Rumi

The Masnavi

Book Four

A new translation by Jawid Mojaddedi

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THE MASNAVI

RUMI, known in Iran and Central Asia as Mowlana Jalaloddin Balkhi, was born in 1207 in the province of Balkh, now the border region between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. His family emigrated when he was still a child, shortly before Genghis Khan and his Mongol army arrived in Balkh. They settled permanently in Konya, central Anatolia, which was formerly part of the Eastern Roman Empire (Rum). Rumi was probably introduced to Sufism originally through his father, Baha Valad, a popular preacher who also taught Sufi piety to a group of disciples. However, the turning-point in Rumi's life came in 1244, when he met in Konya a mysterious wandering Sufi called Shamsoddin of Tabriz. Shams, as he is most often referred to by Rumi, taught him the profoundest levels of Sufism, transforming him from a pious religious scholar to an ecstatic mystic. Rumi expressed his new vision of reality in volumes of mystical poetry. His enormous collection of lyrical poetry is considered one of the best that has ever been produced, while his poem in rhyming couplets, the *Masnavi*, is so revered as the most consummate expression of Sufi mysticism that it is commonly referred to as 'the Qur'an in Persian'.

When Rumi died, on 17 December 1273, shortly after having completed his work on the *Masnavi*, his passing was deeply mourned by the citizens of Konya, including the Christian and Jewish communities. His disciples formed the Mevlevi Sufi order, which was named after Rumi, whom they referred to as 'Our Lord' (Turkish 'Mevlana', Persian 'Mowlana'). They are better known in Europe and North America as the Whirling Dervishes, because of the distinctive dance that they now perform as one of their central rituals. Rumi's death is commemorated annually in Konya, attracting pilgrims from all corners of the globe and every religion. The popularity of his poetry has risen so much in the last couple of decades that the Christian Science Monitor identified Rumi as the most published poet in America in 1997. The popularity of Rumi's poetry in English translation has spread to Europe more recently, and UNESCO designated the commemoration of the eight hundredth anniversary of Rumi's birth in 2007 as an event of major international importance.

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JALAL AL-DIN RUMI

The Masnavi

BOOK FOUR

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
JAWID MOJADDEDI

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of
Paul E. Weber
(d. 25 February 2016)

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INTRODUCTION

Rumi and Sufism

RUMI has long been recognized within the Sufi tradition as one of the most important Sufis to have lived. He not only produced the finest Sufi poetry in Persian, but was also the master of disciples who later named their order after him. Moreover, by virtue of the intense devotion he expressed towards his own master, Shams-e Tabriz, Rumi has become the archetypal Sufi disciple. From that perspective, the unprecedented level of interest in Rumi's poetry over the last couple of decades in North America and Europe does not come as a total surprise.

Rumi lived some 300 years after the first writings of Muslim mystics were produced. A distinct mystical path called 'Sufism' became clearly identifiable in the ninth century and was systematized from the late tenth and eleventh centuries. The authors of these works, who were mostly from north-eastern Persia, traced the origins of the Sufi tradition back to the Prophet Mohammad, while at the same time acknowledging the existence of comparable forms of mysticism before his mission. They mapped out a mystical path, by which the Sufi ascends towards the ultimate goal of union with God and knowledge of reality. More than two centuries before the time of the eminent Sufi theosopher Ebn 'Arabi (d. 1240), Sufis began to describe their experience of annihilation in God and the realization that only God truly exists. The illusion of one's own independent existence began to be regarded as the main obstacle to achieving this realization, so that early Sufis like Abu Yazid Bestami (d. 874) are frequently quoted as belittling the value of the asceticism of some of their contemporaries on the grounds that it merely increased attention to themselves. An increasing number of Sufis began to regard love of God as the means of overcoming the root problem of one's own sense of being, rather than piety and asceticism. The most influential of these men was al-Hallaj, who was the most prolific Sufi poet of his time and was executed for heresy in 922.[1]

The Sufi practice discussed the most in the early manuals of Sufism

[1] Translations of representative samples of the key texts of early Sufism are available in M. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (Mahwah, 1996).

is that of listening to music (*sama'*; see Glossary). Listening, while immersed in the remembrance of God and unaware of oneself, to love poetry and the mystical poetry that Sufis themselves had begun to write, often with musical accompaniment, induced ecstasy in worshippers. The discussions in Sufi manuals of spontaneous movements by Sufis in ecstasy while listening to music, and the efforts made to distinguish this from ordinary dance, suggest that this practice had already started to cause a great deal of controversy. Most of the Sufi orders that were eventually formed developed the practice of surrendering to spontaneous movements while listening to music, but the whirling ceremony in white costumes of the followers of Rumi is a unique phenomenon.[2] Although it is traditionally traced back to Rumi's own propensity for spinning around in ecstasy, the elaborate ceremony in the form in which it has become famous today was established only centuries later.

