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RUMI'S PLATO: BETWEEN REASON AND RAPTURE



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Introduction

The first name mentioned in Rumi's¹ (1207–1273) masterpiece, the *Masnavi* is Plato:

Love is the cure for our arrogance and wickedness;
it is our Plato and Galen. (*Masnavi* 1:24)

Given that virtually all books written by medieval Muslims start with “in the name of God” and the praising of the Prophet Muhammad, Rumi's deviation from that tradition is in itself intriguing. Further, knowing Rumi's deep and unwavering devotion to Shams Tabrizi, why is he not mentioned before Plato, particularly in a book aiming at educating future Sufi Sheikhs? Finally, Rumi showed extraordinary affection toward his favorite student Hosam al-Din Chalabi (d. 1284), to whom the *Masnavi* is dedicated. Why is Hosam al-Din not mentioned first instead of Plato?

One may argue that this reference to Plato is incidental and void of concealed intentions. It is said that Rumi spoke the poems in the *Masnavi* spontaneously as he was teaching a small circle of devoted students, who inscribed the poems. Perhaps he did not have the occasion to ponder much on each word in his poems. Plato was widely known as one of the wisest people of all times among Rumi's contemporaries, and he was frequently mentioned as such in various Medieval Persian and Arabic texts. It could be argued that Rumi simply mentioned Plato on the ground of his symbolic representation as a wise person. He could have been elevating the value of love by comparing it to Plato's wisdom.

There are some problems with that suggestion. First, there were a number of other individuals praised for their wisdom by Rumi and his Muslim contemporaries. A good example is Loqman. He was not only widely celebrated for his wisdom but also favorably mentioned in the Qur'an, where a chapter is named after him. Rumi knew about Loqman's reputation for wisdom, and mentions him in the *Masnavi*.² Second, the spontaneity of the *Masnavi* does not suggest that the poems were composed erratically and impulsively. As Seyed Ghahreman Safavi has argued, one can identify highly sophisticated hermeneutical designs in the work.³ Finally, as I shall argue, the conjunction of Plato and Galen in the verse above is not

accidental. It is reasonable to conclude that in the *Masnavi* Plato plays an elaborate symbolic part.

Traditionally, nominal attention has been paid to the reference to Plato in this verse of the *Masnavi*. Some earlier commentators such as Kamal al-Din Husain ibn Hasan Khawrazmi (d. 1437), Mowlana Ya'qub Charkhi (ca. 1361–1448), Khawjeh Ayub Parsa (d. 1742), Haj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari (1797–1873), Abu al-Muzaffar al-Kharazmi al-Koruki (Seyyed Adineh Muhammad) (d. 1801), and Vali Muhammad Akbarabadi (nineteenth century) ignored this mention of Plato entirely. Among them, Hasan Zarifi Chalabi (d. ca. 1570) offers the following interpretation of the verse: "Try to make love your physician, for its medicine and treatment is better than hundreds like Plato and Galen."⁴

Among the later commentators, Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar (1897–1960), a renowned scholar of Rumi, suggests that Plato is referred to in this verse as a physician.⁵ Foruzanfar's British counterpart Reynold A. Nicholson (1868–1945) is of the same opinion. Nicholson points out that "Plato's own theory of love makes the mention of him here especially appropriate."⁶ However, he does not elaborate on this statement. 'Abd al-Husain Zarrinkub (1923–1999), another contemporary Iranian scholar who has done extensive research on Rumi, echoes Foruzanfar's and Nicholson's comments.⁷ Another commentator, Muhammad Iste'lamī, limits his remarks on the verse to suggesting that Rumi presents love as a "skillful physician like Plato and Galen."⁸ Finally, Karim Zamani, who introduces Plato as "an Athenian physician," suggests that Plato symbolizes the "spiritual [as opposed to the physical] healer."⁹

