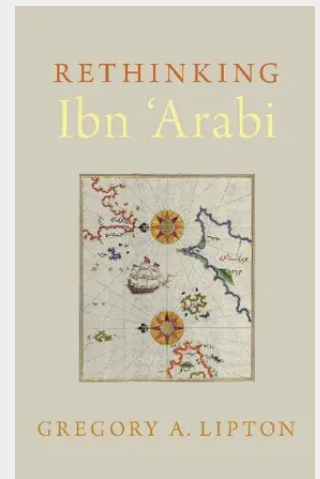


Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi

The thirteenth century mystic Ibn 'Arabi was the foremost Sufi theorist of the premodern era. For more than a century, Western scholars and esotericists have heralded his universalism, arguing that he saw all contemporaneous religions as equally valid. In *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi*, Gregory Lipton calls this image into question and throws into relief how Ibn 'Arabi's discourse is inseparably intertwined with the absolutist vision of his own religious milieu—that is, the triumphant claim that Islam fulfilled, superseded, and therefore abrogated all previous revealed religions. Lipton juxtaposes Ibn 'Arabi's absolutist conception with the later reception of his ideas, exploring how they have been read, appropriated, and universalized within the reigning interpretive field of Perennial Philosophy in the study of Sufism. The contours that surface through this comparative analysis trace the discursive practices that inform Ibn 'Arabi's Western reception back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century study of "authentic" religion, where European ethno-racial superiority was wielded against the Semitic Other—both Jewish and Muslim. Lipton argues that supersessionist models of exclusivism are buried under contemporary Western constructions of religious authenticity in ways that ironically mirror Ibn 'Arabi's medieval absolutism.

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