried the Quran to Muhammad. In Surah II, it means the divine power which aided the Lord Jesus.(4)

The two words, al-Sakinah and Ruh al-Qudus used together mean the Divine Power.

- (1) Muhammad Husain Ibn Khalaf, Tabrizi, Burhāna Qāṭi<sup>c</sup>, Vol.2, p.1235 (Calcutta 1858).  
 (2) Barnes, The Rise of Christianity, p.32 (London 1948).  
 (3) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.560 (London 1935).  
 (4) The same source, p.177.



Amshā Shubandān means an angel (1).

VI. Avicenna's attitude towards man and his situation reminds us of the words of Simonides, a famous Greek poet: "None but the man whom the Gods love, to whom they send good fortune".(2)

VII. It should be admitted that Avicenna, after taking the narrow view of the divine power in dreams, broke down the barriers and opened the door to deal with the deepest problem of life, the problem of man in relation to the universe. But in spite of that he was able to keep the balance in this delicate subject.

### Chapter 10

#### General Comment.

I. It should be borne in mind that there are two schools of thought concerning veridical dreams, the religious and philosophic. The former held that God personally or through the medium of an angel plants divine knowledge into the heart of the dreamer.(3) The latter, which Avicenna represents, claim that this knowledge comes to man after a long intellectual training in which his mind contacts the universal mind, not through direct contact with God.

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(1) Muhammad Husain Ibn Khalaf, Tabrizi, Burhāna Qāti<sup>c</sup> Vol.I, (Calcutta 1858), /p.74

(2) Werner Jaeger, Paideia, The Ideals of Greek Culture, Vol.I, p.213 (Oxford 1945).

(3) Al-Baidāwī, Anwar al-Tanzil, Vol.5, p.56 (Cairo 1330 A.H).



Avicenna illustrated this in the following way:(1)

(i) God's essence is purely intellect and his activity is subject to the law of "cause and effect".

(ii) The intellect being unchangeable and indivisible, cannot comprehend the individual which is changeable and divisible. God's knowledge, therefore, is limited to the universal, while He is ignorant of the individual.

(iii) The spheres are living creatures. Having "intellect" and "senses", they comprehend both the individual and the universal.

(iv) The world is influenced by the spheres and all happenings whether in the past, the present, and the future, are initiated in the world of the spheres; the spheres are the "cause" and consequently they must have knowledge of all events. In fact, the past, the present, and the future are related only to those whose life is bound with the limitation of "time". To the spheres, whose life is above "time", everything is present.

(v) The human soul has the same nature and character as those of the spheres. It can, therefore, acquire the knowledge which the spheres have and penetrate the future, provided that it detaches itself from the influence of matter.

(1) See: (a) Al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, p.223 (Cairo 1321 A.H).

(b) Ibn Rūshd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, p.494 (Beirut 1930).

(c) Avicenna's *Al-Ishārāt wal-Tanbīhāt*, p.160, 176, 185, 209 (Leyde 1892).



In fact, the human soul has two tendencies, one towards the material and the other towards the spiritual. No man can be devoted to both; when man inclines violently in one of these directions, he is weakened in the other. Where he concentrates upon the pleasures of the mind, physical pleasures are given up and vice versa.

(vi) There are obstacles in the way of the soul's development. Man, however, can overcome these obstacles and co-operate with the world of the spheres: (a) During sleep, where his soul is naturally free from the influence of the material, the way is open to him to communicate with the world of the spheres. (b) There are few people whose spiritual powers are highly developed, who are sufficiently strong to free themselves from the influence of matter even during the waking state. (c) There are some people, like madmen, whose spirits are so weak that they are naturally free from the influence of matter even during wakefulness. They can also foretell the future.

II. Avicenna considered that man communicates with God indirectly in dreams through the medium of the spheres, the reason being that his conception of God's knowledge, limited to universal, made it impossible for man to communicate directly with God.

Belief in universals is ancient. The Milesian School of Philosophy, some two centuries before Plato, believed in universals, independent of the world of phenomena. Then Plato came



with the theory of "ideas" to support the belief in these universals. He thought that:

- (i) Knowledge and Science exist.
- (ii) They must have objects.
- (iii) Therefore those objects exist.
- (iv) They cannot be the particular things we know since these are in a perpetual state of change whereas the objects of science must be constant.
- (v) There must therefore, be eternal and immutable realities which we call the universal.(1)

Aristotle criticised Plato's theory of the universal and put forward his own alternative doctrine, the theory of "form". The form of a thing, he said, is its essence and primary substance. Forms are substantial although universals are not.(2) Avicenna invented a formula which was repeated by IBN Rushd. He believed that thought brings about generality in forms. From this it might be supposed that he did not believe in universals apart from thought.(3)

That is why he accepted several modes of existence of universals; the first is in the mind of God, for all that exists is related to God as a work of art is related to an artist. It existed in his wisdom and will before its entrance into the world of manifold existence. In this sense the universal is before the individual. Realised with its accidents in matter the universal constitutes the natural thing. The third mode is when the human intellect abstracts the universal from the individual.(4)

(1) Grube, Plato's Thought, p.1, 5 (London 1935).

(2) Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p.445 (London 1947).

(3) Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p.188 (London 1947).

(4) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.455 (London 1935).



III. Avicenna tried to effect a reconciliation between philosophy and religion. He considered that knowledge which man acquires by vision has the same nature and value as that acquired by prophecy. Both, he said, (1) are a result of contact between the human soul and the spheres. The only difference is that vision occurs when man is asleep, while prophecy takes place when he is awake. Man as man, by the development of his soul, can enter into relationship with the spheres and foretell the future. Though we must confess that this door is not open to everybody, only to those who have reached the highest pinnacle of perfection. But this philosophical interpretation of revelation was regarded by the religious teachers as a victory for philosophy, at their expense.

The religious teachers distinguished between three kinds of revelation, inspiration, vision and a divine message, according to the Quran: "and it is not for any mortal that God should speak to him except by inspiration or from behind a veil or by sending a message and revealing by his permission what he pleases". (2) They regarded the third kind as peculiar to prophets, (3) while Avicenna makes no distinction between these three kinds, considering them all universally possible.

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(1) Avicenna's *Al-Ishārāt wal-Tanbīhāt*, p.127-9 (Leyde 1892).

(2) The Quran, 42:51.

(3) Mawlāna Muhammad 'Alī, *Religion of Islam*, p.205.

(Lahore 1936).



The religious teachers believe that the prophets see an angel in his corporeal form and hear his speech in revelation,<sup>(1)</sup> and Avicenna believes that the angel is seen only in spiritual form.

Avicenna failed to satisfy the religious teachers of Islam by this attempt at reconciliation and therefore, we should not be surprised to find in his biography this statement: "It is said that most of the Muhammadan teachers living at the time of this man considered him as an Atheist, since he confessed in the book of al-Shifā a belief in the eternity of the world and denied the resurrection of the body and other things of this nature."<sup>(2)</sup>

Avicenna gave his answer to those people in one of his Persian poems:

"It is not a light thing to regard a man such as I,  
 as an Atheist without foundation.  
 Because there can exist no firmer faith than mine.  
 There is no greater Muhammadan in the world and  
 yet you consider me an Atheist.  
 Therefore I contend that there is no other  
 Muhammadan in the world." (3)

Avicenna was charged with impiety not only by his contemporaries, but even after his death: "Majd Al-dīn, a learned man in Baghdad, saw in a dream that he met the prophet and enquired about Avicenna's fate. The prophet said that Avicenna tried

(1) Encyclopaedia of Islam, V.4, p.1093.

(2) Al-Khūnsārī, Rawdat al-Jannat, p.244 (Teheran 1888).

(3) The same source, p.244.



to reach God without his (the prophet's) mediation, so he prevented his passage and Avicenna fell into hell.(1)

In Baghdad in the year 1160, the Caliph Al-Mustanjid burned Avicenna's writings because of his atheism.(2)

IV. It appears that fundamentally, Avicenna's treatment and theory on the subject did not vary throughout all his works. He held the view that dreams are a link between the spheres and man, and that there is correlation between dreams and revelation.

The only noticeable exception to this occurs in his final work "Al-Ishārat Wal-Tanbihāt", in which he colours his philosophy by employing religious and sūfī arguments; the reason being, perhaps, that both the religious teachers and sūfīs of Avicenna's time considerably influenced public opinion. They considered the philosophers their enemies and accused them of Atheism. Avicenna, as a philosopher, as well as a politician, dependent on the support of the multitude, was obliged to protect himself against this accusation under the guise of adhering to religious and sūfī principles. In this attempt he was unsuccessful, for the greatness of his mind and the soundness of his philosophy proved stronger than the artificiality of his last work.

One might ascribe this attitude to advancing age and to

(1) Al-Khūnsārī, Rawḍat al-Jannāt, p.244 (Teheran)1888).

(2) IBN Al-Athīr, al-Kāmil Fī al-Ta'rikh, Vol.XI, p.170 (Lugdunī, 1851).



sufferings in his life. He was accused of Atheism, imprisoned, and several times in peril of execution. Some people took refuge in religion and sūfism when tired of life, but Avicenna was not one of them. He was a very vigorous man, taking part in many of the activities of his time.

V. It seems that Avicenna, in his interpretation of revelation was largely influenced by "MaḥJ al-Belāghah". The theme of 'Alī's teaching as presented in this work, is found running throughout Avicenna's theory of revelation.

From the historical point of view, the attitude of the Muhammadan people to this subject has passed through three successive stages.

During the first stage in the lifetime of Muhammad the understanding of the nature of revelation was not developed. People regarded it as a gift of a superior intelligence and not as a kind of prophecy. Muhammad was considered as a political figure rather than a prophet. The literature written about him, after his death, in circumstances differing greatly from those of his lifetime, gives this impression. There are many incidents in his life which bear this out, and in the following, five are chosen by way of example.

(1) After the making of the treaty of Al-Hudaibiyah by Muhammad and the Quraish, Muhammad ordered his followers to perform the ceremonies of the pilgrimage, shaving their heads and sacrificing their camels. But they refused to do so,



remaining unmoved by his commands.(1)

(ii) When Muhammad was distributing the spoils of battle among his army some protested saying "O Muhammad, be just. Verily you are unjust".(2)

(iii) At the battle of Hunain, when Al-Ansar addressed Muhammad as follows: "Why do you take from us to give to your relatives of Makkah what God has given us as the result of the work of our swords?"(3)

(iv) Muhammad shortly before his death gives us a fourth example. He called out: "Bring me ink and paper that I may record for you a writing which shall prevent you from going astray for ever". The people present then refused to do so.(4)

(v) In the debates concerning a successor to Muhammad, following his death, it was clear that the post which Muhammad occupied was regarded as a temporal office and not as a divine one appointed by God.

The students of the history of Islam, even in the Middle Ages, were not unaware of this fact, but lacked the courage to express it frankly. Instead, they express it indirectly. One of them said: "Many people believed that God instructed Muhammad to give judgments according to his own standards, for his standards are right".(5)

(1) IBN Abi Al-Hadid, Vol.2, p.574 (Cairo 1329 A.H).

(2) IBN Abi Al-Hadid, Vol.2, p.574 (Cairo 1329 A.H).

(3) IBN Abi-Al-Hadid, Vol.2, p.574 (Cairo 1329 A.H).

(4) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.383 (London 1935).

(5) IBN Abi Al-Hadid, Vol.2, p.572 (Cairo 1329 A.H).



During the second stage, which was after Muhammad's death, the Arabs conquered a large area of the richest part of the world, differing greatly from their own poor desert, and they revelled in the wealth and beauties of the conquered countries. It was only then that the Arabs developed a real appreciation of Islam and considered Muhammad as a supernatural being instructed by God. Besides, they regarded him as the most perfect of all prophets and the last.

The Arabs appreciated Islam, partly because Muhammad created a high standard of life for them, and partly because, in coming into contact with the Christian and the Jewish concepts of the prophet, they adapted these ideas to their own religion.

In a later period, when a highly speculative nation were converted to Islam, they made out of Islam something much more interesting, more religious, and more philosophical, than had been imagined by the prophet.(1) This represents the third stage, probably that took place in Iraq. Islam, in this cultured country was faced with serious criticism. "The soil of Iraq" wrote a historian, "still sprouts new religions and wonderful creeds". The people of this region are very intelligent and profound thinkers".(2)

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(1) Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p.442 (London 1947).

(2) IBN Abi Al-Hadid, Vol.2, p.176 (Cairo 1329 A.H.).



When the teaching of Islam was brought to Iraq, the people appear to have found in it a contradiction between two principles. They were told first that Muhammad came to save the world from its troubles and chaos, and secondly that he would be the last prophet to come. They argued if God intends to save the world from its trouble (according to the first principle) why should He send no other prophet after Muhammad (according to the second principle) while the world is still suffering chaos and many problems?

The gulf between the people of Iraq and Islam widened day after day. Iraq constituted a problem in the Islamic world. The first three caliphs who succeeded Muhammad failing to solve these problems, grew tired of it. When 'Alī, the fourth caliph came to Iraq to meet his rival 'Āyishah, he went far in solving these problems. 'Alī was very ambitious and helped by his distinguished and noble character, and his outstanding courage, he found in Iraq the best field for the fulfilment of his desires, and in his great personality the Iraqians found the best answer to their problems. 'Alī, understanding the psychology of the Iraqians, was able to solve these problems. He declared himself to be another prophet. He said to the people: "O men ask me anything you wish before I die, for I know everything and shall answer questions."(1)

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(1) IBN Abī Al-Hadīd, Vol.2, p.174 (Cairo 1329 A.H).



Many things have been written of <sup>c</sup>Alī's prophecies in Iraq. For example, once a man came to <sup>c</sup>Alī and challenged him to tell him the number of hairs on his head and in his beard. <sup>c</sup>Alī replied that in each hair of his head there was an angel cursing him and in each hair of his beard there was a devil enticing him to evil, and, said <sup>c</sup>Alī, there is in his house a kid which would kill the son of the prophet. In fact this man had a child who later did kill <sup>c</sup>Alī's son.(1)

<sup>c</sup>Alī had many disciples in Iraq drawn mainly from the intellectual class and not exclusively Arabs. They formed a new school in Islam which rejected the belief that the prophecy in its wide sense, is restricted to Muhammad. They said that the world, owing to its permanent chaotic state, is never left without an Imām, who, like the prophet, has the divine character(2) and immunity from error and sin.(3)

Avicenna in his interpretation of revelation, was influenced by this school of thought, for three reasons. The first is that the Ismā'īlīan missionaries who represented this school were very active in Avicenna's time. They scattered over many parts of the Islamic world, spreading propaganda widely.

Avicenna himself tells us that his father was one of those who welcomed these missionaries, and was considered one of the Is-

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(1) IBN Abī Al-Hadīd, Vol.1, p.208 (Cairo 1329 A.H)

(2) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.574 (London 1935).

(3) Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.2, p.543.