Plato in Rumi's Poetry

It is helpful to look at other occasions where Plato and Galen are mentioned in Rumi's Poetry, before returning to this verse. Plato is mentioned in two other verses of the *Masnavi*. In verse 1923 of Book Four, he is presented as the symbol of wisdom (*khirad*). In verse 4144 of Book Six, he is presented as a guide, whose advice should be heeded. Plato is also mentioned thirteen times in Rumi's other book of poetry, the *Divan-i Shams Tabrizi* (also known as *Divan-i Kabir*).¹⁰ In Ghazals 424:5 and 2097:4 of the *Divan*, Galen and Plato are also mentioned together. Criticizing human wisdom as corrupting, Ghazal 424 presents Plato and Galen as infected by that wisdom:

Plato and Galen of our time,
ridden by defects and ailments, are our patients

Ghazal 429:6 reads:

Your Plato and Galen,
Filled with egoism, are our patients

In Ghazal 2097 the reference to them is as physicians. In Ghazals 1075:6, 1665:5, 2367, and 2650 Plato is introduced as a symbol of human wisdom, but this wisdom is deficient and of little use without the intervention of divine love.¹¹ Ghazal 1665:5 reads:

If you are as prudent as Plato and Loqman,
Just by looking at you, I shall make you ignorant

Here, by making ignorant Rumi means freeing one from the bondage of human reason. Relevant to the preceding, Ghazal 2367 (verses 6–7) is important as it compares Plato's teachings to those of Shams Tabrizi:

The preacher of [human] wisdom walked in, I advised him:
You resemble Plato, leave us! You are taking the life out of our gathering.
Go to Shams al-Din Tabrizi, by whose blessing,
the dead has returned to life, mad and in love.

In Ghazal 2231 (verses 7–10), however, Plato's status is elevated to that of a sage who recognizes that the 'wound' of divine love is not curable by human wisdom. Further, he concludes that the wound is not fatal but leads to a new life. Ghazal 2293:3 suggests that if Plato had become subject to divine love, he would have become more insane than Rumi.¹² Finally, Ghazal 2662:6 of the *Divan* is particularly relevant here as it encourages the reader to become "Plato's Plato" in the art of healing. This verse connects the symbolic value of Plato to an essential element in Rumi's teaching. Like Plato, Rumi believes in an ontological pyramid. While for Plato Forms are at the top of the pyramid, for Rumi God occupies that position. Meanwhile, both Plato and Rumi find human illusions at the bottom of that pyramid. Plato could guide a gifted pupil to see beyond the illusions and objects and recollect the Forms, which for Rumi are themselves a class of illusions. Plato, who can save one from the snare of some illusions, needs a savior to save him from the more elaborate deceptions of the human mind (the Forms).

Rumi and Rationality

There are more references to Galen than to Plato in Rumi's work. Reviewing these references is helpful to appreciate better the symbolic value of Plato in the *Masnavi*. In these references Galen is represented as a medical doctor, for which he was highly celebrated among Muslims and in the West.¹³ While Rumi's treatment of Plato may appear ambivalent, he shows explicit contempt for Galen. For example, the *Masnavi* suggests that Galen was so much in love with earthly life that he preferred being half alive and seeing the world through the anus of a mule than being dead.¹⁴ On other occasions Galen is specifically depicted for his lack of skills to treat anything beyond

diseases of the body, and therefore of little worth when it comes to diseases of the soul and achieving salvation.¹⁵

Both Plato and Galen have often been referred to as *hakims*. The word *hakim*, which entered Persian from Arabic, has two meanings relevant to the present article. It is the title of both medical doctors and people recognized for their prudence. It is in the second sense that Bozorgmehr Bokhtagan (ca. 500), Abu al-Qasim Ferdowsi (ca. 940–1020), Naser Khusrow (1004–1088), and ‘Omar Khayyam (1048–1131) are all called *hakims*, although none of them was a medical doctor, and their ideas and agenda shared very little with each other. Meanwhile, it is important to recall that Sufi Sheikhs are not referred to as *hakims*, as their followers consider their status to be fundamentally different from (and higher than) that of a *hakim*. While a *hakim* can help a person to better understand social, political, and psychological problems, and recommend solutions for some of them, he is not a spiritual healer. In the words of another Sufi poet, Hafiz:

