

Rumi's Ontology: The Being and the World

Hossein Zamani Alavijeh (Corresponding author)
Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Kharazmi University, Iran
Email: hzamani_alavijeh@yahoo.com

Fazel Asadi Amjad
Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Kharazmi University, Iran

Received: 15/03/2022
Accepted: 12/05/2022
Published: 01/07/2022

Volume: 3 Issue: 4

How to cite this paper: Zamani A. H., & Asadi Amjad, F. (2022). Rumi's Ontology: The Being and the World. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, 3(4), 1-10
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.v3i4.155>

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Abstract

The present article aims to explore Rumi's ontological approach to Being and World which is deeply impressed by mystical doctrines and practices of Islamic Sufism and the writings of his contemporary Islamic philosopher Ibn 'Arabi. Rumi finds all the components of creation as a manifestation of the unique manifestations of God, in which God has manifested as much as the talents of the creators. In Rumi's view, existence is a mirror in which God is constantly manifesting. Rumi finds all the components of the universe full of meaning and considers meaning as God. He calls on people in this field to read the meanings of different and diverse manifestations of existence with the foresight of the mind and inner purity. Although the question of Being was basically addressed in Heidegger's seminal *Being and Time*, many questions and paradoxes were left unanswered and unresolved for him and his successors regarding the subject of Being. Despite Heidegger's harsh onslaught on the pillars of western metaphysics, his *Being and Time* was more concerned with posing questions regarding the subject of Being rather than offering answers. The present paper by delineating Rumi's ontological approach aims to broaden our horizons in the field of existential philosophy and offer a new and advanced perspective on dealing with the question of Being.

Keywords: Rumi, Ontology, The Being, The World, Ibn 'Arabi, Heidegger

1. Introduction

Perhaps the most important question that philosophy - as a branch of the massive tree of human cognition - has tried to answer throughout the history of its life and solve it as a complex mystery is the question of ontology. What is existence? What is the origin of existence? What is its basic essence and hidden root and where does it come from?

The fundamental problems of philosophy, directly or indirectly, overtly or implicitly, depend entirely on the answer given to these fundamental questions, and are closely related to the kind of approach taken to this problem. Issues such as ontology, phenomenology, structuralism, ontology, anthropology, ethics, cognition of good and evil, freedom and fatalism, necessity and accident, and other important philosophical issues are raised in connection with the subject of ontology and the answer to them depends on the answer that philosophy gives to the problem of ontology. Therefore, this branch of knowledge is considered the mother of all sciences and on the other hand is the key to solving the most important fundamental problems in human life. The issues involved play the most fundamental role in the destiny of man and his eternal happiness or his eternal misery.

No rational human being has the illusion that the universe is nothing, and that there is neither human nor other being. Even the Sophists, who consider the scale of everything to be human, at least accept the existence of man himself. No one could deny

the existence of oneself and the existence of one's denial simultaneously. Therefore, one is practically forced to accept the reality. In any case, the rational man, whose mind is not tainted with the suspicions of sophists, skeptics, and idealists, not only accepts his own existence and the existence of his own perceptual powers and mental forms and concepts and mental actions and interactions, but also believes in the existence of other human beings and the outside world. Hence, it is said that belief in existence or Being is obvious and innate. In this article, the truth of existence and its types and effects and the general relations of beings with each other are discussed and explored in Rumi's Mathnavi.

When referring to the thought of Martin Heidegger, one can speak of a turn (Kehre), a change of approach, an opening of paths, etc., but what is constant in his work is the search for the non-thought. This search will become the common thread of your journey. The question posed by him was not intended to be novel. Rather, it could be said that Heidegger returned to a question posed a thousand times, although, in his opinion, never understood or answered correctly in a satisfactory way: the question of being. This is the great issue, the only issue of Heideggerian thinking, although it was approached from different angles and with different nuances throughout its entire journey. And if something is going to characterize his reflection on being, it is that it is going to be constituted as a great and uninterrupted dialogue with previous thinkers; in a debate, critical and passionate, with the great tradition of Western metaphysics.

For Heidegger, the metaphysics that began in Aristotle reaches its paroxysm with Hegel and flows, like a river that is lost in the sea, in the last modern metaphysician: Nietzsche. Our thinker understands that the history of metaphysics has been onto-theology and that, after Nietzsche, declaring the death of God, it seems that Western philosophy is doomed to nihilism. This is how nothing enters Western thought and with it begins the era of nihilism. Heidegger understands that Western philosophy, by incorporating Aristotle's approach, accepted to measure itself by entities that are not like ourselves, by entities of nature; that is, he built a building with categories that, without being our own, we apply to our very existence and that, as it is not difficult to conclude, are neither capable nor adequate to account for the uniqueness of Dasein.

Although Heidegger was completely on the right path in his harsh criticisms of Aristotle and the western thought concerning the question of Being, he himself, despite all his rigorous linguistic attempts, was not able to break free from the shatters of representation and expression in grasping the meaning of Being both before and after the mentioned turn in his philosophical approach. His famous statement "only a god can save us" is a late acknowledgment clearly attesting to his failure in his grand trajectory. Heidegger's approach to Being as it was later noticed by Derrida and his differentiation of Being from beings was inadvertently treating Being like a being. Being is set within boundaries like it or lump it and treated as a something to be grasped and known. Dasein is thrown into the world but he fails to delineate what this throw is and from where it originates. It is reasonable to assume this was the Achilles' heel of his philosophical trajectory and the main reason he had to hold Being in confinement. He presumed Being to be ringed with nothingness as the last resort. But this was only turning a blind eye to the fact that nothingness does not exist at all. If there *is* nothingness then nothingness *is*. Therefore, nothingness *isn't* there at all. Also, by considering death as the end of Being, Heidegger is knowingly or unknowingly bounding Dasein in history. I believe Rumi's ontological approach, directly impressed by Islamic thought, could put forward highly cogent answers regarding the question of Being which has thus far baffled philosophers around the world.