Mā'īlians and listened to the philosophical discussion in which they expounded their theories on the soul and the mind. Avicenna's brother did the same. Both discussed various subjects in the presence of Avicenna, who understood what they were saying. They asked him to accept their Ismā'īliān teaching.(1)

The second reason is that Avicenna kept in close contact with the Buyides who were the supporters of this school. He held the high office of Prime Minister in their court. In Isfahān, where <sup>al-</sup>Alā-dāwlah governed, Avicenna was leader of the meetings in which he explained many principles of this school.

The third reason is that philosophy in Avicenna's time had become closely identified with the teaching of this school.(2)

VI. In order to estimate fully Avicenna's contribution to the study of dreams, it will be necessary to consider the theories of his predecessors on the subject. For every great thinker, however original he may be, is influenced by those who have gone before him.

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(1) IBN Abī Uṣāibi<sup>c</sup> ah, Vol.2, p.2 (Cairo 1882).

(2) De Lacy O'Leary, Arabic Thought and its Place in History, p.156, 179 (London 1922).



## Chapter 11

Aristotle said:

Our first task is to determine whether the soul has a real existence or not, or whether it is potential or actual existence.(1)

There are two qualities of the soul, movement and sensation. We have practically accepted these two characteristics of the soul from our predecessors.(2)

We describe one class of existing things as substance and this we subdivide into three.

(i) Matter which is in itself not any particular thing.

(ii) Shape or form which makes things particular.

(iii) A compound of the two, matter and form. Matter is potentiality and form is actuality.

It has been said that the soul is a harmony of the elements of the body because harmony is a mixture or composition of opposites and the body is composed of opposites. But this idea is unsound for two reasons. The first is that harmony is either a proportion or composition of the elements mixed and the soul cannot be either of these two. The second is that movement is not a characteristic of harmony, and yet almost everyone ascribes this to the soul as an essential.

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(1) Aristotle's On the Soul, translated by Hett, p.11  
(London 1935).

(2) The same source, p.19.



The soul, however, may be defined as the first actuality of a natural body possessing organs. Plants also have organs which are their parts, very simple organs. The roots in plants are analogous to the mouth, for both absorb food.(1)

We should now consider sleep and wakefulness, what are they, are they peculiar to the soul or to the body, or do they belong to both and why are they characteristic of living creatures?

It is obvious that both wakefulness and sleep belong to the same part of the living creature because they are contraries (sleep appears to be in a sense only a negation of wakefulness) and contraries evidently occur in the same recipient. We recognise the man awake or asleep by the same signs; for we reckon that the man who is conscious is awake and the man who is awake is conscious. Since sensation does not belong specifically either to the soul or to the body, it is clear that sleep is not peculiar to the soul alone but to both soul and body, since body without soul cannot feel.(2)

Practically all animals share in sleep, in the sea, the air and on the land. The reason being that all animals possess sensation and sleep is characteristic of sensation; a sort of immobility or fettering. The release or removal of this fettering is wakefulness. None of the plants can share in either of these affections because neither sleep nor wakefulness is

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(1) Same source, p.67.

(2) Aristotle's Sleep and Waking, translated by Hett, p.313 (London 1935).



possible without sensation. But creatures possessing sensation also are capable of grief and joy and those which have these must also possess desire. But none of these are presented by plants. That is why the nutritive faculty in animals exercises its function more in sleep than in wakefulness, for at that time it absorbs more nourishment and grows more rapidly because it does not require consciousness for these two purposes.(1)

It is not true, as has been said, that sleep is an impotence of the senses, because some people move in sleep and perform the actions of wakefulness, which cannot be done without some mental image and some consciousness.(2)

In short, sleep comes when the bodily part is carried upwards by the heat, through the veins to the head. When this is no longer possible, the part which is carried upward becomes excessive in amount, it is moved in the contrary direction and flows downwards. So when the heat, which is the agent of rising, is withdrawn men fall down and the falling down produces loss of consciousness and afterwards imagination.

It is clear that the experience which we call dreaming is not performed by the senses nor by thought, since both these are not functioning during sleep. Yet the soul does these things in sleep, for we seem to see that the approaching object is a man and also that he is white. Moreover in dreams we have some

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(1) Same source, p.319.

(2) Same source, p.321.



other concept just as if we perceived something while awake, for we often have some thoughts about what we perceive, and so in sleep we sometimes have other thoughts beyond the mental pictures. It is obvious then that a dream does not consist entirely of a mental picture seen in sleep, but that we also form opinions about that picture.

On the whole question it is clear that we are deceived precisely in the same way in which we are deceived in illness when awake. Dreams are an experience of senses just as sleep is. The sensible objects produce sensation in us according to each sense organ and the effect produced by them not only exists in the sense organs while the senses are in active operation, but continues after these have gone.

It is evident that the movements arising of the senses, both those which are stimulated from without and those which have their origin within the body, occur not only during waking but also during sleep, and even more at that time.(1) In the day these movements are eclipsed when the senses and the mind are active, and are obscured just in the same way as a smaller fire is obscured by a greater, and small pains and pleasures by great, but at night the great movements cease and the small ones come to the surface and become noticeable.(2)

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(1) Aristotle's *On Dreams*, translated by Hett, p.345  
(London 1935).

(2) The same source, p.357.



As for prophecy which takes place in sleep and which is said to arise from dreams, it is not a simple matter to be contemptuous or to be convinced. The idea that it is God who sends it (the dream), apart from its improbability on other grounds, is strange, especially as it does not come to the best and wisest. But if we dismiss the theory that dreams come from God, there seems no other probable explanation left; for it seems beyond our understanding to find any reason why anyone should foresee things occurring at the pillars of Heracles or on the Borysthenes.

Dreams which come true can be attributed to the following sources:

(i) The dreamer's sensibility to minute organic disturbances which are imperceptible in wakefulness.

Impulses occurring during wakefulness, if they are not powerful, pass unnoticed because of greater waking impulses. But during sleep the opposite takes place, for the small impulses seem to be great. This is clear from what often happens in sleep; men think that it is lightening and thundering when there are only faint echoes in their ears, and that they are enjoying honey and sweet flowers when only a drop of phlegm is slipping down their throats.

(ii) Pure accident, as when a man imagines something and by chance it comes to pass.



(iii) The dreamer dwelling upon his dreams so seriously that he himself brings about the result. Generally speaking, seeing that some of the lower animals also dream, dreams cannot be sent by God, nor is this the cause of their appearance, but they are miraculous; for human nature is miraculous, though it is not divine.

There is proof of this, for some inferior men have prophetic and vivid dreams, so they cannot be sent by God, but men whose nature is melancholic see all kinds of visions because they respond often to any kind of stimulus.(1)

**Comment:**

I. This outline shows that Avicenna's work, *Ta'bir al-Ru'yā* is based largely on Aristotle; Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 are almost identical with the book "On the Soul", Ch. 3, with the book on Sleep and Waking, Chapter 6, 7 and 8 with "On Dreams" and "On Prophecy in Sleep".

II. Avicenna followed Aristotle in his treatment of the subject. Like Aristotle, he started with an enquiry into the nature of the soul, its faculties, and its relation to the body, from which he passed to the study of sleep and dreams. Perhaps this method of treatment was logically dictated by the nature of the subject, which cannot be fully understood unless the soul and sleep are analysed. However, Avicenna while following his

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(1) Aristotle's *On Prophecy in Sleep*, p.375. Translated by Hett (London 1935).



master's method, soon began to differ from him in his conclusion. Here he expressed his belief in dreams as being of divine origin where the supernatural power speaks to man, while Aristotle believed in dreams as being physical phenomena where nature speaks to man. It is sufficient for the moment to say that Avicenna's treatment of the subject and not his theory, represents Aristotle's.

But if we take the subject a little further we find that although Avicenna did not agree with Aristotle in his theory, he did borrow from him most of his raw materials. Aristotle did not oppose Plato's school; on the contrary, his sympathies inclined to its principles. He pointed out some difficulties in his way. He put these difficulties in three questions, suggesting indecisive answers, leaving the reader free to make his own choice. In other words, Aristotle paved the way for Avicenna by raising those questions and by suggesting answers to them. Avicenna, backed by the Islamic traditions, which will be discussed in detail later, was able to provide answers to these three questions.

The first question Aristotle asked was if veridical dreams were from God, why were they not restricted to the best and wisest men.

Avicenna replied by saying that they were restricted to the best and wisest men, as long as they were universal.



But if they were concerned with the individual why should they be restricted to the best and wisest men?

The second question was, if dreams come from God, why do they always appear by night. Avicenna replied by giving instances of various prophets who had received divine messages by day.

The third question was if dreams are from God, why do they come to the madman and inferior man. Avicenna replied by saying that because both have rich imagination.(1)

This is sufficient to show how far Avicenna utilised Aristotle.

### Chapter 12

Muslims attached great importance to dreams. Al-Shahrastānī in his work, The Religious and Philosophic Sects(2) refers to the subject of dreams as one of the four chief studies of the Arabs, the other three being genealogy, history and astrology. He observed that Abu Bakr, the Caliph, was one of the best Arab interpreters.

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(1) See:

(a) Avicenna's Al-Shifa, <sup>-VOL 1</sup> p.337 (Teheran 1885).

(b) Al-Ghazālī's Maqāsīd al-Falāsifah, p.308 (Cairo 1331 A.H).

(2) P.434, (London 1846).



IBN Hishām in his work, *Sīrat al-nabī* (1) gave full details of <sup>c</sup> Abd al-Muttalib's vision in which he was instructed to excavate the Zamzam Spring. <sup>c</sup> Abd al-Muttalib did this in spite of the opposition of the Quraish. He found in the spring the two golden statues of gazelles which the tribe, Jurhum, had buried, shortly before they left Makkah. <sup>c</sup> Abd al-Muttalib, as a result of this, acquired the privilege of giving drink to the pilgrims.

Many dreams are recorded in the Quran, such as those which came to Abraham, Joseph and Pharaoh, and many occurred in the life of Muhammad himself. <sup>c</sup> Āyishah relates that "The first revelations which the prophet received were in dreams. His dreams came true as regularly as the dawn of day." (2) Muhammad, before his departure for Al-Madīnah, dreamt that he was carried by Burāq past Al-Madīnah to the temple of Jerusalem, where he was welcomed by the former prophets. From Jerusalem he ascended from one heaven to another until he found himself in the presence of God, who ordered him that his followers should pray five times a day. (3)

It is related that Muhammad said: "Dreams constitute one part of the forty-six of the prophecy". (4) This tradition is

(1) Vol.1, p.154 (Cairo 1937).

(2) IBN Hishām Vol.1, p.252 (Cairo 1937).

(3) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.351 (London 1935).

(4) IBN Hāzīm, *al-Fisal fī Al-milal wal-ahwā wal-nihal*, Vol.5, p.20 (Cairo 1317 A.H).



rather vague and the commentators differed about its implication. Some believed that it refers to the veracity of the dreams, while others thought it referred to the first six months of Muhammad's vision in which he received divine messages through dreams. The latter based their argument on the fact that Muhammad was forty years old when he was first inspired. He died at the age of sixty-three. The whole period of his mission, then, covered twenty-three years and the first six months of this period are the forty-sixth portion of these twenty-three years.

This tradition, however, explains why the first part of the Quran is less eloquent than the second, while both come from one source. The inspired word received during sleep is less eloquently expressed than that word received during the waking state, since consciousness during wakefulness allows greater concentration than during the time of dreaming.

"<sup>c</sup> Umar the Caliph was warned of his approaching end by a white cock thrice-pecking him with his beak, the manner of his death being verified in the number of stabs he received from the hand of Firus, and it is probable that the colour of the bird symbolised the nationality of the assassin.

Al-Amin's fear of the approaching power of the Tahirite family is said to have been derived from a dream that came as a warning to him.



A flame of fire spreading over heaven and earth fortold to the obscure father of the first three Buwaihide princes the foundation of the glory of his family.<sup>11</sup>(1)

Būku Khan dreamt that he would possess the entire world, he assembled his troops and sent his brothers to wage war against the Mongols.(2)

Muslims, however, did not consider all dreams to be veridical. "It is related that an Arab once began to relate his dream to Muhammad in such a confused manner that the prophet asked him what he had eaten the evening before. The Arab said he had supped on a large quantity of cooked dates and Muhammad declared his dream to be unsound and incapable of being expounded.

The Arab doctors in their classification of dreams rejected all those which proceed from the mind being preoccupied with any engrossing idea, when it naturally summons up in sleep images of those objects which most interest it in a waking state, such as the case of a lover who beholds the beloved person in his sleep, or of a man who dreams of his profession.<sup>11</sup>(3)

It is related also that Al-Na<sup>3</sup> Mun the Caliph believed that there is no truth in dreams because, he said, if they were valid

(1) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, First Series, Vol. XVI, p.120.

(2) Skrine and Ross, The Heart of Asia, p.115 (London 1899).

(3) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, First Series, Vol.XVI, p.128-130.



then they should all come true while this is not the case.(1)

It seems strange that in spite of the powerful influence of dreams on Muhammadans, there is no evidence in the Quran to support their validity, though there are many dreams recorded there.

Only some commentators said that the word "wahy" (revelation) in the Surah (42-51) covers both that comes during sleep and in the waking state.(2) While others maintained that this word is restricted to revelation which comes during sleep.(3) Another group of authors said that the word al-bushra in the Quran means true dreams.(4)

Al-Sarraḡ said that some people denied the veridical dream on the basis that if the ordinary man can communicate with God directly through a dream, then it deprives prophets of their privilege, since the prophets could only communicate through the medium of an angel.(5)

It seems that these voluntary comments on the Quran are the source of numerous traditions which were fabricated in a later period to support the idea of veridical dreams. The

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- (1) Ibrāhīm IBN Muhammad, Al-Bai-Haqī, Kitāb al-Mahāsīn wal-Masāwī, Vol.2, p.343 (Gussen 1901).
- (2) Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Mahallī and Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, Tafsīr Al-Jalālain, Vol. 2, p.161 (Cairo 1924).
- (3) IBN Muṭrif Al-Kinānī, Al-Qurtān, Vol.2, p.121 (Cairo 1355 A.H).
- (4) See:  
 (a) Al-Nabulusi, Taḡīr Al-Anām, Vol.1, p.3 (Cairo 1301 A.H)  
 (b) Khalīl IBN Shāhīn Al-Zahīrī, Al-Isharāt Fī 'Ilm Al-Ibārāt, p.4 (Cairo 1301 A.H).
- (5) IBN 'Alī Al-Sarraḡ, Kitāb Al-Luma' Fī Al-Tasawwuf, p.423 (Leyden 1914).



The famous Hadith, "dreams are divided into three groups, terrors caused by Satan to disturb man, unfulfilled desires occupying man's mind during the waking state and dreams which come from God", was invented by IBN Sirin.(1)

Salih, the pupil of Al-Nazzam, held an extreme idea about dreams. He believed that things seen in dreams actually happen, at the time of the dream. For example, if a person while in Spain, dreams that he is in China, then God must have transferred him to China while dreaming. IBN Hasm (2) who tells this belief, said: "This idea is very unsound, for two simple reasons, because the dreamer remains with us while dreaming and because the dream may be impossible in itself."