Seek another cure, my hearth;
For a *hakim* cannot heal a lover’s pain. (367:8)¹⁶

In Rumi’s assessment, the Sufi’s concerns are universal, existential, and transcendental. The prudence of *hakims*, however, addresses circumstances created by mundane and transient variables, which cannot speak to the Sufi’s concern. This is essentially due to the fact that the *hakim*’s prudence is grounded in human reason. Muhammad al-Ghazali describes the problem in the following way:

They use the appearance of their mathematical and logical sciences as evidential proof for the truth of their metaphysical sciences, using [it] as a gradual enticement for the weak in mind. Had their metaphysical sciences been as perfect [and] free from conjecture as their mathematical sciences, they would not have disagreed among themselves regarding metaphysics, just as they do not disagree when it comes to their mathematical conclusion.¹⁷

Al-Ghazali’s point is particularly relevant when one recalls Plato’s emphasis on the importance of mathematics to the education of philosophers. It is in this context that Rumi’s father, who “always rejected *hakims* and philosophers,”¹⁸ calls Plato “discredited.”¹⁹ Rumi’s contemporary Sheikh ‘Alā al-Dowleh Simnani (1261–1336) makes a similar accusation when he states that human reasoning, inherently incapable of reaching the truth, has created disputes among philosophers.²⁰ This fundamental failure of the *hakim*’s rationality in addressing the existential questions inspires the Sufi to seek a radically different approach to discovering the truth.²¹

In *Fihi Ma Fih*, Rumi presents another concern about knowledge gained via human reason. Some philosophers may access some truths through deduction. For instance, they may deduce that God is the creator of all beings. However, this is a transitory awareness, since maintaining it requires

engagement with the deduction that leads to it. As such engagement is inherently short-lived, the awareness of truth by human reasoning is unstable and temporary. "So long as one is engaged with deduction, he enjoys the truth it leads him to. But the moment he stops engaging in that deduction, the resulting knowledge and its joy vanish."²² This is particularly important, since for Rumi to be one with God is the ultimate goal. In temporal life, the closest one can come to that goal is to be spontaneously, constantly, and consciously engaged with God. Achieving such spontaneity is beyond the capacity of human reason, as one cannot permanently engage in the deduction that connects him to God.

The conjunction of Plato and Galen's names in the *Masnavi* is in reference to the dual meaning of the hakim's definition. Galen is an expert in that area of prudence concerned with the human body and curing its ailments. Like all medical doctors, he strives to heal bodies using human reason. Plato enjoys mastery in that area of prudence which is concerned with the healthy soul. He utilizes human reason to identify diseases of the soul and find their cures.²³ What makes them similar is their epistemology. For Rumi, they are both rationalists, each practicing his own technê.²⁴ In contrast, the Sufi is irrational. Rumi's frequent call to madness is based on his conviction that authentic consciousness could only be the outcome of an attitude that rejects and abandons rationality, since rationality can only engage with the mundane. Society functions based on the rational principles produced by human reason. Meanwhile, real spiritual enlightenment is only possible through a rebellion against such rationality and prudence.²⁵ It was this pervasive tension between social rationalism and spiritual irrationalism that led a number of Sufis to seek hermetic lives, or at least substantially limit their social engagements outside the Sufi circles. Galen and Plato were both guided by rationalism, adopted rationalist epistemologies, and advocated prudence.²⁶ Consequently, neither of them could become a true healer of souls.