2. Discussion

In Rumi's view, God was a "hidden treasure" before the creation of the universe, who wanted to be discovered and known. Thus he created the world to reflect his characteristics as a great mirror. In Rumi's view, all the components and elements of the universe before man, including himself, reflect the attributes and characteristics of their creator. In his ontology, the universe consists of two worlds that face each other: the "smaller world" which includes the entire universe of creation and the "larger world" which is man. Like a fruit whose appearance is apparently derived from the branch of a tree, and inwardly, both the branch and the tree are created for the appearance of the fruit, the whole universe is a parasite of human existence. However, the reflection of the image of truth in the miniature of human existence will not be perfected unless one ascends to the rank of "perfect man" - the concept of the perfect man will be explained below.

At the dawn of creation, God taught man the "letters" and "breathed his spirit into him." With this incident, man actually received the "trust" of his Creator, the "Divine Spirit", from him, and became responsible for guarding and protecting it, in order to return the trust safely and cleanly to its true owner on the "Day of Judgment". Due to the high position of man in the system of creation, the angels were ordered to prostrate before him and they all did so, except the devil who was arrogant and jealous of Adam and as a result was expelled from God's vicinity. In search of revenge for that tragic event, Satan decided to divert man from the right path of worshipping the Lord, and unfortunately succeeded in his intention. Adam disobeyed the command of his guardian and caused his wrath, and as a result of this rebellion, he was expelled from heaven and fell to earth, an event that is the consequence of the presence of human beings on earth today. Today, earthly man can only return to the original paradise if he removes the mirror of his existence from the rust to reflect the face of the Creator. The removal of impurities will eventually lead man to the stage of "annihilation", the stage which is the disappearance of his "single self" (or its attributes) and his transformation into a complete mirror that has no image of its own and its existence is entirely in the image of God. By reaching this stage, the seeker has completed the journey of perfection and has attained the high position of "perfect man".

The universe is a radiant and all-encompassing ray emitted from the source of divine grace. However, this single and colorless light, in the eyes of partial people, appears in a hundred colors and a hundred manifestations. Each of us has colored

glasses on our eyes through which we see the world in its various colors, and it is possible that this multicolor misleads us. The cause of discord and strife among human beings is to remain in the same apparent multiplicity and dispersion. Only the unique ones are able to see that single colorless light beyond this apparent multiplicity. Despite the dualities of disbelief and faith, good and evil, obedience and rebellion, there is only one essence in the name of God in the world. Staying in the forms and being seduced by the images is idolatry, and if we could see that total unity beyond apparent differences, all religions and human classes would live in peace and reconciliation, and war, division, and hatred of the world would disappear:

The marvel is that this colour arose from that which is colourless: how did colour arise to war with the colourless?

The original source of oil (the oil producing tree) is made to grow by means of water: how (then) does it (oil) finally become opposed to water?

Since the rose springs from the thorn, and the thorn from the rose, why are both of them at war and (engaged) in recrimination? (1/ 2470-2)

Any study of Rumi's existential worldview without considering the great impression of Ibn 'Arabi's philosophical thoughts on him would be in vain. These considerations lead us to consider the relationship between the One and the many in Ibn 'Arabi's works prior to delineating Rumi's own thoughts regarding Being. The key to understanding this relationship is a correct understanding of the distinction between Essence and Divinity: one must seek the source of the "imaginary", relative, finite and differentiated cosmos in the Divine itself, which means that within the divine Nature, the planes on which the Names and Attributes become distinct and differentiated realities must be distinguished from the Essence, which is the intrinsic reality of these Attributes, comprising them in itself ineffably under an absolutely undifferentiated mode. The Names in their multiplicity are only relations which are of a non-existent nature.

The Names, therefore, represent the specific ways in which the Real enters into relation with contingent things, and by this very fact they represent the pathways by which the Real descends into the realm of relativity; each Name is externally an aspect of the Manifestation of the Real, - and whoever says Manifestation, says something which is "other than" what is manifested, while internally, the Name indicates the Real in itself. Names have two connotations; the first connotation is God Himself Who is what is named, the second is that by which a Name is distinguished from another. (Ibn al-'Arabi', 2015, p.59) Insofar as it is essentially the other, the Name is Reality, but insofar as it is not the other, it is the imagined Reality.

In other words, each Name, on the one hand, is identified with all the Names by virtue of its essential identity with the Named, the One Essence which is the ultimate source of all the Names, and on the other hand, is distinguished other Names by virtue of its specific ownership; now distinction implies limitation, hence relativity, and ultimately ephemerality, thus the Name assumes the nature of 'imagined Reality' (Ibn al-'Arabi', 2015, p.96). This plane of plurality within the divine Nature is designated by Ibn 'Arabi as the "Unity of the multiple" (ahadiyyat al-kathrah), in contrast to the "Unity of the One" (ahadiyyat al-ahad) which relates exclusively to the Essence. In fact, as to His Self, God has the Unity of One, but as to His Names, He has the Unity of multiple (p.98).