The characteristics of the Sufi mystic who has completed the path to enlightenment is one of the most recurrent topics in Sufi writings of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Students of Sufism at that time would tend to associate with several such individuals rather than form an exclusive bond with one master. By the twelfth century, however, the master–disciple relationship became increasingly emphasized, as the first Sufi orders began to be formed. It was also during this century that the relationship between love of God and His manifestation in creation became a focus of interest, especially among Sufis of Persian origin, such as Ahmad Ghazali (d. 1126) and Ruzbehan Baqli (d. 1209), both of whom drew inspiration from the aforementioned al-Hallaj. The former's more famous brother Abu Hamed was responsible for integrating Sufism with mainstream Sunni Islam, as a practical form of Muslim piety that can provide irrefutable knowledge of religious truths through direct mystical experience.[3]

In this way, by the thirteenth century diverse forms of Sufism had developed and become increasingly popular. Rumi was introduced to Sufism by his father, Baha Valad, who followed a more conservative

[2] Concerning the contrast between the Mevlevi *sama'* and other forms of Sufi *sama'*, see J. During, 'What is Sufi Music?', in L. Lewisohn, ed., *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism* (London, 1992), 277–87.

[3] The chapter of Abu Hamed Ghazali's autobiography which describes his experience on the Sufi path is available in translation in N. Calder, J. Mojaddedi, and A. Rippin, eds. and trs., *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (London, 2012), 299–302.

tradition of Muslim piety, but his life was transformed when he encountered the profound mystic Shams-e Tabriz. Although many of the followers of the tradition of his father considered Shams to be totally unworthy of Rumi's time and attention, Rumi considered Shams to be the most complete manifestation of God. He expressed his complete love and devotion for his master Shams, with whom he spent only about two years in total, through thousands of ecstatic lyrical poems. Towards the end of his life he presented the fruit of his experience of Sufism in the form of the *Masnavi*, which has been judged by many commentators, both within the Sufi tradition and outside it, to be the greatest mystical poem ever written.

Rumi and His Times

The century in which Rumi lived was one of the most tumultous in the history of the Middle East and Central Asia. When he was about 10 years old the region was invaded by the Mongols, who, under the leadership of Genghis Khan, left death and destruction in their wake. Arriving through Central Asia and north-eastern Persia, the Mongols soon took over almost the entire region, conquering Baghdad in 1258. The collapse of the once glorious Abbasid caliphate, the symbolic capital of the entire Muslim world, at the hands of an infidel army was felt throughout the region as a tremendous shock. Soon afterwards, there was a sign that the map of the region would continue to change, when the Mongols suffered a major defeat in Syria, at Ayn Jalut in 1260. Rumi's life was directly affected by the military and political developments of the time, beginning with his family's emigration from north-eastern Persia just a couple of years before the Mongols arrived to conquer that region. Although they eventually relocated to Konya (ancient Iconium) in central Anatolia, Rumi witnessed the spread of Mongol authority across that region too when he was still a young man.

In spite of the upheaval and destruction across the region during this century, there were many outstanding Sufi authors among Rumi's contemporaries. The most important Sufi theosopher ever to have lived, Ebn 'Arabi (d. 1240), produced his highly influential works during the first half of the century. His student and foremost interpreter, Sadroddin Qunyavi (d. 1273), settled in Konya some fifteen years after his master's death and became associated with Rumi. This

could have been one channel through which Rumi gained familiarity with Ebn 'Arabi's theosophical system, although his poetry does not clearly suggest the direct influence of the latter's works.