Meanwhile, Rumi observes two differences between Plato and Galen. First, Galen is portrayed as almost exclusively concerned with biological life, while Plato realizes that in addition to and above biological health, human beings need healthy souls. Second, Plato recognized the ontological superiority of the soul over the body, concluding that the ultimate goal for human life is salvation and elevation of the soul. Indeed, on the basis of these assumptions about Plato, medieval Muslim authors gave him a privileged position among Greek thinkers. The observation by the author of *Bayan al-Adyan* (Enumeration of the religions) (ca. 1092) is illuminating here. He argues that Plato believed in God, while "Galen said that he doubted God's existence. Such a person cannot be called a *hakim*, defined as a philosopher. [Galen] is called a *hakim* as a medical doctor."²⁷

At times Plato is even referred to as *hakim-i ilahi* or the divine *hakim*.²⁸ An example is *Multaqat Aflatun al-ilahi/Bayan al-Adyan* (Selected readings

from the Divine Plato), a work that is actually not by Plato.²⁹ *Unifying the Opinions of the Divine Plato and Aristotle* by Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, the most prominent medieval Muslim scholar of Neoplatonism, is significant in this title's discrimination between Plato and Aristotle. Confusing Platonism and Neoplatonism, a trend common among Muslim scholars of the time,³⁰ the renowned religion scholar Muhammad Al-Shahrastani (1086–1153) describes Plato as the *hakim-i ilahi*, known for his "monotheism and wisdom."³¹ Similarly, Abdulkarim al-Jili in *Al-Insan al-Kamil* (The perfect human being) suggests that Plato, supposedly on the ground of his piety, has achieved immortality, making him similar to the famous Khizr/Khidr, who according to Muslims was taught (mystical knowledge) directly by Allah.³² According to al-Jili, Plato is busy meditating on a mountain,³³ a practice commonly associated with highly pious mystics. The *Masnavi*, however, stops short of such endorsements. Here, Plato is recognized as the symbol of human wisdom's ultimate achievement, presenting rationality's final boundaries, which recognizes the immortal soul's priority over the destructible body. Meanwhile, Galen's achievements fall far shorter, as his practice of rationality is limited to human biology.

Even some of the Sufis who displayed overt and intense hostility toward all Greek philosophers acknowledged the difference between Plato and others such as Aristotle and Galen. In Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Omar Suhrawardi's (ca. 1147–1234) *Rashf al-Nasayih al-Imaniyeh va Kashf al-Fazayeh al-Yunaniyeh* (Tasting the advice of the faith and exposing the Greek scandals), Plato is criticized for not having the kind of divine knowledge that was potentially available to the followers of the Abrahamic religions. However, Suhrawardi makes the intriguing comment that while Plato believed that the Universe was created, Aristotle thought it was eternal. This is, of course, a very important distinction for a Muslim. Plato, as 'ignorant' as he is, has recognized and acknowledged the Creator of the Universe, while Aristotle, with whom Galen is often associated among Muslims, is portrayed as a materialist. For Suhrawardi, Plato's trust in human wisdom could not get past illusions about the ultimate Truth. However, his illusions are closer to the truth than those of Aristotle and Galen.³⁴

Situating Plato in Naynameh

Let us now return to the twenty-fourth verse of the *Masnavi*, where Rumi describes love as the cure for all ailments, calling it "our Plato and Galen." The reference is a part of a transition between the "Naynameh" (The Tale of the Reed)³⁵ and the *Masnavi*'s first story, "The King and the Slave Girl." "The Tale of the Reed" is often described as the essence of the teachings conveyed by the rest of the *Masnavi*. The highly abstract "Tale" is self-evident truth to a Sufi Sheikh, but unfathomable to a novice Sufi. The pupil needs to 'experience' the entire *Masnavi* to comprehend the "Tale." As such,

the sixteen verses that follow the “Tale” are connecting the most abstracted version of Rumi’s doctrine to the stories, which are designed to assist the pupil in understanding it.