The process of universal Manifestation requires the "Level" of Names, which are multiple as a result of their relation to the various possibilities of cosmic phenomena; the Being lends existence to these possibilities, and they acquire their specific qualities by virtue of their contact with the Names; the Names in turn acquire their distinctive characteristics by virtue of their governing property over those effects - the cosmos as a whole - which are thus existent (p. 110). Names do not possess distinctive ontological entities, since that would invalidate the principle of the Oneness of Being by denying the reality that all Names are, in their essence, only the Named; this is how we observe degrees within the One Being: all the things of the world are reduced to "effects" of the Names, and the Names in turn are the Named: Since the effects belong to the divine Names, and the Name is the Named, there is nothing in Being/existence except God.

The Names therefore constitute an isthmus (barzakh) between contingent existence and necessary Being; if considered inwardly they have no separate entities, while outwardly they possess properties of governance over begotten things; now these properties of governance require governed effects, just as the notion of "Lord" requires that of "vassal" and that of king, a kingdom; there is therefore a mutual dependence between the Names and the contingent things, in such a way that each would be inconceivable without the others (p.130). It is thus that all the Names which presuppose the world are Names of the Level of the Divinity, not of the Names of the Essence.

The meaning of this Unity lies in the fact that it includes both the Unity of the One and the Unity of the many, and insofar as nothing in existence can be located in a separate dimension of the One Reality, all cosmic multiplicity must be assimilated to the plane of the Unity of the multiple, which in its turn is assimilated to the Unity of the One; we thus come back to the crucial notion of the absolute Unity of Being, which comprises distinctive levels and degrees, from the relative point of view, whereas from the absolute point of view, there is only the undifferentiated nature of the Pure Being (Ibn al-'Arabi', 2015, p.119). Therefore, there is nothing except the Essence, which is Elevated in Itself and its elevation is not in relation to any other. From this point of view, therefore, there is no relative elevation, although, as regards the aspects of existence, there is (a certain) differentiation. Relative elevation exists in the one Essence only insofar as It is (manifested in) several aspects.

To speak of the distinction between creature and Creator is to speak of a real ontological distinction, but this does not exclude the assertion that the entire context in which this distinction, as well as others, manifests itself is necessarily relative and ultimately illusory, since the Real in its Absoluteness does not admit differentiation and distinction (Ibn al-'Arabi', 1989, p.180); this is what Ibn 'Arabi seems to mean when he assimilates the creature to the transcendent: insofar as the creature is, and insofar as the Being is unique, the creature, in its essence, cannot be other than the transcendent and this is the metaphysical logic which flows from the principle of the Unity of Being.

It should be noted that the ontological difference is key to understanding Heideggerian philosophy. It is about the difference between Being and being and its establishment is decisive when it comes to showing how metaphysics - up to now and from its origins - has wondered about being and has forgotten Being. To show the irreducible radicality of this difference, the author of Being and Time, will affirm that Being is the nothingness of being, that is, that Being is everything that is not being; that is, nothing. Heidegger uses these words, which can sometimes be paradoxical, because he understands that the language of traditional philosophy is exhausted. In his magnificent work he questions, as we know, the being of entities and in this question, Kantian influences resound - although formulated and established in a very different way: the search for an a priori, for something not given, which is a condition of possibility.

In Rumi's words, the two elements "body" and "soul" are repeatedly opposite. This contrast, of course, does not mean contradiction. The "body" is like the shell that forms the outer form of human existence and the soul or spirit is the essence of his existence. The "body" of man is a burden for his "soul" and owes its value to him. The body is dependent on the soul, and without it, it would be mortal, but the soul does not need the body. Since the "soul" has a high and heavenly origin, it is constantly eager to rise and fall, while the "body", according to its earthly nature, tends to stay and sink. The soul seeks great pleasures and the body seeks material pleasures. However, the "body" in human existence is not a hated or inalienable field, but bears some functions:

Do not make your home in (other) men's land: do your own work, don't do the work of a stranger.

Who is the stranger? Your earthen body, for the sake of which is (all) your sorrow.

So long as you are giving your body greasy (rich) and sweet (food), you will not see fatness in your (spiritual) essence.

If the body be set in the midst of musk, (yet) on the day of death its stench will become manifest.

Do not put musk on your body, rub it on your heart. What is musk? The holy name of the Glorious (God). (2/263-7)

The prerequisite for joining the truth is to die on oneself, and this means killing the rebellious self (Amara). If you want to join, you must extinguish the fire of animalistic lusts and remove the rust of evils from the mirror of spirit so that the veils of the soul will disappear and existence will become the mirror of the ray of truth. The reason for this is obvious. There are no two "I's" in front of the lover: one is you and the other is him. So your selfish "I" must die before him and only one "I" remains and that is his "I":

What is (the meaning of) to learn the knowledge of God's unity? To consume yourself in the presence of the One.

If you wish to shine like day, burn up your night-like self-existence.

Melt away your existence, as copper (melts away) in the elixir, in the being of Him who fosters (and sustains) existence.

You have fastened both your hands tight on (are determined not to give up) "I" and "we": all this (spiritual) ruin is caused by dualism. (1/3009-12)

In Rumi's view, the world of creation is constantly evolving and growing. In this evolutionary cycle, beings, from the lowest to the highest, feed on each other and provide the ground for each other to grow until it reaches man, who grows and matures, and eventually returns to the soil. But those who have received eternal life by the grace of God do not die and achieve survival in the sight of God. In the course of his perfection, man reaches from a solid to a plant and then to an animal and then to the level of humanity. This is not the end of his path. There is a great change on the way that takes place with the death of a person on his human dimension, and from it, man reaches the position of angel. But in the path of truth, he eventually transcends the status of angel and reaches "non-existence" in order to be worthy of returning to the presence of truth. But what moves and completes all the elements and particles of the universe is the wave of love and the desire of those who are perfect.