The lives of two of the most revered Sufi poets also overlapped with Rumi's life: the most celebrated Arab Sufi poet, Ebn al-Fared (d. 1235), whose poetry holds a position of supreme importance comparable with that of Rumi in the Persian canon; and Faridoddin 'Attar (d. *c.*1220), who was Rumi's direct predecessor in the composition of Persian mystical *masnavis* (see below), including the highly popular work which has been translated as *The Conference of the Birds*.[4] It is perhaps not surprising that the Sufi poet Jami (d. 1492) should want to link Rumi with 'Attar directly by claiming that they met when Rumi's family migrated from Balkh; 'Attar is said to have recognized his future successor in the composition of works in the mystical *masnavi* genre during that visit, when Rumi was still a young boy. Soon afterwards 'Attar was killed by the Mongols during their conquest of Nishapur.

As the Mongols advanced westwards, Anatolia became an increasingly attractive destination for the inhabitants of central parts of the Middle East who wished to flee. A number of important Sufis and influential scholars chose this option, including Hajji Bektash (d. *c.*1272), the eponym of the Bektashi order which went on to become one of the most influential Sufi orders in Anatolia in subsequent centuries, and Najmoddin Razi (d. 1256), whose teacher, Najmoddin Kobra (d. 1221), the eponym of the Kobravi order, had been killed during the Mongol invasion of Transoxiana.

Many works have been written about Rumi's life in Konya, since shortly after his death, but contradictions in these sources, and the hagiographic nature of most of the material compiled, mean that a number of important details remain uncertain. Nonetheless, the general outline of the life of Rumi seems to be presented relatively consistently in the sources, and remains helpful for putting the *Masnavi* into context.

Rumi was born in September 1207 in the province of Balkh, in what is now the border region between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. His father, Baha Valad, was a preacher and religious scholar who also

[4] See e.g. F. Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, ed. and tr. A. Darbandi and D. Davis (Harmondsworth, 1983).

led a group of Sufi disciples. When Rumi was about 10 years old his family emigrated to Anatolia, having already relocated a few years earlier to Samarqand in Transoxiana. This emigration seems to have been motivated primarily by the approach of Genghis Khan's Mongol army, although rivalries between Baha Valad and various religious scholars in the region may have also played a part. Instead of directly moving westwards, Rumi's family first made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and it was only a few years after arriving in Anatolia that they decided to settle permanently in Konya. By this time, Rumi had already married (1224) and seen the birth of his son and eventual successor in Sufism, Soltan Valad (1226).

In Konya, Baha Valad found the opportunity, under the patronage of the Seljuk ruler Alaoddin Kay Qobad I (r. 1219–36), to continue his work as a preacher and to teach students in a religious school. He had been grooming Rumi to be his successor, but died only a couple of years after settling in Konya, in 1231. Although the original reasons for his arrival remain unclear, it seems that one of Baha Valad's students, called Borhanoddin Mohaqqeq, arrived in Konya from north-eastern Persia soon afterwards to take over the management of his school. He also took responsibility for overseeing the continuation of Rumi's education and training. Within a few years, Borhanoddin had sent Rumi to Aleppo and Damascus to continue his education in the religious sciences. It is possible that during his stay in Damascus Rumi may have heard the lectures of Ebn 'Arabi, who was living there at the time. Rumi returned to Konya in around 1237 as a highly accomplished young scholar, and took over leadership of Baha Valad's school from Borhanoddin.

After his return to Konya, Rumi's reputation as an authority on religious matters became firmly established there, and he reached the peak of his career as a scholar, achieving what his father seems to have hoped for him. In November 1244, after seven years of excelling as a religious teacher, Rumi experienced a challenging encounter that would prove to be the most significant event of his life. As one would expect, an event as important as this has generated many competing accounts. However, most versions at least share the same basic elements. According to one popular and relatively simple account, Rumi is asked about his books by an uneducated-looking stranger, and responds by snapping back dismissively, 'They are something that you do not understand!' The books then suddenly catch fire, so Rumi

asks the stranger to explain what has happened. His reply is: 'Something you do not understand.'

Rumi was immediately drawn to this mysterious figure, who turned out to be a wandering mystic called Shamsoddin from Tabriz (known popularly as Shams, or Shams-e Tabriz) in north-western Persia. The two began to spend endless hours together in retreat. What was shared by the pair during this time remains a mystery that can only be guessed from the volumes of poetry that it inspired.

What is reported consistently about the period of approximately a year and a half that Rumi spent with Shams is that it provoked intense jealousy and resentment among his disciples, who also feared that their highly respected master was risking his reputation by mixing with someone so unworthy in their eyes. These disciples eventually drove Shams away, but, on hearing reports of sightings of him in Syria, Rumi sent his own son, Soltan Valad, to ask him to come back. Although Shams did return a year later, in 1247, he soon disappeared forever. According to tradition, Shams was killed by Rumi's disciples after they had seen that driving him away had failed to separate him permanently from their master.