Muslims, although they held different views on dreams, all agreed upon two points, the divine character of dreams and the relation between them and revelation. Both came from God. The difference between them is only in the state of those who receive this communication, whether in sleep or in the waking state. Those who receive the messages in the waking state are called "rusul", pl. of "rasul", and those who receive the messages during sleep are called "anbiya", pl. of "nabi".(3)

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(1) Tawfiq al-Tawil, Dreams, p.64 (Cairo 1945).

(2) Al-Fisal Fi Al-Milal Wal-Ahwa Wal-Nihal, Vol. 5, p.19, (Cairo 1317 A.H).

(3) IBN Sirin, Muntakhab al-Kalam, p.16 (Cairo 1301 A.H).



It is beyond question that Avicenna was influenced by Muslims in these two points. Yet there is another point which draws him closer to those Muslims who preceded him, and that is his attitude towards God in dreams. Dreams, besides being of divine origin, are for protection and guidance. They come only in the time of danger, when man falls in despair and when his mind is unbalanced. Avicenna on many occasions emphasized that God "must" protect man, since man's life is in constant danger and he needs the protection of God. This attitude of putting responsibility and obligation upon God is the attitude of the Mutasilah, who believe that God must do all in His power to help. He must advise man when he is in need and relieve him in his distress. If God fails him then He is unjust. They illustrated their idea with the following example: If a poor man asked a rich neighbour for help the rich man must come to his aid. If this is not forthcoming, then the rich man is avoiding his obligation. This idea is contrary to the beliefs of Ashariyah, who believe that God can do no wrong and that you cannot speak of justice and injustice in connection with God.(1)

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(1) IBN HAZM, al-Fisal fi al-milal wal-ahwa wal-nihal, Vol.3, p.164 (Cairo 1317 A.H).



Chapter 13

Al-Fārābī said:(1)

Man has three faculties, intellect, senses and imagination, which stand somewhere between sense and reason. During waking hours, imagination receives pictures from without and from within through the medium of the senses and the intellect. During sleep imagination is free from the influences of the senses and intellect for they cease to function; with their disappearance imagination becomes independent and follows its nature:

(i) This joins and separates those pictures which it had received from the intellect and the senses during wakefulness.

(ii) Creates pictures similar to those already received.

(iii) Reflects the state of the body in its different environment.

If the state of the body is moist, imagination represents moisture images, such as water etc. Similarly with dryness, coldness and heat. These three kinds of pictures which imagination achieves during sleep are the cause of the physical activities which occur in dreams.

Some people get up during their sleep and walk up and down and beat or flee from someone, while there is no-one to beat or flee from. What happens is that those imaginary pictures seem

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(1) See Al-Fārābī's

(a) *Ārā Ahl al-Madinah al-Fādilah*, p.47 (Leyden 1895).

(b) *Al-Thamarah al-Mardiyyah Fi Ba'd Al-Risalat al-Farabiyyah* p.72 (Leyden 1890).



as real as though they actually exist.

Veridical dreams occur when imagination communicates with God through the medium of the "active mind" and depicts future events. Most of these pictures are individual, while the rest are universal. When imagination accurately reflects these pictures, dreams are clear, but when these pictures are inaccurately presented, dreams become vague and require interpretation.

Dreamers are divided into five groups:

(i) He whose imagination is so rich and perfect that he can receive pictures of the past and the future during wakefulness; these are prophets.

(ii) He who receives only some of these pictures during wakefulness and the others during sleep.

(iii) He who receives these pictures only during sleep.

(iv) He who receives these pictures occasionally.

(v) He who sees these pictures only when his mental and physical conditions are unbalanced.

Comment:

I. Al-Farabi differs from Avicenna in his approach to the subject. Avicenna realised that dreams could not be studied without reference to the nature of sleep itself, while Al-Farabi ignored this altogether. The reason for this might be that, as a doctor, Avicenna felt he should begin his study from the



body, whereas Al-Fārābī, as a philosopher, would confine himself to the soul. Or else the reason was that Al-fārābī studied dreams merely in order to explain prophecy on philosophical grounds. Avicenna, however, was more interested in the dream itself, though he used it as a means of explaining prophecy.

II. Al-Fārābī, like Plato,(1) considered dreams to be the work of the lowest faculties of the soul, thus opposing Avicenna's belief that they are the result of the highest faculties of the soul, the idea which was attributed to Socrates.(2)

III. Al-Fārābī believed that imagination only functions during sleep, while Avicenna considered that both imagination and the intellect may continue to function then.

IV. Both Avicenna and Al-Fārābī considered that the dreamer should be in circumstances which would enable him to communicate with God. However, they differed in their attitudes towards God. Avicenna considered that God was the active adviser and helper of the dreamer, since He plans the life of man and stands by him in his perils. When He finds man in difficulties, He advises him by means of dreams. In the view of Avicenna, then, prophecy in dreams depends on two principles, namely, the ability of man and the gift of God. But in Al-Fārābī's view prophecy depends upon man's ability rather than on the gift of God.

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(1) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.7, p.347.

(2) Plato, The Republic, translated by Lindsay, p.269 (London 1945).



In other words, Al-Farabi's God in dreams is negative, derived from Aristotle's, while Avicenna's God is positive, derived from Plato's. This differentiation runs through all the works of Avicenna and Al-Farabi and it is difficult to read them without having this impression.

V. We need not enter into the question whether Avicenna went directly or through the medium of Al-Farabi to Aristotle. The close relation between Avicenna and Aristotle on the one hand and the wide gap between Avicenna and Al-Farabi on the other hand suggest that Avicenna went directly to Aristotle. But there is no doubt that Al-Farabi preceded Avicenna in the giving of names of angels to philosophical terms. Apart from that, there is no close relationship between them.

#### Chapter 14

The "Brotherhood of Purity" said:(1)

(1) Man, being a combination of body and soul, occupies an intermediate position in the universe, between the spiritual and the animal worlds. By his body he is linked up with the animal world and by his soul he is related to the spiritual world.

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(1) The Treatises of the Brotherhood of Purity, Vol.4, Ch. 5, 6 (Cairo 1928).



(ii) The aim of man's life in this world is to free himself from his body, so that he may be absorbed, or rather re-absorbed, into the spiritual world. Thus he approaches nearer to the deity and receives God's message.

(iii) There are several means of communication between God and man. The most important are inspiration, vision, revelation and dreams.

(iv) During sleep, the soul is independent of the body. It leaves the body and enters the realm of the spirit, where it learns of future events.

(v) There are several kinds of dream: (a) dreams retained from pictures seen during wakefulness; (b) dreams caused by the physical condition of the body; (c) dreams affected by the position of the planets; (d) dreams that come from God through the agency of Angels; (e) dreams that come directly from God when He speaks in person to the dreamer; (f) dreams that come from the Devil. It is not difficult to distinguish these dreams one from another. There is confusion only between dreams which come from God and those which come from the Devil. It is possible to distinguish them by deciding whether the instruction and advice contained in them is good or bad.

Veridical dreams can be proved by the fact that God in many cases has sent His message through dreams; for example, the dreams which came to Joseph, Abraham and Muhammad. These dreams prove not only the existence of God who reveals the



future to man through dreams, but also the existence of the soul, which receives this revelation.

Finally we should make it clear that man has the ability to become an angel if he directs his efforts towards the good as did the prophets. He is also capable of becoming a devil if he follows his passion as did the wicked.

**Comment:**

I. It is obvious that the most notable feature in this argument is its simplicity and its sūfī character. Comparing it with Avicenna's, the only relation between them is that both believed in veridical dreams.

II. It is possible that the sūfī tendency which characterises Avicenna's last work, "Al-Ishārāt wal-Tanbīhāt", was influenced by the brotherhood's Sūfism, since both use a similar style of language, though there is a slight difference between the two. The Brotherhood's Sūfism is pure and simple, while Avicenna's is coloured with logic.(1)

The brotherhood of purity represents one of the Ismā'īlī's movements in Islam. Avicenna, as we have already seen, was influenced by this movement, so it is not difficult to see his relation with this society.

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(1) See:

(a) Ikhwan al-Safa, Vol.4, Ch. 4 (Cairo 1928).

(b) Al-Ishārāt wal-Tanbīhāt, Ch. 8, 9, 10 (Leyde 1892).



III. The brotherhood added a new class of dreams, those caused by the position of the stars. Avicenna in Al-Shifa only, (1) expressed his belief in the influence of the stars on dreams, while considering them to be of no prophetic value.

IV. One point deserves notice. The assumption that dreams are proof of the existence of the soul suggests that primitive man began to believe in the soul by means of dreams. Scholars through this suggestion might explain many religious customs and habits. This, however, proves that dreams have played a prominent role in the history of mankind.

## Chapter 15

### General Comment

With the Brotherhood of Purity we reach the last of the philosophers who preceded Avicenna. It remains to compare him with philosophers as a whole in order to see what he himself contributed to the subject, since in this lies the criterion by which he may be judged.

It appears from what has already been stated that most of the materials from which he built up his theory on dreams existed in the works of his predecessors. If we subtract from him what he borrowed from them, there seems to be little of his own left.

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(1) Vol. 1, p.338 (Teheran 1985).



But the fact that Avicenna was not the originator of these ideas does not deny him greatness, since his contribution to the subject was not a mere repetition of the elements passed to him from his predecessors. He harmonised them, gave them a fresh stamp and put them in a new order.

Aristotle's treatment of the subject was profound, based on logical grounds. Yet he could not find evidence for his logic in the experience of man. He was in two minds whether to accept the divine school or the physical school. Both appeared to him unable to solve the problem, so he remained uncertain till the end.

The divine school came forward with the idea of veridical dreams supported by much evidence that God sent His message to men by dreams. But this evidence was without intellectual basis.

Avicenna stood between these two schools, trying to solve the problem. He found that the serious obstacles to Aristotle's theory was the lack of evidence which Aristotle supported in theory, especially concerning dreams occurring during the day. The divine school, on the other hand, had these instances but lacking logical proof. Thus the only solution to such a problem was to combine these two attitudes and this is what Avicenna did. It is clear that Avicenna worked on the subject as a shaper, and not as a creator.

It is worthy of mention that Greek philosophy held a prominent position in Avicenna's work. In fact he did not



hide this. He always remained in close contact with Greek philosophy and did not want to be separated from it. The reason being, perhaps, that Avicenna attained the summit of perfection; through his universal mind, he saw the world as one. For him East and West were indivisible. Although they represented two outlooks on life, both could exist together and there was no contradiction between them. This attitude no doubt helped him to assimilate and elaborate Greek philosophy.

#### Chapter 16 (1)

Aristotle in his book, *Al-HāssWal-Mahsūs*, identified the divine power with the "active intellect", the "universal mind". Veridical dreams, Aristotle said, come from a close contact between the universal mind and the individual mind. When God desires communication with man, He sends His message through the medium of the universal mind. Dreams are either personal, concerning the dreamer himself or some of his relatives, or universal, concerning the world at large, such as the one that came to Heraclius who dreamt that God instructed him to conquer the world which he did.

#### Comment:

Clearly, the story of Heraclius' dream is an example given

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(1) Ms. Ch. 9.



by Avicenna to explain the universal dream mentioned by Aristotle, though Avicenna presented it in such a way that it gave the impression that he came across this story in the aforementioned book of Aristotle. This story, however, belongs to the beginning of the seventh century, when the Persian armies conquered Syria and Egypt and encamped opposite Constantinople. Heraclius the Roman Emperor "proposed in despair to abandon his capital and seek a refuge in Carthage, but at the entreaty of the patriarch he took courage and beat the Persian army".(1)

There is a point which calls for special consideration. This story as depicted by Avicenna is vague and differs from that which we read in other sources. It seems a confused abridgement of the following story:(2)

"Khusraw, the king of Persia, sent an army under the leadership of Shahrirāz to invade the Roman Empire. They massacred the Romans, destroyed their cities and laid waste the countryside. Heraclius, seeing his countrymen plundered, afflicted and killed, besought God to relieve them from this peril. Later he had a dream in which he saw himself in the presence of a man with a thick beard, well dressed, sitting on a high seat. Meanwhile another man entered. He cast the well-dressed man from his seat and said to Heraclius: 'I deliver this man to you'.

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(1) The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.XIII, p.310.

(2) Al-Tabari, Vol.2, p.1003 (Leyden, 1861-1882).



When Heraclius awoke, he mentioned his dream to no-one. Next night the dream was repeated, but the third man came this time with a chain which he fastened round the neck of the well-dressed man and delivered him again to Heraclius, saying 'I deliver Khusraw to you, attack him. Verily you will defeat him'. Heraclius told his dream to the Roman nobles, who advised him to invade Persia. Heraclius left his son in charge of Constantinople, and bypassing the Persian army, penetrated to the heart of the Persian empire."

In Al-Shifā (Vol.1, p.337 Teheran 1885) Avicenna gave another version of the dream which came to Heraclius: Heraclius was embarrassed by a dream to which the interpreters could not give a satisfactory answer. On the following night he received through another dream an explanation of the first and news of future events concerning the world in general and his country in particular.

Thought usually travels from the plain to the obscure because there is some relation between them. It is not impossible that it should move from the obscure to the plain. The feeling of anxiety after the first dream induced the imagination to recall it on the following night. Imagination, working naturally, passed from the complicated outline to the clear. Thus the meaning of the dream was revealed. In fact there was only one dream recalled by memory.



It is clear that the theory of dreams which is attributed here to Aristotle differs fundamentally from the known teaching of Aristotle. Neither does it agree with Plato's, though it represents Plato's school, since Plato considered that the irrational soul is a medium between God and man, while this theory suggests that God through the rational soul, communicates with man. This theory, however, is more akin to neoplatonism.

There is one more difficulty here. The book which Avicenna attributed to Aristotle is among the known works of Aristotle.(1) It is entitled "On Sense and Sensible Objects", (2) but it does not deal with the point to which Avicenna referred.

These difficulties may be explained by the fact that Aristotle's writings and philosophy had suffered many changes at the hands of the Arabs.

Perhaps Avicenna was misled by Al-Fārābī, who attributed this theory to Aristotle in his book "al-da<sup>c</sup>āwā al-qalbiyah."  
(3)

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- (1) See:  
 (a) Gregory (Abū al-Faraj) Ta'rikh Mukhtasar al-duwal, p.94 (Beirut 1890).  
 (b) IBN Abi Usaibi<sup>c</sup> a<sup>b</sup>, Vol.1, p.68 (Cairo 1882).
- (2) Translated by ~~W.S.~~ Hett (London 1935).
- (3) Hyderabad Deccan, p.11 (1349 A.H).



Chapter 17**Imagination, memory and mind function  
during sleep.(1)**

It must be understood that imagination is not the only faculty which functions during sleep: the internal senses and intellect also continue to function normally during sleep. If the picture of a lion, for instance, passes through the imagination of a man while he is asleep, his faculties recognise it as an injurious animal. As a result of this, the man feels that his life is in danger. This feeling affects his body; though still asleep, his face turns yellow, he weeps, cries and perhaps rises and walks, in order to escape from this danger. This physical activity cannot occur without the impulsive power which in turn only functions when the internal senses and intellect are acting.