Since various translations and interpretations of “The Tale of the Reed” are readily available,³⁶ I will only give a summary of the text. The “Tale” reports the story of a reed flute complaining about separation from the reed bed. Such anguish is expected from “one detached from his essence and seeking reunion” (*Masnavi* 1:4). There is a general agreement among interpreters that the flute symbolizes the spiritually perfect human being, moaning about his separation from God.³⁷ It is important to keep in mind that Rumi does not suggest at all that such a human being is isolated from God. Instead, he is lamenting the lack of a complete union, which would become possible only after he dies. In the ninth and tenth verses Rumi suggests that what flows through the flute is not air but the flames of love. Love is the medium of engagement between man and God. In the last verse of the “Tale,” he declares that only the highly enlightened could understand the flute’s message, and “not much more is left to be said; that is the end” (*Masnavi* 1:18). Yet, there are almost 26,000 verses following that “end.” As we shall see, this is not a haphazard outcome.

“The Tale of the Reed” revolves around six concepts: (1) the yearning of the enlightened person, who has become separated from God and craves returning to Him; (2) love as the essence of that enlightenment, the medium of engagement with God, and the vehicle to return to Him; (3) the nostalgia associated with enlightenment; (4) the pain resulting from the separation of the lover (human being) from the beloved (God); (5) the ‘insanity’ required to fall in love and appreciate it; and (6) the inability of ordinary human beings to comprehend mystical love. The sixteen verses that follow “The Tale of the Reed” present a sudden departure from an idiosyncratic comprehension available only to a few Sufi sages. Instead, they invite ordinary human beings to take part in a journey and experience the reed flute’s state of enlightenment. To the Sufi master the first eighteen verses are sufficient reminders of a journey already under way and at its last stage. The stories of the *Masnavi* are not for the master, but the novice. The verses connecting “Naynameh” to these stories are a brief reminder of why taking such a long and trying journey, which demands nothing short of a complete transformation, is needed.

The first story of the *Masnavi* explains why taking such a ‘lethal’ journey is inevitable for one who seeks salvation. Rumi refers to this story as “the story of our lives,” as it gives a symbolic blueprint of the transformation that his students need to go through. It would also have been Plato’s story, if he enjoyed the good fortune of having a mentor like Rumi. The story is about a “mighty and pious” king, who accidentally encounters a slave girl and falls madly in love with her. The king purchases the girl and takes her to his palace. Shortly thereafter, the girl falls ill. As

reason would dictate, the king summons the best educated medical doctors in his realm to cure her. The doctors, blinded by their arrogance, which is rooted in human wisdom, assure the king that his beloved would be cured in no time. They start prescribing various medicines customarily recommended for the treatment of what the girl's illness appears to be. However, to everyone's surprise, each medication's effect is the exact opposite of what was 'rationally' expected.

As the girl's condition deteriorates further, the king realizes the bleakness of the prospect of the medical doctors' ability to cure her. In despair, he prays to God for a cure, and is told in a dream to expect the arrival of a holy man capable of healing the girl.³⁸ Upon his arrival, the divine doctor asks to be left alone with the slave girl. He then engages in a conversation with the girl, while holding her wrist to measure her heartbeat. Consequently, the holy man discovers that the girl is in love with a goldsmith, and her separation from him is the cause of her illness. His recommendation is to bring the goldsmith to the palace and let him have the girl. As the king follows this advice, the holy man starts poisoning the goldsmith. The poison gradually affects the goldsmith's appearance, making him less and less attractive to the girl. At the end the poison kills the goldsmith, and the girl falls in love with the king.

The king is able to save his beloved only when he agrees to give up human wisdom. First, to trust the cure of an adored patient to a stranger who presents no credentials in medicine goes strikingly against reason. Second, the king's behavior is irrational, as he gives permission to this stranger to be alone with his beloved in a room and touch her—acts entirely unacceptable by any Muslim man of Rumi's era, much less a king. Even more absurd is that the king allows the girl to mate with the goldsmith. Finally, it goes against reason and its moral imperatives that a "pious" king and a "holy" doctor conspire to brutally murder an innocent goldsmith. While we should not diminish the complexity of symbolic representations by these individuals and acts, the story's overall suggestion is that those seeking salvation and true felicity must first abandon human reason and its various manifestations, and accept the 'irrational' guidance of a qualified guide (the Sufi Sheikh) to reach the beloved.