Although he was already a respected religious authority in Konya and had trained in a tradition of Sufi piety under his father, whom he succeeded as master, Rumi frequently affirms that he was led by Shams to a far loftier level of Sufi mysticism. His poetry, for instance, emphasizes the importance of love in transcending attachments to the world, and dismisses concerns for worldly reputation, literal-mindedness, and intellectualism. From dry scholarship and popular piety, Rumi turned his attention to mystical poetry, and he became known for his propensity to fall into an ecstatic trance and whirl around himself in public. The fact that Rumi's writings are replete with biting criticisms of religious scholars and intellectuals should be seen as a sign of his own background which he had turned away from: he draws upon their kind of scholarship subversively again and again even as he tears it apart, showing that he had already mastered it in the past. Rumi innovatively named his own collection of ghazals, or lyrical poems, as 'the Collection of Shams' (*Divan-e Shams*) rather than as his own collection, and also included Shams's name at the end of many of his individual ghazals, where by convention the poet would identify himself. This can be seen as Rumi's acknowledgement of the all-important inspiration that Shams had provided for him.

After the final disappearance of Shams, Rumi remained in Konya and continued to direct his father's school. However, he chose to appoint as deputy, with the responsibility to manage many of the affairs of the school in his place, a goldsmith called Salahoddin. Like Shams, he was disliked by many of Rumi's disciples, who considered him uneducated. A colourful story about the first encounter between the two describes Rumi as falling into ecstasy and whirling, on hearing the rhythmic beating of Salahoddin at work in his market stall. After Salahoddin's death in 1258, Rumi appointed Hosamoddin Chalabi in his place. When Hosamoddin became a disciple of Rumi he was already the head of a local order for the training of young men in chivalry. He brought with him his own disciples, the wealth of his order, and the expertise he had acquired in running such an institution. However, his most important contribution was serving as Rumi's scribe and putting the *Masnavi* into writing as Rumi recited it aloud. Rumi praises Hosamoddin profusely in the introduction of the *Masnavi*, which on occasion he even calls 'the Hosam book', indicating the vital importance of Hosamoddin's role in this work (see, for example, the first page of the poem in Book Four).

In addition to Rumi's poetry, three prose works have also survived: collections of his letters, sermons, and teaching sessions. These reveal much about aspects of his life that have been neglected by most biographers. His letters testify to his influence among the local political rulers and his efforts to secure positions of importance for his disciples through letters of recommendation. This contradicts the popular image of Rumi withdrawing from public life after the disappearance of Shams. It would be more accurate to say that he entrusted everyday matters, including the training of disciples, to his deputies, but he still represented the order in external matters. His collection of seven sermons attests to the fact that he was highly esteemed by the local Muslim population. It reveals that he delivered sermons at the main congregational mosque on important occasions, and that he used such opportunities to give Sufi teachings, albeit within the rigid constraints of a formal sermon. Rumi's most important prose work, however, is the written record of his teaching sessions, which was compiled after his death by his students as seventy-one discourses. This work, called 'In it is what is in it'—probably on account of its diverse and unclassified contents—provides intimate glimpses of Rumi as a Sufi master. The content of this work is comparable with

his didactic poem the *Masnavi*, in that it contains many of the same teachings.

Rumi died on 17 December 1273, probably very soon after the completion of the *Masnavi*. Tradition tells us that physicians could not identify the illness from which he was suffering, and that his death was mourned not only by his disciples but also by the large and diverse community in Konya, including Christians and Jews, who converged as his body was carried through the city. Many of the non-Muslims had not only admired him as outsiders, but had also attended his teaching sessions. The 'Green Dome', where his mausoleum is found today, was constructed soon after Rumi's death. It has become probably the most popular site of pilgrimage in the world to be visited regularly by members of every major religion.

Hosamoddin Chalabi served as the leader of Rumi's school for the first twelve years after Rumi's death, and was succeeded by Soltan Valad. Rumi's disciples named their school 'the Mevlevi order' after him, for they used to refer to him by the title 'Mevlana' (in Arabic 'Mowlana', meaning 'Our Lord'). It became widespread and influential especially under the Ottoman empire and remains an active Sufi order in Turkey as well as in many other countries across the world. The Mevlevis are better known in the West as 'the Whirling Dervishes' because of the distinctive dance that they perform to music as the central ritual of the order.