Since the internal faculties can recognise and assess an object during sleep and create physical activities, then obviously they function during sleep independently of the physical organs.

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(1) Ms. Ch.10.



## Chapter 18

### Clear and Obscure Dreams.(1)

Dreams are divided into two classes, the clear dream which requires no interpretation and the obscure dream which consists of symbols only to be explained by accredited interpreters. This classification is based on the fact that the imagination of dreamers varies, sometimes presenting exact pictures and sometimes not. In addition, when God sends His messages to man, He sends them either vaguely or clearly, according to the need of the dreamers.

Man during his time on this earth is exposed to many dangers and in his search for happiness he encounters many difficulties and obstacles, which he must overcome, in order to attain security. But as the energy and power of man are limited and the problems of life are complicated, so he may, in the course of this struggle, lose his courage and fall into despair. Then the divine power whose purpose is to perpetuate human life must come to relieve him of his despair and support him in his hour of need. The only method He should adopt is to send a clear dream.

The obscure dream may be explained by the fact that the purpose of the divine power is to develop man's mind through the medium of puzzling dreams, to let man search, investigate and discover. In this way his mind develops and attains a high intellectual plane.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 11.



The following are examples of clear dreams which were sent at various times to help man.

(i) Galien, in his book "The Phlebotomy"(1) relates: "I endeavoured by every medicine to cure a swelling in my body, between the diaphragm and the liver, but there was no improvement. Finally I fell into despair. Then I had a dream in which a man came to advise me to open up a vein. When I awoke I took his advice; opened my vein and I recovered, in spite of the fact that I had no previous knowledge of this treatment".(2)

(ii) Galien, again, in his book "The Remedy"(3) relates: "Other doctors and I have treated a patient with a great swelling on his tongue so big that he could not hide it in his mouth. The patient fell into despair as we failed to cure him. But he saw in a dream a man who recommended him to take the juice of a special grass. Being told of this dream, I put it to the test and the patient was cured."(4)

(1) Fihrist, p.404 (Cairo 1348 A.H), Ibn Al-nadīm mentioned this among Galien's works translated into Arabic.

(2) Ibn Abī Usaibi<sup>c</sup> ah, Vol.1, p.9, gave full details of this dream. (Cairo 1882).

(3) On referring to the book "Silat al-Bi<sup>r</sup>" , it was found that the correct title is "Hilat al-Bur<sup>2</sup>" , which is one of the sixteen basic books which medical students in the Middle Ages studied. It was translated by Habash (Ibn Al-Nadīm, p.403, Cairo 1348 A.H).

(4) Ibn Abī Usaibi<sup>c</sup> ah gave full details of the dream. (Vol. 1, p.9, Cairo 1882).



(iii) Aribāsīūs (1) in his book "Kunāsh"(2) Al-Kabīr (the great) relates: "I was treating a patient with a stone in his bladder. I endeavoured by every medicine to break down the stone but there was no improvement. The patient fell into despair. But he saw in a dream a man who advised him to take the ashes of a special bird which he named. The patient did what had been advised and was cured."

(iv) Al-Mu<sup>c</sup> tasim, the Caliph, on one of his journeys was accompanied by Al-Sarī Al-Hāsib,(3) who related in his book "Al-Mawālīd", that while he was asleep in a tent he saw in a dream a man warning him against a viper. When he awoke he saw a viper two yards away creeping towards him, and his life was saved.

(1) This name is written incorrectly Arinyāsōs. The correct name is Aribāsīūs who was a physician living in Egypt in mediaeval times. He wrote many books about medicine. (Ibn Al-Qiftī, p.56, Leipzig 1903).

(2) This name is written incorrectly Kitāb. The correct name is Kunāsh, which means a collection of notes: see Ibn Abī Usaibi<sup>c</sup> ah who gave full details of this dream. (Vol. 1, p.10, Cairo 1882).

(3) It is certain that there is a mistake in this name, Al-Sarī Al-Hāsib. Probably the correct name is Habash al-Hāsib, which was the surname of Ahmad<sup>ibn</sup> Abd Allāh, who lived in Baghdad in the time of Al-Ma<sup>man</sup> and Al-Mu<sup>c</sup> tasim. (Ibn al-Qiftī, Ta<sup>r</sup>ikh al-Hukamā , p.170, Leipzig 1903). The book Al-Mawālīd, which was wrongly attributed to him, was written by his pupil, Muhammad Ibn<sup>c</sup> Abd Allāh Ibn<sup>c</sup> Umar Ibn Al-Bāsiyār, who was one of the famous astrologers in Baghdad in the Middle Ages (Ibn al-Qiftī, p.286, Leipzig 1903).



(v) Al-Mu<sup>c</sup> tasim saw in a dream a man pleading to him for Mansūr Al-Jammāl who had been unjustly imprisoned. When the Caliph awoke, he enquired for Mansūr Al-Jammāl whose name the Caliph had never heard. Mansūr Al-Jammāl was brought to the Caliph by the jailers. The Caliph released him when he found him not guilty. Mansūr Al-Jammāl was a righteous man.

(vi) When Abū Ja<sup>c</sup> far Ibn Qudāmah was at the point of death, he put his library at the disposal of the public, leaving it in the charge of a friend, who, after a lapse of many days, sold it and decided to leave Baghdad for Khurāsān with the pilgrims. But before he parted with it, Yahyā Ibn <sup>c</sup>Adī (1) a schoolfellow of Abū Ja<sup>c</sup> far Ibn Qudāmah, had a dream in which Abū Ja<sup>c</sup> far Ibn Qudāmah complained to him of the action taken by the friend to whom he had entrusted his books. He requested Yahyā to warn his friend before delivering the books to the buyer and leaving Baghdad. When Yahyā awoke he related his dream to that man, who was frightened. He regretted his action, cancelled the sale and swore he would take care of the books as long as he lived.

(vii) Fakhr al-Dawlah, towards the end of his reign, oppressed his subjects, imposing heavy taxes on them, especially

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(1) He was one of the best logicians of Baghdad in the middle ages; he was a Christian, studied under Abi Bishr Mattā Ibn Yūnus and Al-Farābī, and died in 364 A.H. (Ibn al-Qiftī, p.361, Leipzig 1903).



on the citizens of Qazvin. A man had a dream in which he saw Fakhr al-Dawlah's father, Rukn al-Dawlah, who disapproved of the behaviour of his son and his treatment of his subjects. Rukn al-Dawlah requested this man to warn his son that he would die within five days. When Fakhr al-Dawlah was told of this dream he was disturbed, mended his ways and gave relief to his subjects. However, before a week was out, he died.

(viii) There was in Tabaristān a good woman whose son disappeared. She had saved a certain amount of money to help him in a time of crisis. She died, however, while her son was still missing. When the son returned to Tabaristan, he was sent to prison and told that he would be released only when he had paid money to the governor. He saw his mother in a dream where she directed him to the place in which she had hidden her money. When he awoke, he related his dream to the jailers, who took the money and released him.

There are many dreams such as these. They only come during a time of distress and despair, when frightful happenings occur. They come when a great crime has been committed or a great reward is expected.



١ - ذكر جالينوس في كتاب الفصد انه عرض له وهم بين الحجاب وبين الكبد والجته بما امكن والخت بقدر الطاقة لم ينفع ولم ينجح فحيرت وانقطع رجائي في السلامة والحيوة فرأيت في النوم انسانا يشير على بفصد العرق واخرجت الدم منه فبرأت من تلك العلة ولم اعلم ان ذلك العرق يفصد ولم اسمع انه يفصد قبل ذلك وان في اخراج الدم منه منفعة .

٢ - وحكي هذا حكاية في كتابه في حلة البئر ان رجلا قد وهم لسانه وهم حق لم يكده يسع في فيه والجته انا وفيري من الاطباء بكل ما علفنا من المعالجة فلم يبرأ فأعرضنا عن مداواته وسلم نفسه الى الهلاك فرأى الانسان في النوم ان انسانا يقول له خذ الحشيش الفلاني ودهه واعصره وتضمض حق تبرأ وتصلح ، فلما دخلت عليه قص الرجل روياء فرأيتما موافقة للقياس الطبي فجزيت ذلك عليه فبرأ الانسان من تلك العلة بتطامه .

٣ - اريناسوس يحكي في كتابه الكبير كان رجل عرض له في الثانية حجر عظيم وداوته بكل دواء يصلح لتفتت الحجر فلم ينفع البتة واشرف على الهلاك فرأى في النوم ان انسانا اقبل عليه وفي يده طائر صغير الجثة وقال له ان هذا الطائر يسمى فلانا ويكون في موضع كذا فخذوه واحرقوه وتناول من رطاده بقدر كذا حتى تسلم من هذه العلة ، فلما انتبه فعل ذلك فأخرج الحجر من مثانته مفتتا كالرماد وبرأ برأ تاما .

٤ - السرى الحاسب يحكي في كتاب المواليد انه كان مع المعتصم في بعض اسفاره فلما في خيمته فرأى انسانا يقول تم واعجل واحسب



فان الامى قد قصدت اليك لتقتلك قبل ان تلدخك ، فخاف من قوله  
فانتبه فرأى الامى وبينه وبين الامى قدر ذراعين مقبلة عليه فهرب  
منها فنجأ .

• - يحكى أن المعتم رأى انسانا فى النمل يقول له الى متى  
لا تطلق من مضور الجمال وتحبسه ظلما ، فلما انتبه وتفكر فيه فليس  
يعرفه ولم يكن له علم باسمه فاستحضر حرسه سجنه فسألهم من هذا  
الرجل فظلموه حتى وجدوه فاستحضر مجلسه واجتهدت عن شأنه فالفساء  
محبوسا بغير جنابة وكان رجلا صالحا فأطلقه ورثه ورحمه .

١ - ابو جعفر بن قدامة كان مع يحيى بن عدى فى السدوس  
فلما اشرف على الموت اودع كتبه عند رجل من اصدقائه لياخذ الناس  
ويتفهموا بها وأوصى أن لا يخرج من مستحقها وضى لسيله فلما امتدت  
الايام عليها بلغ هذا الرجل تلك الكتب ونم على الخروج من مدينة  
السلام مع الحاج الى خراسان ، وقبل أن يسلم الكتب الى من باعها  
فه رأى يحيى بن عدى فى النمل ابا جعفر بن قدامة كأنه اتبل عليه  
وقال له الا ترى قدر هذا الرجل اودعت كتبي عنده فباعها ونم على  
الخروج فدا ولم يسلم الكتب بعد الا أنه يخرج فدا مع القافلة وتحتضره  
وظه فدعا يحيى بن عدى وحكى له رؤياه ففرق فى قلبه رغب وارتمد .



من الخوف وقال قدمت على ط فعلت فعاد الى منزله وقال النبي وحسب  
انه لا يبيع ضمنا كتابا البته ولا يضيعه في حياته .

٧ - لما قرب خروج فخر الدولة من الدنيا ظلم واصسف ونف على  
رضته وقام بأنواع المطالبات لهم وخاصة لاهل قزوين فرأى رجل في المنام  
اباه ركن الدولة فقال له لم لا تقبل لهذا الشقي كم تؤذي الناس  
ولم تخف الله تعالى وقد بنى من عمره مدة خمسة ايام فأخبر فخر الدولة  
بالرؤيا فندم وتأسف واقتم وامر بتخليص الرضا ولم يدر عليه اسبغ حتى مضى  
لسيله .

٨ - كانت بطبرستان امرأة مستورة سالحة صائبة وكان لها ابن ضائع  
وهذه المرأة قد ادخرت من الدراهم له مقدارا ليدفع بها يوط شدة وسلا  
فطمت المرأة وابنتها فاتب ، فلما رجع الابن الى طبرستان وحالت عليه الاحوال  
فأخذها السلطان وطمع فيه وحبس وطولب فرأى في المنام انه تقبل له لسم لا  
تستخرج من موضع كذا ط دفنت لك فيه لعل هذا اليوم الذي ابتليت وتخلص  
نفسك به ، فانتبه الرجل وذكر هذه الرؤيا للموليين به فخرجوا الى ذلك  
الموضع واستخرجوا تلك الدراهم ودفعها اليهم وتخلص من البلا .

وامثال هذه الرؤيا كثيرة وانما تكون في اوقات الشدائد والتحير في  
الامر المخوفة العظيمة وترى عند الوقوع في ذنب كبير عند حصول شسواب  
عظيم .



Chapter 19

Why are dreams carrying bad messages fulfilled  
sooner than those carrying good news? (1)

Dreams which carry good tidings, (al-ru'yā al-mubashshirah) their fulfilment is distant, while those carrying evil messages, (al-ru'yā al-mundhirah) are accomplished almost immediately.

The reason being that the divine power sends good messages early, long before the things seen in dreams occur in reality, in order to allow the dreamer a long period of joyful anticipation. In the case of bad dreams, the divine power shortens the time of disturbance in the mind of the dreamer, while preparing him for the coming disaster.

People believe that the varying degrees of time which elapse before a good or a bad dream materialise, is due to the nature of the dreams themselves. They believe that happiness is difficult to grasp, while misery is forever close at hand.

The fact is that both good and evil were equal in relation to human nature.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 12.



## Chapter 20

### Dreams and Omens.(1)

Dreams differ fundamentally from omens. The basis of omens is entirely fallacious. It rests on a mere coincidence by which man predicts the future. Dreams are signs of the future, since they are sent by God who is the cause of the future. The relation between them and the future is not a matter of coincidence, as in the case of omens.

#### Comment:

Omens are considered by the Arabs to be a branch of Al-Kihānah (fortune-telling). It is chiefly based on the motions and positions of birds, or of gazelles and other beasts of the chase.

Thus an animal standing or passing with its right side towards the spectator was esteemed by the Arabs as a good omen and was termed Al-Sāniḥ. If the animal stood or passed with its left side towards the spectator, it was regarded as a bad omen and was called Al-Bāriḥ.(2)

If an Arab, for example, started out on an important journey and he saw a bird flying with its right side towards him, he would take it as a good omen, but if he saw it flying with

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(1) Ms. Ch. 13.

(2) Muḥammad IBN Yasīd al-Mubarrad, al-Kāmil fī al-Lughah, Vol.I, p.189 (Cairo 1355 A.H.).



its left side towards him, he would regard it as a warning of impending danger.

It is obvious that the success or failure of this journey is dependent upon the manner in which man may set out, that is, whether he has the ability which will lead him to his goal or not. To see a bird flying with its left or right side towards the spectator at the start of a journey is neither the cause nor part of the cause of success or failure. Such an incident has no relation to either success or failure.

Arabs before Islam regarded omens as one of the methods of divining the future, although a small number of them denied their validity.

Al-Nābighah al-Dhibyānī and Raiyān IBN Saiyār al-Fizārī were planning a raid, when a locust alighted on Al-Nābighah's head. He regarded it as an evil omen for two reasons; the body of the locust was two-coloured, and the word for locust in Arabic is al-jarād which is derived from the same root as the word for deprivation. So he abandoned his journey and Raiyān went alone and was successful. He returned laden with spoil and composed the following poem:

Ziyād held that an evil omen foretells misfortune,  
 This however is fallacious.  
 He abandoned his journey as though he was advised  
 by Luqman IBN 'Ād.  
 You must realise that all omens are misleading  
 Some of them sometimes come true by mere coincidence.  
 While the rest have no foundation.(1)

(1) IBN Abi Al-Hadid, Vol.4, p.432 (Cairo 1329 A.H).