In my reading of the story, Plato, who was generally respected by Rumi's contemporaries, was in the position of the "mighty and pious" king. He had glimpses of true love. Because of that, he was successful in escaping the bondage of the most primitive instances of human rationality, whose illusions had enslaved sophists, moneymakers, and politicians. But Plato remained faithful to a higher instance of human rationality, philosophical reasoning. To overcome this, he needed the guidance of a holy doctor, a Sufi Sheikh.³⁹

Love, Philosophical and Mystical

The connection between love and madness and the contrast between love and human wisdom are familiar themes in Sufi writings. Sana'i, whose influence on Rumi is documented,⁴⁰ says,

The wise cannot be in love,
In the path of love, wisdom is madness.⁴¹

In the *Sharh al-Ta'aruf li-Mazhab al-Tasawwuf* (Explaining the doctrines of Sufism) (ca. 990), one of the earliest accounts of Sufism in Persian, we read; "Love makes one either ill or mad."⁴² Similarly, according to Khwajeh 'Abdullah ('Abdollah) Anṣārī, "Love is the incurable disease, and human wisdom fails to understand it."⁴³ In his *Kanz al-Salikin* (Treasure of the people of the path), Ansari describes a debate between love and human wisdom. At one point, wisdom describes itself as "the adviser to all mature human beings." Love responds that it is free from the "calculation of profits and losses" done by such people.⁴⁴ In the words of 'Ain al-Quzat Hamedani, "the occupation of love is more beneficial than that of worldly prudence, and the madness of love is superior to all forms of [human] wisdom."⁴⁵ The same concept is repeated by Rumi when he accuses wisdom of seeing a marketplace and engaging in worldly business, while love transcends and goes beyond such a mundanity.⁴⁶

But what about such claims as "Sufi divine love in Islam owes much to Greek ancient thinking," and that "every discussion of love . . . must begin with Plato?"⁴⁷ Does Rumi unjustifiably dismiss Plato's contribution to the Sufi love, "the cure" for all pains and diseases? In general, scholarly statements about Plato's influence on Sufi doctrines of love are both reductionist and highly speculative. They are reductionist because they ignore the diversity of Sufis' accounts of their experiences with divine love. They are highly speculative, because there is little explicit evidence that Sufis knew much about the ancient Greek doctrines of love, including Plato's.⁴⁸ Particularly, there is no evidence that any substantial part of the three Platonic dialogues on love—the *Lysis*, the *Phaedrus*, or the *Symposium*—had been transmitted to the medieval Muslims.⁴⁹

A modified version of a short passage of the *Symposium* could be found in an Arabic book called *Kitab al-Zahra* (The book of flowers) (ca. 900), written by Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Isfahani/Isbahani (868–909). The text reads:

Some philosophers have argued that Allah created all souls in the shape of globes. He then assigned half of the globe to one body and the other half to another body. There is, therefore, love between the two people due to their souls' original connection.⁵⁰

Likely influenced by al-Isfahani, in the *Kitab 'Atf al-Alif al-Ma'luf 'ala al-Lam al-Ma'tuf* (Book of the conjunction of the cherished Alif with the conjoined Lam), the tenth-century Sufi Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muḥammad Daylami states, "Plato said: 'God Most High created all Spirits together in the shape of a ball. Then he divided them among all creatures, placing them in the body of whomever he chose in his creation.'"⁵¹ Very similar accounts could be found in Abu Muḥammad Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'īd ibn Hazm's writings,⁵² and in the *Muruj al-dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar* (Meadows of gold and mines of gems) by a contemporary of al-Isfahani, Abu al-Hasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdi.⁵³ Meanwhile, in his authoritative *al-Fihrist* (The index), Ibn al-Nadīm makes no mention of the *Symposium* as one of Plato's works.⁵⁴