Although that union (with God) is immortality on immortality, yet at first that immortality (baqá) consists in dying to self (faná):

The reflexions that are seeking the Light are naughted when His Light appears.

How should the reason remain when He bids it go? Everything is perishing except His Face.

Before His Face the existent and the non-existent perish: existence in nonexistence is in sooth a marvellous thing! (3/4659-62)

One of the biggest challenges in understanding and interpreting Rumi's speech is the linguistic complexities of the mystic discourse. In mystical theology, the form of poetry is often used to convey spiritual themes and express romantic experiences. This preference is due to the fact that the language of poetry, due to its verbal and semantic flexibility, provides a wide space for the mystic to express unconventional and novel mystical concepts, including the possibility of using a single sign (or word) to refer to two or several meanings, and vice versa, the possibility of using multiple signifiers to refer to a single meaning. In sum, poetic language has several main features that make it suitable for expressing mystical experiences. Some of these characteristics are: melodicity, interpretability, ambiguity, and diversity or even conflict between multiple layers of meaning. The combination of these characteristics turns poetic speech into a pleasant field of ambiguity, music, imagination and colorful illustrations, and allows the audience to let the bird of imagination fly in the sky of the speaker's words, and depending on his taste and thought, he derives different meanings and sometimes receives divergence from the words before him. These are some of the points and subtleties that should be considered in reading and understanding Rumi's speech, because one of the essential principles in understanding mystical discourse is sufficient familiarity with the specific language and lexicography of this area. Without such a context, there is a possibility of confusion or error in understanding and interpreting Rumi's words.

Rumi's ontology has developed in the context of Islamic and Quranic ideas. Based on what is stated in Quranic verses and prophetic hadiths, he has taken his philosophy of creation from them. In line with this general vision, Rumi has found that all

parts of the universe always rejoice in the position of glorifying God, although they will never be able to be thankful enough to God. Indeed, it can be said without exaggeration that Rumi's poetry is nothing more than an attempt to speak of the greatness of God, as he reveals himself in different aspects of life. The God who revealed himself to Mawlana Jalaluddin is a living God, and not the first cause, or the first origin, who once created the world and now moves it according to predetermined plans. He is the God who wanted to be known and revealed himself from his eternal treasure and he is an infinite treasure; everything began and came into being from the word of his Creator. And it is only through heartfelt observation of his signs in the universe, each of which testifies to the creation, power, grace and mercy of the truth, that one can approach him.

In Mathnavi, Rumi refers to the text of a holy hadith which is famous among mystics. It lucidly explains the philosophy of creation. This hadith recounts David's story when he asks the God about the cause and motive of the creation of the world and he hears the answer that: "I was a hidden treasure that wanted to be known, so I created the creatures to be known." Rumi says:

'Twas a hidden treasure: because of its fullness it burst forth and made the earth more shining than the heavens.

'Twas a hidden treasure: because of its fullness it surged up and made the earth (like) a sultan robed in satin. (1/2862-

3)

On this basis, Rumi recognizes the whole creation as manifestations and mirrors of the manifestation of truth. Indeed, the foundation of creation is beauty, and the love of beauty. The essence of the God before the creation of his world was both a lover and a beloved. He wanted to reveal his beauty, and made creation a mirror of his beauty. Therefore, the foundation of the creation and emergence of the world is the love of truth for its own beauty and the manifestation of its own beauty. Indeed, God is a beloved, the beloved of Himself and the beloved of all creation. Creation is the means of the emergence of truth and the grounding of knowledge and love of the people for that true lover.

Before getting acquainted with Shams and opening his eyes to the vast world that Shams placed in front of him, Rumi had a limited world within the narrowness of his perception and interpreted it within the confines of his thoughts and beliefs. But with the teachings of Shams, this interpretation of Rumi from Existence - both this world and the other - underwent a transformation. In light of this novel interpretation, in Rumi's view, both worlds were liberated from their familiar size and breadth. This world could no longer be explained by the method of philosophy and the principle of "rotating and driving", that is, the order of cause and effect, nor by the professional and doctrinal foundations of the various sects of his time. Rather, it was an infinite wonder that could only be spoken of through a mouth as wide as heavens.

Rumi was roaming the extremes of the world when he realized the frailty and poverty of interpretations of various philosophies and laws. Philosophies and Shari'as had an old, fixed and immovable world with an old, fixed and immovable God, and Rumi with the experience of the new earth and the new heavens in the province of love, was soon disgusted with this old and motionless world, and its steadfast and stereotypical God. The image he saw of the truth of existence bore no resemblance to the indoctrination and illusions of religious or philosophical professions. Hence, such communication and description of the world was impossible for him with the familiar methods of philosophies and laws, and with the everyday language of knowledge and religion and philosophy.

In Rumi's view, the whole universe is a manifestation of the God's existence. God has various manifestations in the world and His various manifestations have created various beings. These different manifestations are for man to realize the existence of the one and to immerse himself in it. Rumi himself says about this:

Thou didst contrive this "I" and "we" in order that Thou mightst play the game of worship with Thyself,

That all "I's" and "thou's" should become one soul and at last should be submerged in the Beloved. (1/1788-9)

In interpreting these lines, Nicholson says: "The Supreme Being created the creatures with the intention of making them Worship Him. But he is in fact both the lover and the beloved, and "the self" or "the other" (me and us) is nothing but an illusion and imagination arising from the connection of two aspects, under which the one truth can be observed. (p.499)" Ankaravi pays more attention to Rumi's ontology and says: "The single truth threw these many designations and covered them with the clothes of creation, so that they according to their natures and attributes engage in worshipping Him. As such, if we look through the lens of truthfulness, no separation and distinction could be seen among creatures as it is only on the basis of plurality and form that otherness can be recognized. (p.379)"

The world or the universe is not only known and summarized within the limits of our external senses, but it also has a soul and an essence, which is also lamely called the supernatural or the unseen world or the world of non-existence. The unseen world has taken the world of form in its womb and embraces it like the soul in our body, and it rules over it and regulates the order of this world of sensations:

The Unseen World has other clouds and water (than ours), it has another sky and sun.