With the birth of Islam the Arabs followed the teaching of Muhammad, who said "Do not put faith in a bad omen, but rather take a good omen."(1) It seems from this that he accepted good omens and ignored the bad. But this is illogical, since the basis of both omens is one and the same. If one accepts good omens then he should accept the bad, and if he rejects one he should reject the other.

There is, however, another tradition according to which Muhammad said "Omens do not influence fate" - "al-fa'l lā yarudd qadarān", (2) which indicates that he ignored even good omens. But this contradiction might be avoided if one assumes that the prophet meant by the first tradition, be optimistic rather than pessimistic.

### Chapter 21

#### The General Rules of Interpretation.(3)

The Interpreter should commence by enquiring

- (i) the dreamer's class, habit, religion, etc.
- (ii) the subject of the dream, whether it is animal, vegetable or mineral
- (iii) the condition in which the dream appeared
- (iv) its effects on the dreamer
- (v) to whom the dream concerns

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(1) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.114 (London 1935).

(2) Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Vol.4, p.431 (Cairo 1329 A.H).

(3) Ms. Ch. 14.



in fact everything relating to him personally, and of all the circumstances, even the most trivial, connected with his dream.

Then the dream should be judged in the light of these circumstances.

**Comment:**

It seems that those who believed in veridical dreams held two different views on the qualification of the interpreters.(1) Some believed that the art of interpretation should necessarily be of divine origin, since the dream itself is from God. Others believed that the interpreters should learn from dream books which contain rules laid down by the experience of ages.

Avicenna(2) tells us that both the Greeks and the Arabs favoured the second view. They believed that the interpreters should have wide knowledge and great experience. It is important also for the interpreter to know the dreamer's age, country, religion, rank and condition of life.

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(1) Ratcliff, History of Dreams, p.35 (London 1923).

(2) Ms. Ch. 29, 30.



Chapter 22.

The Interpretation of Dreams depends on the dreamer's language, religion, rank and circumstance.(1)

For example: for a soldier to dream that he is fighting with a weapon is a good omen. But for a pious man to have the same dream is a bad omen.

If a Jew dreams that he has eaten camel's flesh it is a bad omen because it is forbidden to him according to the Mosaic laws; but if the dreamer be Gentile it is indifferent, since camel's flesh is prohibited only to Jews.

If a Persian dreamt of a quince it would be a good omen, since the name of this fruit in his language is equivalent to the name of "good". But if the dreamer were an Arab, it would be the sign of a long journey, since safarjal in Arabic is quince, but split up safar - jal, it means a long journey.

If a man dreamt that he stood naked in the bazaar, it would be a sign of disgrace, but if it happened in his own private bath, it would be harmless.

If a man dreamt he was clothed in fur or sitting by a fire in summer it would be a bad sign, but if it was in winter it would be a good sign.

To dream of having drunk too much would be a sign of sorrow, but to dream of having taken little would be a sign of happiness.

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(1) Ms. Ch.15.



### Chapter 23.

#### The Symbols of Sovereign Power in Dreams.(1)

There are several figures which indicate sovereign power, such as the sun, the sea, a wide valley, a big city, a high tree a large building, an elephant and a lion. The king may be represented by any one of these symbols, since each one of them under some aspects may be related to him. Both the sun and the king are important factors in their own particular spheres. The sun is the greatest power in the physical world and the king is the greatest in the political world. The sun is the cause of light. Many phenomena in the realms of nature are affected by its heat. Life and death, growth and decay, night and day, the four seasons and varied temperaments of human nature. All are under the influence of the sun. The king, if he be just, of noble origin and of high character, will influence his subjects and lead them to prosperity and happiness. Thus his position is similar to that of the sun.

The sea represents the grandeur of the king. Both may bring either wealth or destruction to man. The sea is a source of many benefits. It supplies water which is necessary for life and in the seasure found many precious stones. These advantages, however, are only possible for those who can obtain them. The inexperienced who seek these things may perish.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 16.



This also applies to the king. He will reward those whose attitude pleases him and destroy those who displease him.

Thus it is not difficult to see the relationship between the king and the other symbols mentioned. If the valley, for example, were arid, it would indicate a tyrannical king; were it flooded, it would indicate a bountiful and much-travelled king.

Both the elephant and the lion indicate a severe oppressive king.

The high mountain indicates a very strong unshaken king.

There are many other symbols for the king, such as those which represent his glory, his power and his influence, etc.

It is very important to consider the form in which these pictures appear, since every form has a special meaning and, therefore, a different interpretation.

The water of the sea, for instance, may be either increasing or decreasing or dried up. Each one of these conditions has a particular interpretation.

#### Comment:

Avicenna gave these details of symbols which represent the king in dreams for two purposes. The first was to please the king to whom he dedicated his book. The second was to show and prove that dreams are expressed in the same language which man uses in ordinary life.



### Chapter 24.

The Interpretation of Dreams is a difficult subject;  
Greek and Arab methods of approach.(1)

All we have said in the previous chapters is our own idea because we found no satisfactory treatises on the subject by the many who came before us. They did not approach it from the right angle or with the right treatment. That was because the subject is based on different sciences, mythology, physics, and politics, while at the same time requiring a wide knowledge and experience. It is obvious that any subject cannot attract the reader unless the premises are clear, thus we struggled to clear the way in order to assist the reader to understand the subject, and to present the arguments of Greek and Arab philosophers, the general rules of interpretation of dreams. Finally we intend to include only the essential points, discarding the superfluous. What the Arabs and Greeks have said we shall attribute to them, what remains is our original contribution to the subject.

### Chapter 25

The difference between true and false dreams.(2)

Dreams are of two kinds, the true which are called (الرؤيا)  
and the false (اضغاث الاحلام)

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(1) Ms. Ch. 17.

(2) Ms. Ch. 18.



The main differences between them are, first, that the first group deals with the future while the second group is concerned with the past or the present. Secondly, true dreams can be interpreted and false dreams cannot. Thirdly, the source of the true dreams may be purely spiritual, while that of the false dreams is material. Last, the greatest difference between them is that true dreams come from outside man, and false dreams come from man himself.

The causes of false dreams are:

- (i) Unfulfilled desires of the waking state.
- (ii) Frightful events which occurred during wakefulness and which disturbed the mind of the dreamer.
- (iii) Reflection of the state of the body at the time of dreaming: when there is much heat in the body we dream of heat. Similarly when the body is affected by cold we dream of cold.
- (iv) Pictures stored in the memory during the waking state.
- (v) Disturbances in the four humours of the body. A melancholic temperament dreams of dark, confused and frightful pictures. A choleric temperament sees fire and yellow and red images. A phlegmatic temperament dreams of rain, water, lakes and white things. A sanguine temperament dreams of drinking, singing, amusements and all kinds of pleasure.



**Comment:**

I. The dreams which carry no true messages (confused dreams) are called *ahlāms* and sometimes *adghāth*, a word meaning handfuls of dried grass and weeds, probably signifying their worthlessness. These two words were mentioned in the Quran (XII.44) in connection with the dreams which came to Pharaoh.

II. The Greek writers adopted a division similar to that of Avicenna. They called the false dreams *Insomnium* (present feeling) and true dreams *Somnium*(1) [forotelling the future). These two words correspond to *al-ru'yā* and *adghāth*.

III. The basis of this classification may be traced in the following tradition. It was related that Muhammad said: "Dreams are divided into three groups, terrors caused by Satan to disturb man, unfulfilled desires occupying man's mind during the waking state and dreams which constitute one of the forty-six of the prophecy."(2)

• Chapter 26

Clear and obscure dreams. (3)

**Comment:**

This chapter is repetition of part of the Ms. Ch. 11.

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- (1) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, first series, Vol. XVI, p.128.  
 (2) Islamic Culture, p.151 (1936).  
 (3) The Ms. Ch. 19.



Chapter 27.

Individual, national and universal dreams.(1)

Dreams are divided into three groups; those which concern an individual, those which concern a particular nation, and those which concern the whole of the universe. For example:-

(i) a man dreamt that he was dead. Shortly afterwards his father died.

(ii) A man dreamt that he became blind, shortly after the dream, his son died.

(iii) A man dreamt that his father was consumed by fire. Shortly afterwards the dreamer himself died.

(iv) A merchant dreamt that his mother was ill. Shortly afterwards his business deteriorated owing to a stagnant market.

(v) A man dreamt that he was suffering from grief. When the dream ended one of his friends was afflicted.

As a rule, the head is a symbol of the father, the leg of the slave, the right hand of the brother and the left hand of the mother, wife, sister or daughter.

The universal dream is distinguished by two characteristics. The first is that the message which is sent in this way must be very important, deals with human life on a large scale and affects the universe. The second is that the dreamer who receives this message should be either a king or a philosopher.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 20.



**Comment:**

I. The five dreams quoted previously belong to the first group, the individual dream. In an earlier chapter, when Avicenna was describing Aristotle's conception of the divine power, he mentioned the dream which came to Heraclius, as an example of the universal dream. Of the second group of dreams, those which concern a particular nation, Avicenna gave no example.

II. Al-Fārābī mentioned the universal dream as a parallel to the individual dream without giving a definition of it. Avicenna was the first to give an accurate definition with full details.

**Chapter 28.**

The interpretation of dreams.(1)

**Comment:**

This chapter is a part of the Ms. Ch. 25.

**Chapter 29.**

Classification of Dreams  
according to the Greeks.(2)

The Greek philosophers divided dreams into four groups.

The first are those which contain many objects foretelling

(1) Ms. Ch. 21.

(2) Ms. Ch. 22.



many events. For example, a man who was on a distant journey dreamt he was flying in the air and seeking something which he afterwards found and then he was flying again in company with a flock of strange birds. The fortune of that man was that he returned home and undertook another journey with new associates.

The second are those which contain one object foretelling one event. A man dreamt that his eyes turned into gold. The fortune of that man was that he became blind.

The third are those which consist of one object foretelling many events. A man dreamt that his name was rubbed out. Later he lost his property and became poor, settled abroad and then died from excessive worry.

The fourth are those consisting of many objects which indicate only one event. A man dreamt that he was playing chess, losing and was near to suffering checkmate, but to avoid it, he fled to a hospital which was in the charge of a man named Jamal, then he returned home and a branch of a tree grew from his thigh. The whole was fulfilled by the roof of his house falling and breaking his leg and nearly killing him.

Being near checkmate and running away from it denoted his escape from death, going to a hospital his illness, the name of the man who was in charge of the hospital, Jamal, showed his leg would be broken like a camel's when bent for kneeling, the tree growing from his thigh, that his limb would resemble a bough in stiffness.



Chapter 30Another classification of dreams  
according to the Greeks. (1)

The Greek philosophers classified dreams in another way. They put them under four headings; the first are those which carry pleasant messages of good fortune, such as those in which we see ourselves associated with angels, the prophets and our friends. The second are those which carry pleasant messages foretelling the opposite. For example, a man dreamt that he had taken ten tablets from the sun. The result was that this man died ten days later. The third are those which carry ill messages foretelling ill fortune, as when a man dreamt that he was sent to prison or his property was plundered or he fell down from a high place. The fourth group are those which carry ill messages foretelling the opposite, such as those in which one sees thunder. If the dreamer were a slave he would be released, poor, he would become rich, fighting his enemy he would defeat him, or journeying by sea he would return safely.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 23.



### Chapter 31

The time in which dreams occur. (1)

Dreams occurring by day are not more truthful than those occurring by night, the reason being that time had no effect whatsoever on the dreams or on the nature of the messages which they carry. The fact is that dreams are sent by God merely to succour man in his hour of need. Since this need may occur at daytime as well as at night, it is obvious then that both day and night bear equal claim to true dreams.

The same may be said about false dreams, though for different reasons. False dreams, whether caused by the condition of the body or by disturbances in the mind, may occur at any time of the day or night.

#### Comment:

In this chapter, Avicenna came to deal with the practical aspect of dreams; the measure by which their soundness can be judged.

It was generally accepted by Muhammadans that the truthfulness of dreams depends, to a great extent, on the time when they occur. They believed that dreams occurring by day were more to be relied on than those at night and, according to the tradition "the truest dreams occur at daybreak", the nearer the day the better. Some gave importance to the season in which dreams

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(1) Ms. Ch. 24.



occur. They believed that those dreamt in spring and summer were truer than those in autumn and winter.(1)

In fact Greek philosophers held a similar idea to that of Muhammadans. At the end of the 4th book of Artemidorus is a chapter on the period of fulfilment of dreams, chiefly depending on the time and season when dreams occur.(2)

Some Muhammadans considered the images which appear in dreams as a measure of their soundness.(3) The devil, says Jābir al-Maghrabī, though able to assume all other forms, is not permitted to appear in the semblance of the Deity, angels, prophets or any of the higher order of created objects. There would otherwise be much danger to human salvation as he might, under the appearance of one of the prophets or of some superior being, make use of this power to seduce men to sin.(4)

It was related that Muhammad said that the devil cannot assume his likeness to deceive in dreams.(5)

If we consider this matter in the light of prophecy which covers both dreams and revelation during the waking hours, we find that the Muslims did not establish a measure by which they

(1) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, first series, Vol.XVI, p.129.

(2) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, first series, Vol.XVI, p.139.

(3) Al-Qushairi, al-Risālah al-Qushairiyah, p.228 (Cairo, 1284 AH)

(4) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, first series, Vol.XVI, p.127.

(5) Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā al-<sup>u</sup>lūm, Vol.4, p.432 (Cairo, 1334 A.H).



might decide whether prophecy came from God or from the Devil in the real sense, though they established a half measure.

Al-Shahrastānī said that some people rejected the belief in prophecy on the grounds that prophets cannot distinguish the voice of God from the voice of the devil. Al-Shahrastānī was unable to give a satisfactory answer.(1)

We have an instance of this in the life of Muhammad. When the revelation came to him in the cave of Hīrā, he was unable to make up his mind whether this voice was the voice of God or the devil, until his wife reassured him and took him to her cousin Warāqah,(2) who gave him confidence, assuring him that it was the voice of God.

That is why IBN Sīrīn(3) used to say to the dreamer before interpreting his dream: if your dream comes true it means ..... Implying that there is no way of deciding whether the dream is to be trusted or not.

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(1) See:

(a) Al-Shahrastānī, Kitāb Nihāyat Al-Iqdām fi 'ilm al-Kalām, p.134 (London 1934).

(b) Muhammad IBN Zakariyā al-Rāzī, Rasā'il Falsafiyah, Vol.I, p.291 (collected and edited by Braus (Cairo 1939)).

(2) Arnold, The Quran and The Bible, p.67 (London 1866).

(3) Muntakhabe al-Kalām fi Ta'bir al-ahlām, Vol.I, p.136 (Cairo 1301 A.H).