Based on the information above one can conclude that medieval Muslims' knowledge of Plato's theory of love was meager and inaccurate. Of the seven presentations (including Alcibiades') on love in the *Symposium* only a revised version of Aristophanes', which missed some important points of the original account, could have been available to Rumi and his contemporaries.⁵⁵ It is probable that Rumi knew about Daylami's *'Atf al-Alif*,⁵⁶ but there is little evidence that its inexact statements from the *Symposium* has had any significant impact on Sufis or others.⁵⁷ Also, the Islamized revision of Aristophanes's account in *'Atf al-Alif* and *Kitab al-Zahra* is purported to be by Plato and "the philosophers." Considering the well-known resentment (if not outright hostility) that many Sufis displayed toward philosophers, it is hard to imagine that this brief revision of Aristophanes' account was received well or adopted enthusiastically by the Sufis, affecting their views on love. Finally, one would expect that if the account was of any significance to the Sufis, it would have been mentioned in more of their texts that addressed love.

Rumi's Critique of Platonic Rationality

It is also evident that Rumi and Plato felt a profound sense of distrust toward each other's vocations. In Plato's writings available to medieval Muslims, poets are either rejected (the *Republic*) or required to serve exclusively as philosophers' mouthpieces (the *Laws*).⁵⁸ It is important here to recall that Plato's criticism of poets was rooted in an epistemological scheme: true knowledge, the only knowledge worthy of teaching and learning, was acquired through dialectic. Dialectic could only function to the extent that those engaged in it commit themselves to the standards of reason. The abrupt ending of *Euthyphro*, the silence of Thrasymachus after the first book of the *Republic*, and the sudden exit of Alcibiades in the *Symposium* all signal the failure of dialectic when one party does not (or cannot, because he is intoxicated) commit to the rational standards. Poets are not engaged in dialectics. Instead, they rely

on transitory inspiration to (at best) present ‘unexamined’, vague, and often trivial pieces of half-truth. It is easy to see that there would be no place in Plato’s circle for Rumi, who explicitly rejected the value Plato assigned to human reason.

Meanwhile, Rumi (and many other Sufis) expressed contempt for philosophers and their vocation. Rumi considered philosophical wisdom—similar to the entrepreneurial or political wisdom—as *petit-wisdom* (*‘aql-i Juz’i*). This wisdom in all its manifestations is a product of human reason. As such, it is condemned as myopic.⁵⁹ In addition, *petit-wisdom* rejects the ability of love to be the sole discoverer of the truth.⁶⁰ In the words of Abu Bakr Abdullah ibn Muhammad Razi (Najm al-Din Razi), “The ultimate achievement of human wisdom is to discover about things short of their real essence, while love’s ultimate achievement is to reach their real essence.”⁶¹ In the *Masnavi* Rumi describes philosophers as standing on unreliable wooden legs. The implication is the severely limited distance that one can travel on such legs in the journey toward the truth. It is against this background that Rumi describes the philosophers with a pitiful epithet, *filisufac*, the little philosopher. In Rumi’s pyramid of wisdom, God is the manifestation of the greatest kind of wisdom (*‘aql-i kulli*). Between this highest elevation of wisdom and human reason stands the wisdom of the prophets and the Sufi Sheikhs.