That is not discerned save by the elect; the rest are in doubt as to a new creation. (1/2035-6)

Indeed, in Rumi's ontology, we humans who live in the tangible world are in fact belonging to a larger and more intangible world that we do not perceive and are unable to comprehend. Therefore, any creature belonging to the world of the unseen and the world above our senses and imagination would be a mystery and its entry beyond the realm of our nature will appear very mysterious and wonderful to us.

Rumi in explaining this stage of his ontology, recounts the story of The Holy Mary and the emergence of Holy Ghost on her and shows these points beautifully. According to what Rumi states following this story, the manifestation of all sacred and celestial beings, such as angels, is that these beings are both with us and independent of us, and this is an exemplary event that denotes the interaction between nature and supernature. All beings are not only aware of their creator, but also have an emotional

relationship with Him, meaning that they all love Him. Sometimes Rumi goes even further and says that even non-existence loves God: He (God) is the merciful and bountiful Lord: both existence and non-existence are in love with Him. (1/2445)

Rumi believes that all components of creation have life and at the same time benefit from the perception and consciousness of God's presence. In this regard, the basis of Rumi's speech is the Qur'an alone and he believes that one should not interpret Quranic verses like the Mu'tazilites in this regard, but points out that by providing the means of esoteric and mystical experience, one will be able to understand the truth of creatures' life. He says:

The stone salaams to Ahmad (Mohammed); the mountain sends a message to Yahyá (John the Baptist).
 (They all say), "We have hearing and sight and are happy, (although) with you, the uninitiated, we are mute."
 Forasmuch as ye are going towards (are inclined to) inanimateness (worldliness), how shall ye become familiar with the spiritual life of inanimate beings?
 Go (forth) from inanimateness into the world of spirits, hearken to the loud noise of the particles of the world.
 The glorification of God by inanimate beings will become evident to thee; the doubts suggested by (false) interpretations will not carry thee away (from the truth). (3/1018-22)

Elsewhere, Rumi emphasizes that the secret of understanding life and hearing the words of pebbles and mountains is to have an inner life that leads to real life in the human soul, so that man could hear and gain insight into God's creatures' prayer. Accordingly, he points out that all particles of the world are dead in the eyes of the masses, but in the sight of God they are obedient and wise servants. He writes:

To the vulgar all the particles of the world seem dead, but before God they are possessed of knowledge and submissive (to His commands). (6/860)

Or we read:

Air and earth and water and fire are (His) slaves: with you and me they are dead, but with God they are alive. (1/838)

Elsewhere we read:

The speech of water, the speech of earth, and the speech of mud are apprehended by the senses of them that have hearts (the mystics). (1/3279)

As mentioned, in Rumi's ontology, all particles of the universe are considered intelligent and radiant, and love is present in them. Nevertheless, in his view, all parts of the world, whether living or inanimate, conscious or unconscious, are also thought to love their partners (counterparts). In explaining his views, Rumi shows a kind of lovely relationship between them. For example, we refer to his portrayal of the lovely relationship between heaven and earth:

Because of that fore-ordainment all the particles of the world re paired as mates and are in love with their own mate.
 Every particle of the universe is desiring its mate, just like amber and the blade of straw.
 Heaven says to the earth, "Welcome! To thee I am (in the same relation) as the iron and the magnet."
 In (the view of) the intellect, heaven is man and the earth woman: whatever that (heaven) casts forth this (earth) fosters [...]
 Therefore regard earth and heaven as endowed with intelligence, since they do the work of intelligent beings.
 (3/4401-5)

It should be noted that Rumi following these descriptions, which also extend to day and night, makes precise references to the deep wisdoms behind these relations. Because appearances are deceptive, man considers the world as Being and regards himself as a being among others. But what really exists is God alone. If we place our being within His being, we will see that our whole being comes from Him and we have no existence of our own. We have received a ray of light from his being, and it will not be long before this ray returns to its origin. Hence, what appears to "be" in fact "is not"; and what seems "not to be" really "is". Rumi says in this regard:

Lo, (it is) a world apparently non-existent (but) essentially existent, while that (other) world is apparently existent (but) has no permanence. (1/795)

And also we read:

He (God) hath caused the non-existent to appear existent and magnificent; He hath caused the existent to appear in the form of non-existence. (5/1027)

Rumi explains his view of existence in the fifth book under the title of "The non-existing existence, and the existing non-existence" and explains its example with an allegory of the foam and the sea, and dust and wind. In the description of these lines of Mathnawi, Shahidi refers to Al-Ghazali's words in this regard and says: "A tornado that rises from the ground in clear air wraps itself around itself like a rectangular minaret. One does not look thoroughly and thinks that the earth is twisting and shaking, while it is not the case as with every particle it is the air which is the stimulus, but the air cannot be seen and the soil can be seen. (1996, p.402)" He then points out that "dreamers, everything they see is an illusion. Because the world is unhealthy, so in this world what we see is nothing more than an imaginary world. (p.403)" Rumi uses tangible examples to prove his point, as is his style. Akbarabadi (2004, p.268) does not mention any novel points in the interpretation of these lines of Rumi and suffices only with the meanings of some of its difficult words. In interpreting these verses, Golpinarli (1981, p.254) only presents a fluent translation of these verses and considers it sufficient for the audience. But Sajjadi (1995) likens the world to "a witchcraft that keeps us busy with dreams and fantasies and steals the capital of life from our hands; and when it comes to death, there is nothing left for man except regret (p.367)."