The Masnavi *Form*

Rumi chose a plain, descriptive name for his poem, 'masnavi' being the name of the rhyming couplet verse form. Each half-line, or hemistich, of a *masnavi* poem follows the same metre, in common with other forms of classical Persian poetry. The metre of Rumi's *Masnavi* is the *ramal* metre in apocopated form (– ˘ – – / – ˘ – – / – ˘ –), a highly popular metre which was also used by 'Attar for his *Conference of the Birds*. What distinguishes the *masnavi* form from other Persian verse forms is the rhyme, which changes in successive couplets according to the pattern *aa bb cc dd* etc. Thus, in contrast to the other verse forms, which require a restrictive monorhyme, the *masnavi* form enables poets to compose long works consisting of thousands of verses.

The *masnavi* form satisfied the need felt by Persians to compose narrative and didactic poems, of which there was already before the

Islamic period a long and rich tradition. By Rumi's time a number of Sufis had already made use of the *masnavi* form to compose mystical poems, the most celebrated among which are Sana'i's (d. 1138) *Hadiqato'l-haqiqat*, or *Garden of Truth*, and 'Attar's *Manteqo't-tayr*, or *Conference of the Birds*. According to tradition, it was the popularity of these works amongst Rumi's disciples that prompted Hosamoddin, Rumi's deputy, to ask him to compose his own mystical *masnavi* for their benefit.

Hosamoddin served as Rumi's scribe in a process of text production that is traditionally described as being similar to the way in which the Qur'an was produced. However, while tradition tells us that the Sufi poet Rumi recited the *Masnavi* orally when he felt inspired to do so, with Hosamoddin always ready to record those recitations in writing for him as well as to assist him in revising and editing the final poem, the illiterate Prophet Mohammad is said to have recited aloud divine revelation in piecemeal fashion, in exactly the form that God's words were revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel. Those companions of the Prophet who were present on such occasions would write down the revelations and memorize them, and these written and mental records eventually formed the basis of the compilation of the Qur'an many years after the Prophet's death.

The process of producing the *Masnavi* was probably started in around 1262, although tradition relates that Rumi had already composed the first eighteen couplets by the time Hosamoddin made his request; we are told that Rumi responded by pulling a sheet of paper out of his turban with the first part of the prologue of Book One, 'The Song of the Reed', already written on it. References to their system of production can be found in the text of the *Masnavi* itself (e.g. I, v. 2947). They seem to have worked on the *Masnavi* during the evenings in particular, and in one instance Rumi begs forgiveness for having kept Hosamoddin up for an entire night with it (I, v. 1817). After Hosamoddin had written down Rumi's recitations, they were read back to him to be checked and corrected.

Rumi's *Masnavi* belongs to the group of works written in this verse form that do not have a frame narrative. In this way, it contrasts with the more cohesively structured *Conference of the Birds*, which is already well known in translation. It is also much longer; the *Conference* is roughly the same length as just one of the six component books of the *Masnavi*. Each of the six books consists of about 4,000 verses and has its own prose introduction and prologue. There are no epilogues.

The component narratives, homilies, commentaries on citations, prayers, and lyrical flights which make up the body of each book of the *Masnavi* are often demarcated by their own headings. The text of longer narratives tends to be broken up into sections by further such headings. Sometimes these headings are positioned inappropriately, such as in the middle of continuous speech, which might be interpreted as a sign that they may have been inserted only after the text had been prepared (e.g. vv. 1528 and 1642 in this volume). Occasionally the headings are actually longer than the passage that they represent, and serve to explain and contextualize what follows. It is as if, on rereading the text, further explanation was felt necessary in the form of an expanded heading.