Chapter 32

Habits and customs play a part in the  
interpretation of dreams.(1)

The habits of the dreamer play a prominent role in the interpretation of dreams. These habits fall into three categories, human, national and individual. These three, however, exist within each individual, since he is a unit of both his race and humanity.

Each community in the world has its own way of life and its customs are the expression of that life. The origin of these customs is either religious or traditional. For example:

(1) Persians allowed marriage between brother and sister while Muhammadans prohibited it.(2)

(1) Ms. Ch. 25.

(2) Marriage between brother and sister was adopted by the Royal Family in Persia and it is probable that it was also adopted by the common people. It is not certain whether this form of marriage was a national custom or due to special circumstances such as the belief in the virtue of Royal blood, or due to a decay of morality. Avicenna's statement, however, gives the impression that this form of marriage was a national custom, since he referred to it while discussing the influence of the national customs on dreams.

Assuming on the other hand that Avicenna meant by the word Parsis and not Persians; this will bring us to a delicate point, next of kin marriage, on which the historians differed. The Greeks and Latins maintained that next of kin marriage which was adopted by the Parsis referred to marriage of parents with their children and of uterine brothers and sisters, while Parsi scholars believed that it referred only to marriage between cousins.



(ii) Greeks, on the contrary, prohibited marriage between relatives. They only accepted marriage with someone outside the family.(1)

(iii) Persians worshipped fire, while this custom was not accepted by other nations.

(iv) Beef is prohibited among the Hindus, while people in Sind sacrifice cows to God.

(v) Wine is forbidden only in Islam, while it is permissible in all other religions.

(vi) Beans are forbidden by the Sabian religion while they are permissible among other religions.(2)

(vii) Camel's meat is forbidden only according to the Mosaic laws.(3)

(viii) Persians disapprove of conversation while eating, but Muhammadans approve of it.

(1) Avicenna's statement here contradicts the fact that the Greeks did not prohibit marriage between relatives. On the contrary they encouraged it and sometimes enforced it. Marriage of cousins was common, union of uncle and niece, aunt and nephew, sister and brother, all these forms of marriage were possible.

Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.8, p.444.

(2) Chwolson, Die Saabier und<sup>der</sup> Saabismus, Bände 2, p.10 (Petersburg 1856). Sabians prohibited beans and garlic, some of them also prohibited haricot, cauliflower, cabbages and lentils.

(3) Deut. 14, 7.



Chapter 33

Clear and vague dreams and their  
fulfilment. (1)

**Comment:**

This chapter is repetition of the Ms, Ch. 11, 18 and 19.

Chapter 34

Good and Bad Dreams.(2)

As a rule, dream pictures whether they be good or bad in themselves are a sign of good if they appear logical. There are three standards by which dream pictures may be judged: by nature, by religion and by custom. If the dream conflicts with one of these or with more than one, it is an evil sign.

Chapter 35.

The Interpretation of Obscure Dreams.(3)

If a dream is partly vague the clear part should be interpreted and the vague part ignored. If a dream is completely vague, it should be interpreted in the light of similar dreams. If it was peculiar and with no resemblance it should not be interpreted.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 26.

(2) Ms. Ch. 27.

(3) Ms. Ch. 28.



The Greek interpreters maintained that dreams should not be interpreted unless the dreamer had a complete picture of his dream.

### Chapter 36.

#### Allegorical Interpretation of Dreams.(1)

In addition to habits of the dreamer the interpreter should be familiar with the rhetorical language the dreamer is accustomed to using, because sometimes it is necessary to interpret dreams literally and sometimes metaphorically.

For example, a milkman saw in a dream that he was eating the flesh of his mother. All the interpreters thought that it indicated the acquisition of illegal money. The result was that the dreamer left his city and settled in another where he started a new business. Later on he discovered that the name of the city was "Mother".

A merchant lost his property and became very poor, then he had a dream in which he saw a man who gave him an agricultural implement made of iron which turned to gold in his hands. The result was that this man became a farmer and regained his fortune as a result of his labour.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 29.



Another man was beset by difficulties that he could not solve; saw in a dream a man who handed him a flower, saying that he could solve his difficulties by smelling the flower. An interpreter told him his problems would be solved when the flower bloomed again.

A man dreamt that his leg was of ebony; the interpreters were unable to explain this dream. It happened afterwards that he bought an excellent black slave, the leg signified a servant and ebony the colour of his skin.

The Greeks said that interpreters should be acquainted with many sciences, different races, religions, and rhetoric, while they must have sagacity and experience.

### Chapter 37.

#### The Qualifications of Interpreters according to the Arabs. (1)

#### Comment:

This chapter is a part of the Ms. Chapters 17 and 18.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 30.



Chapter 38.The use of Aphorisms in the Interpretation  
of Dreams. (1)

## Comment:

This chapter is a part of the Ms. Chapters 29 and 32.

Chapter 39.The use of Aphorisms in the Interpretation  
of Dreams. (2)

If one saw in a dream an object in its wrong place, it is an evil omen. For example:

If a king dreamt that he was in a public place or that he was mixing with a crowd, it would be a sign that he would lose his privilege, since kings, according to custom, are not supposed to mix with crowds.

The aphorisms which are current in language play a prominent role in the interpretation of dreams, since the dreamer is influenced by them.

To dream that the right hand was growing longer would be a sign of generosity by the dreamer, because the Arabic phrase for a generous man is "Yaduh al-Yumna Tawilah".

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(1) Ms. Ch. 31.

(2) Ms. Ch. 32.



To dream of washing one's hand is a sign of disappointment because the Arabic phrase for disappointment is "Ighsil Yadak Min Kadhā".

To dream of digging a well indicates that one is planning a pitfall for someone, because the Arabic phrase for such a plan is "Fulān Yahfir bi' rā' 'alā Tariq fulān".

There are dreams which must be interpreted in the opposite way. For instance sorrow indicates happiness.

#### Chapter 40.

##### The Reciprocal and Antithetical Interpretation of Dreams.(1)

The Arabs maintained that some dreams should be interpreted by opposite, for instance dream-sorrow means happiness, victory means defeat.

#### Chapter 41.

##### The condition of the dream subject determines the interpretation.(2)

Weeping indicates happiness, but if accompanied by wailing, it indicates sorrow. Laughter is a sign of sorrow, but smiling is a sign of happiness. Eating walnuts indicates the discovery

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(1) Ms. Ch. 33.

(2) Ms. Ch. 34.



of hidden money, but if the dreamer has difficulty in cracking the shell then a quarrel is indicated. Perfume which stains one's clothes indicates praise, but if the mark alone remains without the smell, then this signifies illness. To dream of having wings means a rise in rank, but to fly with them indicates a journey.

**Comment:**

These few examples show that Avicenna adopted three methods of interpretation. The first is that of "symbolical" interpretation, in which things seen in dreams are taken to be exact pictures of what will happen in reality. This method is called in Arabic "Ta'wīl al-ru'yā min ma'nāhā".

The second is that of "reciprocal and antithetical" interpretation in which things seen in dreams are the contrary in their results. If sorrow, for example, were the subject of a dream, it would indicate happiness, and vice versa. This method is called "Ta'wīl al-ru'yā bi al-dīd".

The third is that of "etymological" interpretation, in which the meaning is derived from the names of things seen in dreams. A camel, for example, indicates beauty, since its name came from the same root as the word for beauty. This method is called "Ta'wīl al-ru'yā 'alā al-qānīn al-sarfi".

These three methods which appear to have been adopted by Avicenna can be justified for the following reasons.



(i) Man's expression of his ideas does not depend upon whether he is awake or asleep. Man in sleep pictures the ideas which come to his mind, judges them and expresses them in the same way as he does when awake.(1)

(ii) In the waking state, we express our ideas in different ways, directly or indirectly. We use a word in its real meaning or ironically in an opposite meaning, or to denote something relating to it. In short, we have three ways of expressing ourselves.

(iii) If we express ourselves during sleep in the same way as in the waking state, it follows that we should have three methods of interpretation.

It seems that the Muslim interpreters before Avicenna adopted five methods(2) of interpretation; the three methods accepted by Avicenna, and interpretation based on the Quran with interpretation based on numbers. Avicenna did not adopt these two; there is, however, a wide difference between them and the other three. Avicenna's methods are based on the dreamer's thoughts, while the other two are in no way related to him.

Only in the case of the method based on the Quran, it may be said that if the dreamer were influenced by the Quran, then he would express himself in the language of the Quran. Then we

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(1) Ms. Ch. 10.

(2) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, p.3 (1940).



must take into consideration the Quran as a means of interpretation. But the Quran in that case is like any text which might influence the mind of the dreamer.

Perhaps the best example of the interpretation based on the Quran is that which is found in the history of the Caliph Al-Mahdī (1) who dreamt that his face was black, an omen which caused him much alarm on waking. Ibrahim, Ibn Abd<sup>c</sup> Allah al-Kirmānī, who was considered to have more experience and skill in the interpretation of dreams, told the Caliph that he would be the father of a female child. The Caliph gave him a thousand pieces of silver for converting a supposed evil omen into good, and that same day a daughter was born to the Caliph, who presented the interpreter with ten thousand dirhams more. The interpretation was according to the following passage of the Quran: "and when any of them is told the news of the birth of a female, his face becomes black and he is deeply afflicted." (2)

#### Chapter 42.

In chapters 35, 36, 37 and 38<sup>of the M.S.</sup>, Avicenna repeats what he has already said in the previous chapters concerning the method of interpretation and the qualifications of the interpreters.

(1) Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, First Series, Vol. XVI, p. 121.

(2) The Quran, 16, 57.



Chapter 43.Avicenna <sup>SAD</sup>: (1)

Now we have to consider each dream separately under its own head and its own rule of interpretation.

The Arabs arranged dreams according to the importance of their subjects; they started with the deity, angels and prophets, etc, while the Greeks started with those of man, his affairs and what is related to him, etc, since man, they said, is the noblest creature on the earth and dreams affect his life and his future.

We however followed the Greek method in this book.

Birth (2)

To dream of being born is generally a good omen:

- (i) If the dreamer has a desire, he will obtain it.
- (ii) If he is afflicted, he will be relieved.
- (iii) If his wife is pregnant she will be blessed with a boy.
- (iv) If he is abroad he will return home.
- (v) If he is ill he will recover.
- (vi) If he has committed a crime, he will never be condemned.
- (vii) If he is poor he will become rich.
- (viii) If he is expecting a gift he will receive it.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 39.

(2) Ms. Ch. 40.



(ix) If he has a problem he will find a solution.

(x) But if he is competent in his occupation he will lose his skill.

(xi) If he is a king, he will lose his power.

(xii) If he is a slave he will never be emancipated.

(xiii) If he is brave, he will be a coward.

(xiv) If he is in prison, he will never be released.

(xv) If he is deciding on a journey he will not carry out his plan.

(xvi) If he had an enemy, his enemy will defeat him.

(xvii) If he is a respectable man he will lose his prestige.

(xviii) And if he is rich, he will become poor.

If a man dreamt that he gave birth to a child, it is a sign of disaster.

As a rule, it is better to dream of males than of females.

#### The Head.(1)

A large head is a sign of being a leader, a small ugly head is a bad omen, more than one head is a sign of being rich; if the dreamer is poor; marriage, if he is single; having children, if he has none; or a quarrel, if he is a ruler.

The head is a symbol of an influential person.

Being beheaded indicates freedom if the dreamer is a slave

Having the head of a lion, leopard or camel is a sign of

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(1) Ms. Ch. 41.



power and defeating enemies; if the dreamer has no enemies, it is a sign of having the character of the animal seen.

The Greeks believed that: if a sailor dreams that he is beheaded it is a sign of his death and the sinking of his ship. If a person dreams that he is turned upside down, it is a sign of his return home, if he is abroad; a journey, if he is at home, or regret for a lost opportunity. Having one's head in the wrong place is a sign of disaster.

#### Hair (1)

Beautiful hair is a good omen, if the dreamer is a woman, slave, or a man who was in the habit of keeping his hair like a woman. Curly hair is a bad omen.

Losing the hair from the forehead is a sign of humiliation, from the back of the head is a sign of death and from the whole head, the loss of beauty.

Beautiful hair means a bad omen for a man, it means a good omen if he dreams that he is cutting his hair.

#### The Forehead (2)

A beautiful forehead is a good omen, an ugly one, bad.

A forehead made of iron or stone is a bad omen unless the dreamer is a debauchee, then it is good.

#### The Eyebrows

Well marked and luxurious eyebrows are a good omen, ill formed ones, bad.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 42.

(2) Ms. Ch. 43.



### The Eyes (1)

Good eyesight is a good omen, weak eyesight, bad, especially for those whose occupation calls for great use of the eyes, such as painters and astrologists.

The loss of the eyes is a sign of loss of strength or disappointment.

The right eye is a symbol of sons and the left eye of daughters.

Having more than two eyes indicates many children unless the dreamer has a secret desire, then it will be a sign of disappointment, and if he is afraid of losing his life, his prestige or his wealth, it is a sign of safety.

Having eyes in the wrong place indicates a catastrophe affecting the children.

A man who had two daughters and two slaves dreamt that his eyes were transferred to his legs. It happened that his two slaves married his two daughters.

### The Ears (2)

Large and well shaped ears indicate a great success, small ears indicate disappointment.

Animals' ears indicate a slanderous disposition.

### The Nose (3)

A well shaped nose is a good omen, an ugly nose is a bad

OMEN.

(1) Ms. Ch. 44.

(2) Ms. Ch. 45.

(3) Ms. Ch. 46.



Loss of the nose indicates the loss of honour and beauty.  
Two noses indicate a quarrel among relatives.

The Beard.(1)

A large luxurious beard is a symbol of prestige. Too long a beard indicates trouble.

The Greeks maintained that a beard indicates marriage if the dreamer is a single woman, if she is married then it is a sign of giving birth to a boy. The loss of the beard indicates marriage if the dreamer is a single man, if he is married then it is a sign that his wife will give birth to a girl.

If a boy dreamt that he has a beard it is a sign of the death of his father or guardian, and that he will have to take care of himself.

**Comment:**

These few examples are sufficient to show how Avicenna classified dreams and how he interpreted them.

As Avicenna was not the last person to study dreams, it is necessary to see how far this subject developed in the hands of his successors.

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(1) Ms. Ch. 47.



Chapter 44.

Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna (1)

Al-Ghazālī said:

Man is created from two different elements, the body which is subject to generation and corruption, and the soul which gives completion to the body. By the soul we do not mean the vegetal soul, nor the animal soul, we mean only that power which is concerned with comprehension and which is receptive of all types of knowledge; a power which lives, acts and comprehends. This soul has different names with various groups of people. The philosophers call it the "rational soul", the Quran calls it the "soul at rest" and the Sūfīs call it the "spirit" or "heart". Though the names of the soul differ the meaning is one.

The soul has five faculties. The first is the sense faculty which receives information from the senses. It is the

(1) See Al-Ghazālī's:

(a) Al-Risālah al-Ladunīyah, part 2, 3 (Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 1938, translated by Margaret Smith).