Nicholson, like Akbarabadi, does not mention striking points following these verses and ignores these verses without any explanation. However, Ankaravi (1969, p.593), like other verses, in the explanation of these verses of Rumi, uses an inclusive and faithful language and tries to explain these verses with a mystical point of view. In explaining the first verses of this discussion, "He (God) hath caused the non-existent to appear existent and magnificent; He hath caused the existent to appear in the form of non-existence". (5/1027)

He believes in Rumi's viewpoint the Supreme Being turned existence into the form of non-existence. The Almighty concealed the sea and exposed the foam, concealed the wind and exposed the dust. That is, the Almighty, with the absoluteness of His power, created and magnified this world, which "is not" in truth and is non-existent and has made the beings and intellects and spirits that actually exist in the form of non-existence. In fact, he covered the sea of truth with a layer of foam which is the images of objects. It is as if it has concealed the wind and exposed the dust. So the people see the faces of objects that are like dust and are unaware of the stimulus. And the people of meaning see beneath that the intellects, spirits, and beings who have captured the forms of things, and they know that the real essence is from God, the Blessed and Exalted. Thus, Rumi considers the forms of things as dust and compares the will and power of truth to the wind.

However, according to Rumi, the universe is something infinite that is always expanding and "Existence" and "non-existence" are two opposite concepts, from the conflict of which all the changes in the universe appear. It should be noted that "non-existence" in his view is not pure non-existence, but the departure of a form, and the coming of another form. And again when that existence is annihilated, it gives way to another form, and it is these "transformations of the forms" that manifest the dialectic of existence.

Rumi believes that all the dualities of this earthly world are born out of the captivity of colorlessness in the world of color. He believes in the fact that anyone who enters this realm of existence, which he calls the colorless world, has entered a world where Moses and Pharaoh are in agreement. He believes that differences in religions arise from dualities and multiplicities, not from the truth of religion. He explains his point of view by quoting many allegories. By giving these examples, Rumi seeks to illustrate that all the colors, images and veils are borrowed from the colorless which is only the image of God. He explains that all these conflicts are scattered like foam on the surface of sea but the sea itself is not inherently contradictory. The whole existence is the manifestation of God.

Since colourlessness (pure Unity) became the captive of colour (manifestation in the phenomenal world), a Moses came into conflict with a Moses:

When you attain unto the colourlessness which you (originally) possessed, Moses and Pharaoh are at peace (with each other). (1/2467-8)

Golpinarli (1981, p.437) emphasizes that if this kind of cognition of existence is realized in the human soul, man rather than being caught in a trap and falling into the abyss of destruction and delusions, reconciles with existence, or in a more common sense, achieves a kind of unity with existence, the fruits of which would be gaining an infinite vision and flourishing of human's humanity that puts man on the throne of true rule over existence and connects the world to eternity. As a result, creatures receive nothing but goodness from man.

God created the world for the sake of human beings and man is the essence of his creation, and the world is an addition. That is, the whole world is a subset of human existence, and man is the goal of his creation, and on this basis, Rumi says: God has placed the crown of dignity only on man's head:

Thou art lovely and beautiful and the mine (source) of every loveliness: why indeed shouldst thou lay thyself under obligations to wine?

The tiara of We have honoured (the sons of Adam) is on the crown of thy head; the collar of We have given thee hangs on thy breast.

Man is the substance, and the celestial sphere is his accident; all things are (like) a branch or the step of a ladder: he is the object.

On the one hand, God has made man his caliph and successor on earth and has made him his supreme creature. At the same time, man is the mirror of divine beauty. (5/3573)

He also says: "Therefore He made a viceroy, one having a heart, to the end that he might be a mirror for His sovereignty". (6/2153) And on the other hand, man stands at a point in existence that he understands the world and the essence of the world. According to Rumi, the human base in the universe is the highest base, because the best manifestation that the absolute has in the form of existence, is observed in man, that is, in this small world. Although love is present in all the universe and the world moves by the power of love, but due to the fact that love has a unique manifestation in man, his base is higher than other entities. Rumi says:

The greatest gift that God gave to man was to teach him all the names. Knowing the name of everything means mastering it and working with it. Hence, God enabled man to call everything by its own name and by granting this ability to man made him the true ruler of the earth and all that is in it.

The father of mankind, who is the lord of He (God) taught (Adam) the Names, hath hundreds of thousands of sciences in every vein.

To his soul accrued (knowledge of) the name of everything, even as that thing exists (in its real nature) unto the end (of the world). (1/1234)

On the other hand, Rumi considers man as a trustee of God. Referring to Quranic allusions, God offered the divine trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, and they refused to accept it, and man eagerly accepted it. Of course, this divine trust, which Rumi considers to be "will", has been called "divine knowledge" by some Sufis. However, Rumi's interpretation does not contradict Sufis' concept of knowledge, as attaining knowledge, without exercise of "will", is not possible. It is as if "will", on the one hand, makes man doubtful and hesitant and on the other hand, with the love that is necessary to free himself from his captivity, he reaches a lovely surrender without doubt. Rumi says:

Hearken to the explanation thereof given by God in the Qur'án, (namely) the Verse they shrank from bearing it.