The frequency of breaks in the flow of narratives, which is a distinctive characteristic of the *Masnavi*, reveals that Rumi has earned a reputation as an excellent storyteller despite being primarily concerned with conveying his teachings in homily form as frequently as possible to his Sufi disciples. The *Masnavi* leaves the impression that he was brimming with ideas, images, and intense feelings which would overflow when prompted by the subtlest of associations. In this way, free from the constraints of a frame narrative, Rumi has been able to produce a work that is far richer in content and more multivocal than any other example of the mystical *masnavi* genre. That this has been achieved often at the expense of preserving continuity in the narratives seems to corroborate Rumi's opinion on the relative importance of the teachings in his poetry over its aesthetic value, as reported in his discourses.[5] If it were not for the fact that his digressive 'overflowings' are expressed in simple language and with imagery that was immediately accessible to his contemporary readers, all the time held together by the consistent metre and rhyme of the *masnavi* form, they would have constituted an undesirable impediment to understanding the poem. Where this leads Rumi to interweave narratives and to alternate between different speakers and his own commentaries, the text can still be difficult to follow, and, for most contemporary readers, the relevance of citations and allusions to the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet will not be immediately obvious without reference to

[5] Rumi expresses his frustration about having to return to the narrative after a break also towards the start of Book Two (Rumi, *The Masnavi: Book Two*, tr. J. Mojaddedi (Oxford, 2007), vv. 194–202).

the explanatory notes that have been provided in this edition. None the less, it should be evident, not least from the lengthy sequences of metaphors that Rumi often provides to reinforce a single point, that he has striven to communicate his message as effectively as possible rather than to write obscurely and force the reader to struggle to understand him.

Rumi made painstaking efforts to convey his teachings as clearly and effectively as possible, using simple language, the *masnavi* verse form, entertaining stories, and the most vivid and accessible imagery possible. The aim of the present translation is to render Rumi's *Masnavi* into a relatively simple and attractive form which, with the benefit of metre and rhyme, may enable as many readers as possible to read the whole book with pleasure and to find it rewarding.

Book Four of the Masnavi

The current volume is a translation of the fourth book of the *Masnavi*, and follows Books One, Two, and Three, also published in Oxford World's Classics.

As mentioned in the introduction to Book Three, the major preoccupation of each book of the *Masnavi* is indicated in its exordium and prose introduction. For instance, that of Book Three is pointed out at the very start of the Prose Introduction with which it begins. Rumi comments: 'Pieces of wisdom are the armies of God by which He strengthens the spirits of seekers, and keeps their knowledge away from the tarnish of ignorance' (III, p. 3). Book Three as a whole correspondingly presents Rumi's epistemology by classifying different levels of knowledge, from the limited amount possessed by fools who are controlled by their lusts and the rational knowledge of the well-educated to the all-consuming mystical knowledge of the Sufi adept, or 'Friend of God' (*wali*), and it does so largely by means of teaching-stories that involve nourishment. Book Two similarly begins with an exordium that stresses the importance of choosing one's companions carefully, and then expands on this teaching through its stories, while Book One, as mentioned earlier, begins with the famous 'Song of the Reed' about the origins of Man with God and then culminates in the story about Ali ebn Abi Taleb succeeding in making the return journey to Him.

Book Three is joined with Book Four through its final story, 'The Union of the lover who was not true', which begins in Book Three

and finishes in Book Four, and also shares a common general preoccupation with epistemology. However, in Book Four, the focus is the divinely revealed knowledge of the Prophets and Friends of God, which is compared in its exordium with the light of the sun.

In Book Four, Rumi's main aim is to highlight the superiority of divinely revealed knowledge over the highest of other forms of knowledge, namely the rational knowledge of the philosophers. For instance, he specifically compares the former favourably with the knowledge of the most celebrated Islamic philosopher, Avicenna (v. 507), and also includes a whole section on 'the difference between philosophers and mystics'. More specifically, he clarifies there that philosophers say 'Man is the microcosm' while mystics say 'Man is the macrocosm', and that this is because the knowledge of philosophers is restricted to the form of Man, while that of mystics penetrates to the inner being of Man (vv. 522–38).

Rumi argues that divinely revealed knowledge is also actually the source of the intellect's knowledge with the example about how burying corpses was learnt by Cain after observing a crow which had received knowledge about burial by inspiration from God (*elham*; v. 1308). Moreover, divinely revealed knowledge sees for certain the outcomes ahead rather than only what is immediately perceptible in the material world (vv. 1619–20). Regarding such matters the intellect must rely on mere conjecture (vv. 3221–42). Rumi's universal tendency can be seen in his implication that the potential for mystical perception is inside humans like forgotten butter in buttermilk, and can be rediscovered through being shaken by a Prophet or mystic (vv. 3031–51). With such knowledge, the Unseen world can be discovered and translated through the material world (vv. 3052–73). The latter is in fact a representation of the former, which comes prior in the causal chain (vv. 3678–97).