(b) Mishkāt al-Anwār, p.30, 39 (Cairo 1322 A.H).

(c) Iljām al-<sup>ʿ</sup>awāmm<sup>ʿ</sup>an <sup>ʿ</sup>ilm al-kalām, p.7, 24 (Cairo 1309 AH)

(d) Al-Munqidh Min Al-Ḍalāl, p.24, 28 (Cairo 1309 A.H).

(e) Al-Madnūn Al-Saghīr Fī Masāʾil Al-Rūh, p.5.  
(Cairo 1309 A.H).

(f) Al-Madnūn Al-Kabīr, p.19 (Cairo 1309 A.H).



root of the animal soul. The second is the imaginative faculty which keeps that information and presents it to the intellect when the information is called for. The third is the intellectual faculty which apprehends ideas beyond the spheres of senses and imagination. It is a specifically human faculty. The fourth is the discursive faculty which takes the data of pure reason, arranges them as premises and creates from them knowledge. The fifth is the prophetic faculty which sees future events, those things while they are unseen by the intellectual and the discursive faculties. This faculty is peculiar to the prophets and some saints.

As the animal soul seeks the delights of passion and the vegetal soul loves the pleasures of eating and drinking, so the rational soul seeks knowledge which may be attained either by human teaching or divine teaching. The latter is of two types, "revelation" and "inspiration". Revelation knowledge comes from the "universal mind" while inspiration knowledge comes from the "universal soul". The first is limited to the prophets and ceased with them. The second is granted also to the saints, it may be acquired in both the waking and the sleeping state.

The "universal mind" is nearer to God than the "universal soul" which is in turn nearer to perfection than man. Inspired knowledge therefore is weak compared with revelation and strong compared with science.



The door of revelation is closed but the door of inspiration is open, since man needs continual help and advice.

Comment:

- I. It is clear that Al-Ghasālī, unlike Avicenna, approached the subject without making an enquiry into sleep.
- II. His conception of the soul is like that of Avicenna. On many occasions he even used Avicenna's words, such as "the soul is like the rider and the body like the horse".
- III. He believed that the soul has five faculties, the four mentioned by Avicenna and what he called the prophetic faculty which sees things beyond the intellect.
- IV. Like Avicenna, he borrowed the Sūfism of "Rasā'il Ikhwān Al-Safā". But Avicenna merely coloured his argument with this Sūfism, while Al-Ghasālī was entirely dependent upon it.
- V. The knowledge which man acquires through dreams, according to Avicenna, is due to the power of the mind and perfection of the soul. Al-Ghasālī, however, believed it due to a supreme power beyond man's understanding, something which cannot be comprehended by the intellect; its authority is al-shar<sup>c</sup> and not al-<sup>c</sup>agl.
- VI. Al-Ghasālī believed that the knowledge which comes through dreams is created by God at the time of dreaming. Avicenna, on the other hand, considered that man acquires this knowledge by contact with the spiritual world. This knowledge is always



present, since its essence and its existence are one and the same, so it cannot be created. The future is present in the mind of the spheres. Thus when man frees himself from the material and is absorbed into the spirit he naturally becomes aware of the future.

VII. Al-Ghasālī believed that this transcendental knowledge is a "gift" of God, a reward for sacrificing material ends, while Avicenna considered it as a "right" of man, and a natural process.

VIII. The gulf between Avicenna and Al-Ghasālī is not merely the difference between two methods of interpretation. It is a difference which divides the roots of their philosophies. When Avicenna says: "God sent his message to man", he means that the obstacles between God and man were removed and that man was in a position to communicate with the spiritual world. When Avicenna speaks of "creation" he means "emanation", while Al-Ghasālī used these words in their usual accepted sense.

In short, Avicenna is a philosopher who uses religion to support his ideas, while Al-Ghasālī is a religious man utilizing philosophy to support his ideas. In Al-Ghasālī's time there was a movement in Islam to replace the philosophy which had been built upon a Greek foundation by Sūfiism. Al-Ghasālī was the leader of this movement.(1)

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(1) De Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, translated by Janes, p.154 (London 1903).



IX. The most noticeable point about Al-Ghazālī in this connection is his conception of prophecy. <sup>(Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl P.28)</sup> Prophecy, he said, is the power to comprehend the future. This power has no connection with the intellect. It is above the intellect. Some people who read books of philosophy believed that they understood prophecy and its aims. They said religious instruction and practical devotion are only a means of discipline for the multitude and their aim is to train the common people to control their "passion". Religion is only for those who are ignorant, not for the philosophers who follow "reason". This is the belief of Avicenna and Al-Fārābī who pretended to be Muslims. They read the Quran, prayed and yet they drank wine and practised other debauchery. If one asks them "why do you perform the prayer?" they answer "because it keeps the body healthy and because it is a habit". If one asks "Why then do you drink wine?" they answer "because it sharpens the mind". Wine was prohibited for those common people who indulged in excess, "but we are philosophers, can control our minds and we follow reason"

Al-Ghazālī charged Avicenna with positive infidelity for three reasons: he taught the eternity of the world, God's ignorance of particulars and denied the resurrection of the body

Therefore, it is not correct, as stated by Sweetman (1) that "Al-Ghazālī derived his exposition of prophethood, revelation, inspiration and vision from Avicenna".

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(1) Islam and Christian Theology, Part I, Vol.I, p.51



### Chapter 45.

#### IBN Malkā and Avicenna.

IBN Malkā said:(1) Dreams are a state in which the intellect is active during sleep. The faculties of the soul function during both sleep and wakefulness. They comprehend things, analyse them and express them in different ways; either literally or metaphorically.

Dreams are divided into three groups:

- (i) those which are concerned with the past,
- (ii-a) those which reflect the physical state of the body,
- (ii-b) or which disclose things unseen, such as a treasure buried in the ground, and
- (iii) those which concern the future

The first group and those which reflect the physical state of the body are called "confused dreams". They have no meaning although people once believed that every dream had a divine meaning. The only dreams worthy of discussion are (iii) and (ii-b).

How can dreams foretell the future and disclose things unseen? There are two theories; first that prophecy is a characteristic of the human soul. Man has the power to discover hidden things and to anticipate the future. While awake, the stimuli which arise from the world without, affect man's soul and prevent it from using this power. But while man is

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(1) Al-mu<sup>c</sup>tabar, Vol.2, p.417 (Huderabad Deccan 1337 A.H).



asleep, his soul is free from outside influence and can exercise this power.

The second theory is that the human soul itself does not make this discovery, but it is God who reveals these hidden things to man through the medium of angels. Human life, in fact, is guided by angels who instruct and advise man, so that he may improve his life and attain a high degree of perfection. This theory was accepted by the majority of the theologians.

Avicenna, following Aristotle, believed that prophecy through dreams is a result of the connection between man and the spheres. He based his idea on the fact that God's essence is purely intellect and since intellect cannot comprehend individuals, then God is ignorant of individuals and cannot give man this kind of knowledge. Thus the only source from which man may draw this knowledge is from the spheres.

But this argument is illogical for two reasons. The first is that the faculty which comprehends the individual is the same as that which comprehends the universal. The faculty of comprehension is one. The words "intellect" and "soul" are two names for a single power which comprehends the individuals and the universals. Even the capacity for sensation is identified with this power.

Muslim philosophers made a similar mistake when they divided the intellect into the practical and the theoretical. This division cannot be upheld, since the power which directs man's



action is the same as that which directs his comprehension. For this reason the Greek philosophers did not make this differentiation. They had only one word for the intellect. But, as there is no equivalent in Arabic except the word "aql", which has only practical sense, the twofold division of intellect arose.

The second reason is that universal knowledge is higher than individual. It is impossible, therefore, that God who has knowledge of the universal, is ignorant of the individual.

Besides, Avicenna had a wrong idea of what comprehension meant. He considered the intellect as a receptacle in which ideas are collected. This led him to believe that the intellect, in order to comprehend individuals, must be individual, being changeable and divisible; while the intellect is unchangeable and indivisible. But the fact is that the intellect is not a receptacle filled with ideas. It only meets face to face with ideas.

Avicenna considered that the "active mind" is the only source from which man receives divine knowledge. He based his argument on the fact that man's anticipation of the future is only a possibility, and since "possibility cannot give rise to actuality", actuality must come from real being. This knowledge, according to him, must originate from the active mind which is real being.



But this argument has no logical basis, since possibility in itself might develop into actuality without outside interference. The seed, for instance, possesses the possibility of becoming a tree and this possibility turns into actuality by the seed itself. This knowledge which man acquires by vision, therefore, might emerge from the human soul itself and not necessarily come from the actual mind.

Comment:

- I. IBN MALKĀ, followed Al-Ghazālī, attacked philosophy and utilized it to support religion, while showing less enthusiasm than Al-Ghazālī.
- II. He thought that Aristotle believed in veridical dreams, the mistake which both Al-Fārābī and Avicenna made.
- III. He distinguished between dreams dealing with the future and those which disclose the existence of things unseen, since the former is absent, while the latter are present. Avicenna, on the other hand, did not differentiate between them, considering both present in the eyes of God and absent in the eyes of man.
- IV. He condemned Avicenna's conception of comprehension as being two separate powers, one perceiving the individual and the other cogitating the universal. This statement disagrees with the fact that Avicenna believed only in a single power



functioning in two directions, the individual and the abstract. (1)

Avicenna believed that God cannot comprehend the individual not because his comprehensive faculty is different from that of man, as IBN Malkā thought, but because the changeability and divisibility of the individual makes it incomprehensible to God. (2)

V. He stated that Muslim philosophers divided the intellect into two separate powers, practical and theoretical, while the Greeks held the intellect to be one single power. This contradicts the fact that both Greek and Muslim philosophers divided the intellect into practical and theoretical, while they agreed that this division is purely functional; (3) it does not imply that there are two separate powers in the intellect, as IBN Malkā thought.

VI. That the intellect is a receptacle in which ideas are collected, appears incorrect for the following reasons:

First, Avicenna's view on the subject, as Al-Rāzī observed, (4) is not clearly expressed. On one occasion he interpreted knowledge as a spiritual form, an entirely immaterial process. On another he considered it a mental form, purely material, while at other times he thought it to be no more than a relation

(1) Avicenna's *Al-Ishārāt Wal-Tanbihāt*, p.121 (Leyde 1892).

(2) Same Source, p.134.

(3) a. Aristotle's *On the Soul*, p.155.

b. Avicenna's *Al-Ishārāt*, p.125.

(4) *Dictionary of the Technical Terms*, Vol.2, p.1062 (Calcutta 1862).



between the mind and an image, in other words, it is merely relative.

Secondly Avicenna, as Nasir al-din al-Tusi, (1) pointed out, gave no definition of knowledge, either because he felt that knowledge requires no elucidation since it is self-evident, or because knowledge is nothing more than the intellect combined with an object.

However, Avicenna's view on this matter, as presented in Al-Isharat (pp.121, 122), gives the impression that knowledge is merely a state in which the mind affects or is affected by an object. In Al-Shifa (2) Avicenna distinguished between three objects, the particular, the universal and the spiritual. The process of knowledge, he said, arises when the intellect sees an immaterial image whether it was by nature immaterial or abstracted from a particular object. The word image has been used here in the metaphorical sense.

VII. IBN Malka's belief that possibility in itself might develop into actuality without outside influence appears illogical since, if possibility in itself can turn into actuality, then why should not every possible become actual?

It is obvious that the seed does not turn into a tree merely by itself without outside influence.

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(1) Hal mushkilat Al-Isharat, p.151 (Lucknow 1293 A.H).

(2) Vo. 1, p.295 (Teheran 1885).



Chapter 46

IBN Rushd and Avicenna.

Comment:

I. There is no separate treatment of dreams in IBN Rushd's works. He referred to them only while discussing the soul, knowledge and prophecy, while emphasizing the fact that both philosophers and religious teachers accepted visions as carrying God's message to man.(1) Therefore one might conclude that IBN Rushd believed in veridical dreams.

II. IBN Rushd in his book, *Al-HāssWal-Mahsūs* (a M.S. in the library of Fu'ād University in Cairo - Tawfiq al-Tawil, dreams p.237 Cairo 1945) stated that dreams are sent by God to warn man against the coming disaster, such as that which came to the King of Egypt in the time of Joseph. That is why the subject in most dreams concerns the future.(p.88) It is possible for the dream subject to cover the past and the present which reveal hidden things.

It should be noticed that dreams in most cases reveal the practical aspect of human life, while the theoretical side is found through study and research.(p.89-90).

III. It is not easy to decide whether he followed Avicenna or Al-Ghazālī, since he disagreed on many points with Avicenna, while he considered Al-Ghazālī as a man who wandered from creed

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(1) *Falsafat IBN Rāshd*, p.9 (Cairo 1319 A.H).



to creed, being "an Asharī, with the Asharīs, a Sūfī with the Sūfīs and a philosopher with the philosophers, so much so that he could say of himself: I am a Yamānī, when I meet a Yamānī, if I meet a Ma'addī I am one of Banū 'Adnān." (1)

Nevertheless one feels that his sympathy was with Avicenna.

IV. IBN Rushd rejected the idea that God has no knowledge of particulars and that he knows only universals, the idea upon which Avicenna built his theory of dreams. He also rejected Al-Ghasālī's belief that God has knowledge of both particulars and universals. God's knowledge, IBN Rushd said, is quite different from ours. For ours is the effect of the existence of a thing while God's is the cause of that existence. Thus one who compares these two kinds of knowledge ascribes the same characteristics to two quite different things. (2) God's knowledge is too high to be called either universal or particular. (3)

V. He rejected Avicenna's conception of the spheres as possessing senses and comprehending future events in detail, because they are living creatures moving towards an object. This proof, said IBN Rushd, though appearing convincing, has no logical grounds, because it is not necessary to have particular knowledge of the object towards which you move and to which you direct all your efforts. It is sufficient to know the object

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(1) Falsafat IBN Rushd, p.14 (Cairo 1319 A.H).

(2) The same source, p.9.

(3) IBN Rushd's Tahāfut al-Tahāfut, p.341-345 (Beirut 1930).



in general. We have many objects in our life and we struggle to attain them, even though they remain vague.(1)

VI. IBN Rushd strongly opposed Al-Ghazālī's idea that God's activities are "free" and above the law of "cause and effect" from which Al-Ghazālī drew his conception of dreams as being a mere "gift" of God and not a natural process of the human intellect. IBN Rushd, like Avicenna, considered that God's activities are subject to the law of "cause and effect". He argued, if we accept that all is possible, then all will be reduced to confusion. If God's activities are not subject to law then there is no basis of "logic", no "reality", no "nature" and finally no "existence", since everything possible might be impossible and vice versa.(2)

VII. IBN Rushd, on the one hand regarded religion from a statesman's point of view. He valued it for its moral purpose, since religion is law, not learning, and therefore it does not contradict philosophy. They are two different things. Both are true and truth cannot contradict truth. If it appears that religion is opposed to a fact proved by philosophy, allegorical interpretation is necessary, and that is diverting a word from its original sense to a metaphorical one. The fact is that there are some ideas which language cannot render in exact terms and which can only be suggested by pictures.