This perplexity in the heart is like war: (when a man is perplexed he says, "I wonder) whether this is better for my case or that." (6/207)

Homayy in introducing the position of man in Rumi's ontology emphasizes the point that human is a "comprehensive being". Indeed, man is a comprehensive version of everything that has existed in all levels of abstractions and matter in earthly and celestial beings. In other words, man is the same as a small world, which has realized within itself the sample and diagram of everything that exists in the big world. Homayy goes on to say that from a mystical point of view, it is possible that the spirituality of a perfect human being is such that it raises man to the position of the great world and reduces the whole of existence to the position of this small world. He further adds that the components of the universe are special nominal manifestations and attributes of the divine names and attributes and the human in general is the manifestation of all the names and attributes, that is, the manifestation of the name "Allah" which is the place of all the names and attributes of perfection, beauty and divine glory.

Based on what we argued about the salient features of man in this discourse, we found that man is the essence of creation in existence; He is considered the caliph of God in existence, and he is the bearer of the great trust of God, which none of the other parts of the universe has been able to bear. And man, on the basis of what is "oppression and ignorance", took up this great gamble.

Ebrahimi Dinani (2013) in his description of one of Rumi's poems points to another feature of man in Rumi's ontology and says:

Man's characteristic is that he does not stay within the limits, but always wants to break the limits. So is human's humanity. In general, everything has a limit, except human beings. Every existence has a limit. Angels have limits, and so do plants and animals, beyond which they cannot move. It is only human beings who have no limits (p.242).

Explaining this feature of man in Rumi's ontology, Ebrahimi Dinani (2013) adds:

There can be no limit to human's journey. In fact, man is immersed in a sea that has no shore or goes in a desert whose edge is never known. . . Whenever a human being is limited and his limits are determined, he is no more than an animal, and the greatness of man is, in essence, in his infinity and boundlessness (p.244).

The foundation of Muslim mystics' view of the world has been influenced by Quranic teachings. In the Holy Qur'an, God has repeatedly emphasized that you should travel in the earth, and learn from the consequences of the past, and be aware of the quality of creation. God revealed His signs and revelations in the horizons and souls, and man sees the face of God wherever he turns.

Rumi was aware of the fact that there is no distance between this world and the other world. This world is in that world and that world incorporates this world. If we know how this world is, we will understand that the world is in the heart of the other world, and there is not only enmity between this world and the other world, but also a relationship of friendship and cooperation and participation in the one thing. Rumi, who knew the seven cities of love and was familiar with the geography of the spiritual world, does not see any geographical boundaries between this world and the other world.

Rumi's world is not the world of Khayyam's atheistic despair and sorrow, in which one does not think beyond the world of senses. Nor is it the cold and soulless climate of the ascetic monks that does not look at the world of sense. The world is devoid of the dryness and violence of preachers, nor is it the small and humble world of knowledge and experience! Infinity is a wave and effervescence that moves with passion, freshness, meaning and life, and makes life a long way to a happy song through which man sings and falls in love.

Such a world in its improvisation (presence) is only worthy of being experienced and felt, not described. Therefore, it is understood only by those who have instilled in their souls the grounds of sympathy and understanding with Rumi, so that they can fly with him in his world, and Rumi's words are only an invitation to these people.

Rumi never despises the world and the universe, and does not condemn the earth. In his view, what is denounced in the name of the world is the greed and inability to find the truth. According to this account, the world is a concept that changes according to the knowledge of everyone, and from the point of view of one who has not reached the truth, this world is like a purgatory. As he says:

O mouth, verily thou art the mouth of Hell; and, O world, thou art like the intermediate state.

The everlasting light is beside this low world, the pure milk is beside rivers of blood. (2/12-3)

From the point of view of those who have attained true insight, the four corners of this world is inevitably no more than a corpse, and the prisoner of this prison will remain in the party of the world until the day of his demise. All the people of the world are prisoners and are waiting for death inside the prison. Rumi believes rare are the prisoners who have body in prison and soul in the divine world; they have fallen into the well of the world and have seen their picture inside the well.

It turns out that the condemned world in Rumi's view is a world that does not lead man to social peace and does not provide him with a secure future and does not lead him to a life free from bondage and full of inner purity. It is a world caught in the

clutches of greed, and has not found its way into eternal intoxication. It is an area that disturbs the spiritual peace of human beings and degrades human beings from high human status, to the point that everyone thinks about his personal interests. It is a place where greed rules and it is an area surrounded by conditions that create greed.

In another definition of the world, Rumi considers the example of the world as a bath that has two faces. One face is inside the bathroom, which has soap and water and is a place for washing the body, and the other face is the garbage that goes in the fireplaces of the bathroom. Rumi believes that those who do not know the world properly pull the garbage bins and boast doing that. But the shrewd, in spite of this commotion, which they have properly recognized, are washing themselves in this world:

The lust of this world is like the bath-stove by which the bath, piety, is (made) resplendent;

But the pious man's portion from this stove is (naught but) purity, because he is in the hot-bath and in cleanliness.

The rich resemble those who carry dung for the bath-keeper's fire-making. (4/238-40)

Rumi emphasizes that washing oneself in the bath of the world is an other-worldly job, and boasting about carrying garbage is a worldly affair. On this basis, Rumi has realized that this world is another form of the hereafter and if we open our eyes to the unseen, we will find that we are sitting in the other world. Indeed, it can be seen that the world, from Rumi's point of view, is by no means devoid of value and importance, but the only possible place to understand the blessings of God, and in the face of it one must redefine one's own position and point of view so that he can benefit from its gifts and meanings.