The main theme can also be detected in Rumi's choice of stories. It should be no surprise that Solomon features prominently in this book, and that the story of Moses and Pharaoh contrasts Moses' prophetic knowledge with the intellect of Pharaoh and his vizier Haman. This book also includes two of the longest stories about Rumi's favourite early Sufi, Bayazid Bastami, whom he mentions much more frequently in his oeuvre than any other. The first of these concerns his knowledge about the future, which Rumi compares with that of the Prophet Mohammad, even going as far as to say that Bayazid's

knowledge comes from the same source as that of Mohammad, the Preserved Tablet in heaven (v. 1852; see 'Tablet' in the Glossary). Ebrahim ebn-e Adham, the second most frequently mentioned Sufi in the *Masnavi,* is also the subject of a story here (vv. 727 ff.). It discusses the Sufi practice of *sama'*, a recurrent topic in this book, with a stress on the conviction that music is a powerful medium for divine communication.

It has been common to identify the story about the old harpist in Book One as one that may be autobiographical, because of Rumi's undeniable sensitivity to music. However, it should not be forgotten that he was an accomplished religious scholar before his transformation into an uncompromising mystic, which is reflected even in the stories about his life-changing first conversation with Shams-e Tabrizi. This important point may help explain why even in Book One it is the story about the limitations of intellectual knowledge ('The Bedouin and his wife') which is by far the longest, while in Book Four Rumi devotes more than 3,800 verses to his central preoccupation about the overwhelming superiority of divinely revealed knowledge over the intellectual knowledge he had once prized so much.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

Rumi put his teachings into the *masnavi* verse form in order that, with the benefit of metre and rhyme, his disciples might enjoy reading them. I have therefore decided to translate Rumi's *Masnavi* into verse, in accordance with the aim of the original work. I have chosen to use rhyming iambic pentameters, since this is the closest corresponding form of English verse to the Persian *masnavi* form of rhyming couplets. These are numbered and referred to as verses in the Explanatory Notes and Introduction.

Book Four of the *Masnavi* consists of over 3,800 couplets, the continuity of which is broken up only by section headings. For the sake of clarity, in this translation further breaks have been added to those created by the section headings. In order for the Contents pages to fulfil their function effectively, alternative headings have been employed there, albeit at corresponding points to the major section headings in the text, which refer in many instances to merely the first few subsequent verses rather than representing the section as a whole.

Although the *Masnavi* is a Persian poem, it contains a substantial amount of Arabic text. This invariably takes the form of citations from Arabic sources and common religious formulae, but the sources for some of these passages are either unknown or oral. Italics have been used to indicate Arabic text, except in the section headings, which are fully italicized. Many Arabic terms and religious formulae have become part of the Persian language, and have therefore not been highlighted in this way. Capitalization has been used when reference is made to God. This includes, in addition to the pronouns and titles commonly used in English, the ninety-nine names of God of the Islamic tradition, as well as certain philosophical terms.

Most of the sources of the *Masnavi* are not widely available in English, if at all, and so references have been provided in the notes only for citations of the Qur'an. Verse numbering varies in the most widely available translations of the Qur'an, some of which do not in fact number individual verses, but since this variation is very slight (a maximum of a few verses) the reader should still be able to find the relevant passages without difficulty. The notes also identify those passages in the translation which represent the sayings and deeds of

the Prophet Mohammad (*hadith*) when this is not already self-evident in the text (e.g. by 'the Prophet said'). It should be pointed out that citations in the original *Masnavi* are very often variants of the original sources, including the Qur'an, rather than exact renderings, due to the constraints of the metre that is used. The same applies in this verse translation.

This translation corresponds exactly to the text of the fourth volume of the edition prepared by Mohammad Estelami (6 vols. and index, Tehran, 2nd edn., 1990). This is by far the best critical edition that has been prepared, since it offers a complete apparatus criticus, indicating the variant readings in all the early manuscripts more comprehensively and transparently than any other edition. Although R. A. Nicholson's edition of the Persian text is more widely available, due to the fact that it is published in Europe, its shortcomings for today are widely recognized and outweigh the advantage of having his exactly corresponding prose translation and commentary to refer to.

As far as possible, the English equivalents of technical terms have been provided, in preference to giving the original in transliteration and relying on explanatory notes. Where it is provided, the transliteration of names and terms has been simplified to such a degree that diacritics are rarely used. It is designed simply to help the reader use Persian pronunciation, especially where this would affect the metre and rhyme.

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