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(1) IBN Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, p.497 (Beirut 1930).

(2) The same source, p.520.



For much the same reason the devices of rhetoric have been invented and employed. That is why Muslims are agreed that some expressions in the Quran and traditions are to be taken literally and some of them given an interpretation.(1) To this the following verse of the Quran refers(2): "It is he who hath sent down unto thee the book wherein are some verses clear to be understood. They are the foundation of the book, and others are parabolical. But they whose hearts are perverse will follow that which is parabolical therein, out of love of schism and a desire of the interpretation thereof, yet none knoweth the interpretation thereof except God. But they who are well grounded in knowledge say, we believe therein the whole is from our Lord; and none will consider except the prudent."

On the other hand, IBN Rushd admitted that the source of religion is beyond the human intellect and that there are some religious doctrines which are incomprehensible.(3)

But IBN Rushd's attitude to religion may be explained in two ways, from fear of his orthodox critics he wrote in terms which could be explained in a way acceptable to the most devout Muslim, or his words are ambiguous by intention and the intellect which cannot comprehend religion, is that of the common man. In spite of this, he was accused of advocating a philosophy against Islam and his fate was that of Avicenna.

(1) Falsafat IBN Rushd, p.6. (Cairo 1319 A.H.).

(2) The Quran, 3, 7.

(3) IBN Rushd's Tahāfut al-Tahāfut, p.429, 527 (Beirut 1930).



Chapter 47.

## IBN Khaldūn and Avicenna.

IBN Khaldūn said:(1) Anticipation of the future is one of the characteristics of the human soul. Man's acquaintance with the world outside begins through the medium of the senses, which cannot function without the body. He apprehends only those concrete objects perceived by the senses. With the development of the soul, man can comprehend the abstract and his soul gradually progresses until it can exercise its power independently of the body. This liberty and maturity which are the result of long experience, enable the soul to co-operate with the spiritual world and acquire knowledge of the future. In fact, the soul when fully developed represents a stage of consciousness in which the future is present.

The soul, however, cannot maintain its independence and exercise its power unless it detaches itself from material influences. People, according to their capacity for freeing themselves from the body, may be classified into three groups. The first are those who fail to give independence to their soul because they indulge in the pleasures of the body. They are more akin to animals. The second are those who achieve a small degree of independence. They are the saints. The third are those who succeed in freeing themselves entirely from the body and so are able to exercise their spiritual power at will

(1) Al-Muqaddamah, Vol.1, p.165 (Paris 1858).



whether in sleep or during wakefulness.

It has been proved by experience that the soul receives knowledge of the future during sleep. This is due to the fact that then the soul is free from the influence of the body and therefore it can co-operate with the spiritual world.

It is logical, therefore, to assume that the soul which can exercise its power in sleep has the same capacity in the waking state, since the human soul is one and its character is the same in both sleep and wakefulness, provided that material influences be removed. The only difference is that during sleep the soul exercises its power more easily than in the waking state, since in sleep the soul is naturally separated from the body, while during the waking state it requires great effort to separate them. This separation demands a great struggle between man and himself, throwing him into an unusual condition. He appears to be unconscious or in a state of coma, his breathing is loud and heavy and gradually he becomes absorbed in the invisible world. Visions appear to him and he hears voices or sees angels which bring his spiritual messages. When this passes, his condition becomes normal and he has only a memory of what he has seen and heard.

The prophet Muhammad confirmed this when he said: "When revelation came down to me, it appeared that an angel took hold of me and squeezed me as much as I could bear. My heart trembled and I was afraid that I should die."



But the exercise of spiritual power for a long period makes communication easier and as a result of this the prophet is able to stand up to this state for longer periods. This is the reason why the Surahs which Muhammad received at the beginning of his mission in Makkah were short compared with those which he received in Madīnah later on. It is notable that Muhammad, towards the end of his mission, received a long Surah of the Quran while he was riding a camel, in a normal state, fully conscious.

This communication with the spiritual world is possible only to a saintly man. Prophets, in addition, must be of noble birth, descended from a strong tribe and immune from error and sin. The standard of morals which is the main principle in this communication varies, and consequently the soundness of dreams and revelation which issue from it will vary. For this reason, the value of dreams varies, witness the traditions "Dreams constitute one of the forty-six parts of prophecy", and "Dreams constitute one of the forty-three parts of prophecy." In some traditions "dreams constitute one of the seventy parts of prophecy." Some commentators believe that these figures refer to the first six months of Muhammad's mission, in which he received divine communication through dreams. But this idea is wrong because the use of the number seventy in Arabic is merely figurative: it means "many".



Admitting that Muhammad did receive God's message during the first six months of his mission by dreams, that does not imply that each prophet received God's message in this way, so that the ratio between dreams and prophecy is always constant.

In addition, the time in which things occur does not affect their nature. If dreams carried divine messages to Muhammad six months out of twenty-three years of his mission, that does not mean that the relation between dreams and prophecy should be fixed according to this ratio.

The degree of revelation, like dreams, varies; the prophet represents the highest and the soothsayer the lowest. Both are capable of exercising their power over the soul during the waking state and both can acquire knowledge of the future in this way. If one has faith in the prophet he must have faith in the soothsayer. The difference is that the prophet can foretell the universal and the particular, while the soothsayer is mainly concerned with the particular. The reason for this is that the soothsayer is inspired by the devil and not by God, relying on his imagination which deals only with the particular.

Some people believe that the soothsayer has ceased to exist since he received his inspiration from the devil, whose influence vanished with the advent of Muhammad. But this idea is refuted by the fact that the devil is not the only source from which the soothsayer took his knowledge of the future; he may



have acquired it by exercising his spiritual power. Besides, the influence of the devil did not vanish with the advent of Muhammad. It was only that Muhammad himself, in order to achieve his mission, was protected from diabolical influence. In fact, the soothsayers disappeared during Muhammad's time because they were overshadowed by his great power. The relation between the soothsayers and the prophet is like that of the stars to the sun. When the prophet comes the soothsayers disappear and when he ceases to exist they appear.

To revert to the subject of dreams, some people believe that dreams can be induced if a man states his requirement and recites the following words: *تأفيس بعدان يسواد وغراس فوفنا غاد سي*. It is related that a man fasted for many days, recited these words and, while he was asleep, someone appeared to him and told him all he wished to know. It happened to me also that I received knowledge of many things in this manner. But in spite of all this, one cannot state that dreams are determined by man. One must rather say that man has placed himself in a suitable atmosphere for the occurrence of dreams.

In conclusion, we should like to emphasize the fact that the anticipation of the future which is one of the characteristics of human nature, can be achieved by one in a state of abstraction completely ignorant of his surroundings with eyes fixed on a particular point.



**Comment:**

I. It is apparent that IBN Khaldūn treated the subject as a philosopher rather than as a historian or a religious teacher, searching everywhere for natural causes, although, on many occasions, he used religion to support his argument.

II. His theory is similar to that of Avicenna, except that for him prophecy is almost confined to Islam, so one might suggest that he considered Muhammad as the only prophet whom God sent to save the world. This narrow religious attitude led him to contradict himself. He violently attacked those who considered that the word vision in the tradition above as applied to each prophet. It is possible, he said, that this vision was peculiar to Muhammad himself. On the other hand, he considered that the qualities which were in Muhammad, ought to be in other prophets also.

III. It is astonishing to find IBN Khaldūn with this religious attitude, ranking the soothsayer among the prophets. He ignored the fact that Muhammad said: "Believe in Islam and put not your trust in soothsayers". "You must not believe anything the soothsayers say." (1) Moreover, he considered Muhammad the greatest soothsayer; while the Quran says: "For thou (Muhammad) by the favour of thy lord, art neither a soothsayer nor one possessed". (2)

IV. Two points in IBN Khaldūn's study are notable, the first

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(1) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, p.260 (London 1935).

(2) The Quran, 52, 28.



is that the belief that the divine knowledge could be obtained through the medium of dreams induced by man, which was rejected by IBN Khaldūn, is popular among ancient and mediaeval people. There are many historical cases of kings finding themselves in difficult situations and imploring God to grant them some light on the future or on the course they should follow, and then the help came through an induced dream.

Iamblichus said that the Greeks believed that listening to tranquillizing music before sleep had the effect of stilling unruly passion, and making sleep light, dreams few, happy and prophetic.(1)

The second is that IBN Khaldūn's conception of the soul and its natural power by which it achieves miracles and penetrates the future agrees with Avicenna. Most of the points which IBN Khaldūn approached in Al-Muqaddamah were discussed in detail by Avicenna in Al-Shifa.(2)

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(1) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.5, p.31

(2) Vol.1, p.343 (Teheran 1885).



Chapter 48.

IBN Sīrīn and Avicenna.

After this detailed enquiry into Avicenna's work, we should now see what position it held among other works dealing with the same subject.

IBN Al-Nadīm(1) and Hājji Khalīfah(2) give long lists of dream books with some details about their authors. Among them we find the names of Ta<sup>c</sup> bīr al-Maghribī, IBN Ash<sup>c</sup> ath, IBN al-Muqri<sup>l</sup> and Abū Sahl. This profusion reflected the importance orientals attached to the subject. The contents of these works, however, showed a lack of variety; their style, method and even the examples which they use are similar. For this reason, it is sufficient to select any one of them for comparison.

Muntakhab al-Kalām(3) which was ascribed to IBN Sīrīn is one of the best.

Both IBN Sīrīn's and Avicenna's works may be divided into two parts, one dealing with the theory of dreams, their classification and the general method of interpretation. The second part deals with each dream separately.

The first part of Avicenna's work is almost philosophical while IBN Sīrīn's is merely traditional.

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(1) p.439 (Cairo 1348 A.H).

(2) Vol.1, p.416 (Constantinople 1941).

(3) Cairo 1301 A.H.



By examples from the history of the prophets, IBN Sīrīn makes it clear that dreams are vehicles carrying God's message to man. Dreams came to Adam, Abraham, Joseph, Pharaoh and others. Muhammad had a dream in which he saw two men who took him to a mountain where he saw people suffering in Hell, others being hanged, because they broke their fast, Muslim children playing between two rivers, Zaid, Ja<sup>c</sup>far, and IBN Ruwāhah drinking, (1) and Abraham, Moses and Jesus waiting for him. (2) Once, Muhammad was bewitched and fell ill. Then he had a dream in which he saw two angels who directed him to the well of Dhī-irwān where Lubaid IBN A<sup>c</sup> said the Jew had made a charm and hidden a cord under a rock. When Muhammad awoke, he sent Ammār IBN Yāsir with some of his followers to the well and when they took out the cord Muhammad recovered. (3) IBN Sīrīn goes on to quote from tradition, "dreams constitute one part of the forty-six of prophecy", "prophecy ceased after Muhammad's death, except that which comes through dreams", and "Dream is a part of prophecy". In fact, says IBN Sīrīn, (4) Muslims accepted not only the divine character of dreams, but gave them the value of real events. For example, it was generally agreed among Muslims that a "will" cannot be considered valid unless it was signed personally before death. But it happened that Abū Bakr, the first Caliph in Islam, accepted the will of Thābit

(1) They were killed at Mūtah, in the year 8 A.H. (Al-Mas<sup>c</sup>ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, Vol.IV, p.159 (Paris 1914).

(2) P, 19. (3) P, 19 (4) P, 17.



IBN Qais which came through a dream after Thābit's death. Thābit IBN Qais was killed in the battle of Yamāmah. While he lay on the field of battle, a Muslim passed by him and took his armour. Later on another soldier saw Thābit in a dream, where he asked him to take back his armour from a man whom he named, sell it and pay his debts and emancipate some of his slaves. When the soldier awoke, he related his dream to Khālīf IBN al-Walīd, who in turn told the Caliph Abū Bakr of the matter. The Caliph considered this will valid even though it came only through a dream.

The rest of the first part of IBN Sīrīn's work is similar to that of Avicenna, except on two points. The first is that he gave more credit to those dreams occurring by day or in the early morning on the grounds that Muḥammad said: "dreams of the early morning are more credible than those of the night, since my communication with God was during the daytime". Ja'far al-Sādiq said: "dreams at noon are more credible than those of the night". This idea, however, was rejected by Avicenna. Although in Al-Shifā (1) he maintained that the only reliable dreams are those of the early morning, not because the time itself is important, but because the condition of the body at that particular time is at its best.

The second is that IBN Sīrīn asserted that dreams can be induced by man if he sleeps on his right side and before going

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(1) Vol.1, p.338 (Teheran 1885).



to bed recites the following words: O God protect me from your wrath on the day of judgment.

The second and larger part of IBN Sīrīn's work begins with dreams about God, prophets, angels and saints. These were not mentioned by Avicenna. IBN Sīrīn told the following stories:

(i) ABŪ Zaid dreamt that he stood on the day of resurrection in the presence of God who blamed him for using in his prayers the names of Salmā and Suthainah as symbols of God. "Had I not known that you are sincere, then I should have punished you."<sup>(1)</sup>

(ii) In a dream a Turkish slave girl saw Muhammad on his way to Paradise with a great following. She followed him to Paradise.

Muhammad and his followers entered but she was asked to recite the Fātiḥah, she failed to do so and was left outside. When she awoke she asked her master to teach her the Fātiḥah, and as soon as she had learned it she died.<sup>(2)</sup>

(iii) Al-Ḥasan al-Basrī had a dream in which he saw himself wearing wool and a drab robe with his legs chained; he was standing on a heap of rubbish leaning against the Ka'bah and playing a lute.

The wool, said IBN Sīrīn,<sup>(3)</sup> indicates devotion, the drab robe love of the Quran, the chains on his legs, stability in religion, standing on a heap of rubbish, scorn of pleasures, playing a lute, propagation of Islam, and his leaning against

(1) P, 23. (2) P, 24. (3) P, 33.



the Ka'bah, indicates that he is seeking refuge in God.(1)

Let us examine those dreams which are mentioned by both Avicenna and IBN Sīrīn.

Avicenna

IBN Sīrīn

1. Drinking indicates happiness, if taken in moderation. If it was extreme, it indicates disgrace. (MS. ch 63)

2. Singing is a good omen. (MS. ch 61)

3. Dancing indicates happiness. (MS. ch 71)

4. A ring is a symbol of property for a man, for a woman a husband. (MS. ch. 76)

5. A sword is a symbol of the birth of a boy, tongue, property or power. (MS ch 79)

Drinking indicates disgrace. (2)

Singing is a bad omen, because Iblīs was the first to sing. (3)

Dancing is a sign of catastrophe. (4)

A silver ring is a symbol of property, a gold, copper or iron ring is a sign of disappointment. (5)

A sword is a symbol of the birth of a boy, sovereignty or power. (6)

This brief comparison between Avicenna's and IBN Sīrīn's works shows that in the first part there is a fundamental difference, while in the second part they agree on some points but not on others.

(1) It seems that IBN Sīrīn expressed his attitude towards Al-Hasan al-Basrī rather than interpreted his dream.

(2) P. 119 (3) P. 118 (4) P. 119 (5) 250 (6) P. 136.