3. Conclusion

Rumi's ontological approach is directly influenced by writings of his contemporary philosopher Ibn 'Arabi. In Ibn 'Arabi's view, by his name the Exterior (or the Manifest al-zâhir), God manifests himself to existing things as immutable entities (a'yân thâbita) and thus makes them appear in their external existence. God, by his name the Interior (al-batin), conceals himself from his creation, thus causing in man the desire and the need for knowledge because science is light and existence and ignorance is darkness and non-existence. This manifestation or this theophany brings out the degrees of existence (marâtib al-wujûd), commensurate with the receptivity (qabûl) of beings and their predisposition (isti'dâd) to receive the light of the Being. Light, like Being, is unique and its effects vary according to the ability of beings to receive it. The unique light of the sun and the multiplicity of its rays symbolizes the divine Essence by the Names and Attributes of which the forms and existential statuses of beings are determined. The divine Names indeed manifest themselves in existence only by their effects.

Similarly, for Rumi, the world exists as a manifestation of God (Haqq). All that is seen is an appearance of the perfect essence of the attributes of God. The world is the mirror of God. The secret of this divine epiphany is Love. The latter is the first cause of the appearance of the world. The Gnostics rely on a sacred hadith introducing God: "I was a hidden treasure. I liked being known. So I created creation in order to be known". This principle is verified in all existing things, and there is not the least atom which is not endowed with this "love for God." The divine majesty reigns over all the atoms of being. For Rumi, the further we move away from the true centre of religious faith, the more differences and controversies arise. The different directions of South, North, East and West only appear when we are far from the Sun. To seek the core of religious teachings and to avoid getting lost in the divergent orientations created by the complexity of theological and jurisprudential discussions, Rumi encourages us, as we saw in his example from the previous account, to remove the divergence between directions and to run towards the Sun, towards the Ka'ba because inside the Ka'ba the rule of the qibla does not exist. In Rumi's view, absolute good or evil does not exist in divine creation. Everything that is created, good or bad, participates in the divine will to reveal this hidden Treasure. However, within the absolute and infinite Divine Being, all the tensions and conflicts implied by the opposition of phenomena are transcended and appeased. God is the Absolute Unity, the perfect coincidentia oppositorum. According to Rumi, it is only by means of the eye of the intellect, awakened by spiritual purification, that man becomes able to participate in the divine vision of creation. Only the illumined eye of the intellect can see the divine unity that hides behind the alternation of Mercy and Wrath, and Beauty and Majesty. According to Rumi, evil does not exist in the Absolute and Perfect God. Nevertheless, evil exists in creation. Creation (or manifestation), which involves separation from God, is based on the fundamental principle of contrast and opposition. Evil comes from separation from God. If one symbolizes God with light, then evil can be symbolized with darkness. Darkness is not a reality like light, but is created by the absence of light. The presence of darkness is dependent on the existence of light. Unlike light, darkness has no independent reality. Evil only exists in the realm of manifestation or relativity; it does not exist as absolute and independent Reality, who would be in opposition to God. While evil is limited and relative in nature, the Divine Being is absolute and infinite. Thus, according to Rumi, although man cannot eradicate evil from the world, he is nevertheless able to rid of the source of evil which is within him and which separates him from God. Therefore, he must neither despair of the existence of evil in this world, nor lose sight of the very real possibility of getting rid of the evil which is in him in order to enable him to return to God and be reunited with Him. He decides to reject words, sounds and words in the realm of confusion, because without these three he can converse with his true love, the universe. He finds true individuality in non-individuality, and therefore passes from his individuality to non-individuality.

References

- Akbarabadi, W. M. (2004). *Sharh-i Mathnawi-yi Mawlawi* (Vols.1-7), Tehran: Nashr-i Qatra,
 Ankaravî, I. (1969). *Sharh-i Kabîr-i Ankaravî bar Mathnawî-i Mawlavî*. (Vol. 2). (A. Bihrûz, Trans.). Tabriz: Khurshîd.
 Ebrahimi D. G. (2013). *Description of Reason and Signs of Love* (5th ed., Vol. 1). Tehran: Tarh-e-no Publication.

- Golpinarli, A. (1981). *Mesnevi: tercemesi ve serhi*, (2nd ed., Vols. 1-6) (S. Taufiq, Trans.), Istanbul: Inkilap ve Aka.
- Ibn al-‘Arabî’, M. (1989). *al-Futûhât al-Makkiyya: Textes choisis/Selected Texts*, (M. Chodkiewicz, W. C. Chittick, C. Chodkiewicz, D. Gril, and J. Morris, Trans.), Paris: Sindbad.
- _____ (2015). *Fusûs al-hikam*, (B. Abrahamov, Trans.), *Ibn al-‘Arabî’s Fusûs al-hikam: An Annotated Translation of “The Bezels of Wisdom”*, London: Routledge.
- Mawlana, J. R. (1925-1940). *The Mathnawî of Jalálu’d-dîn Rûmî* (Vols. 1-8), ([R. A. Nicholson](#), Trans.), London: Messrs Luzac & Co.
- Sajjadi, S.J. (1995). *The Culture of Islamic Theosophy* (3rd ed., Vols.1-3). Tehran, Kooshesh Press Shahîdî, S. J., (1996), *Sharh.-e Mathnawî*, (Vols.1-10), Tehran: Enteshârât-e ‘Elmî wa Farhangî.