Human wisdom is itself divided into degrees. There is certainly a difference between the wisdom of a highway thief and that of a *hakim*, although their assessments and inferences are rooted in the same rational scheme. Rumi’s Plato appears standing at the height of the wisdom achievable by human reason, but short of reaching the intermediary wisdom of the Sufi sheikhs. Plato could guide a Polemarchus to give up entrepreneurial rationality (lower wisdom produced by human reason) for the sake of philosophical rationality (the highest wisdom produced by human reason). But he needed a guide, a “Plato’s Plato,” to deliver him from the bounds of rationality and give him the opportunity to experience the higher level of wisdom and the ultimate truth. It is in this context that Qutb al-Din Abu al-Mozaffar Ardishir al-‘Abadi considers love the ultimate stage of a nine-stage journey in which (human) wisdom is the second stage.⁶² As Ahmad Ghazali puts it: “knowledge acquired by human wisdom can carry one only to the shoreline of the ocean of love. Staying there one can hear a story about the truth. But if he enters the ocean to seek the truth, he drowns. And, the one who has drowned is no longer engaged in discovery through human wisdom.”⁶³

Recognizing the failure of rationality, Rumi calls for a radical departure from human wisdom in seeking the Truth:

I have tried calculative wisdom, and it has failed me;
now, I shall make myself mad. (*Masnavi* 2:2332)

From this wisdom, one shall scape to ignorance,
in madness, he shall seek refuge. (*Masnavi* 2:2328)

I am in love with the art of madness,
Fed up with being cultured and wise. (*Masnavi* 6:573)

Nothing but rebellion and madness,
Belongs to our path. (*Masnavi* 6:609)⁶⁴

Obviously, Rumi is not talking about mental illness here, although the two share a certain characteristic. Both the mentally ill and the Sufi act in ways considered irrational.⁶⁵ Their behavior is unacceptable by the standards of “calculative wisdom.” The rational Rumi is the respected Islamic jurist and scholar of Konya. The “mad” Rumi is the frenzied dancer of the goldsmiths’ bazaar.⁶⁶ As his son puts it, madness turned the rational Jurist scholar into a ‘drunken’ poet.⁶⁷

Madness is the prerequisite to experiencing comprehensive love. Thus, Rumi advises,

Give up the cure, make yourself insane,
Like a butterfly throw yourself in the fire,
Drive yourself mad, burn down the house,
then take residence with those in love. (Divine, 2131:1–2)

Plato’s and Rumi’s projects have an important similarity. They both talk about the purpose of human life and how to secure the means to achieve it. Plato’s path to that end is based on the dialectical epistemology and an ascetic lifestyle. While Rumi agrees with the latter, he finds dialectical epistemology insufficient and even misleading in discovering the ultimate truth, which sheds light on the purpose of human life. In fact, Rumi finds Platonic education as distractive and misguiding as Plato finds Homer’s teachings to be. For Rumi the true path to salvation is nothing short of a conscious revolt against human reason itself, which transfers the basis of inquiry from a theory of understanding to a process of experiencing life free from “logy.” Experiencing divine love, due to its prerequisite of negation of human reason, is not “knowable.” Thus, Rumi asserts that if he is asked to explain divine love, he could not do so even if he is “given a hundred times more than the period between the Creation and Judgement Day” (*Masnavi* 5:2189):

Love cannot be subject to dialectic,
for it is a bottomless sea.
One cannot count the drops in the sea of love,
Which is greater than the seven seas combined. (*Masnavi* 5:2731–2732)

Is Rumi’s perception of Platonic doctrines valid? Is the contrast that he draws between his teachings and Plato’s accurate? Or, is Rumi’s Plato simply an

intended or unintended strawman to debunk philosophical inquiry in favor of mystical inspiration? Platonic dialogues (or their paraphrases), which had been translated into Arabic by the thirteenth century, were limited to the *Republic*, *Laws*, *Euthydemus*, *Timaeus*, and *Statesman*.⁶⁸ Arguably, the influence of the *Republic* and the *Laws* on medieval Muslim thinkers was greater than any other Platonic dialogue. If Rumi knew about Platonic dialogues in any substantial manner, the *Republic* and the *Laws* would arguably have contributed more significantly to his knowledge than any other dialogue. In these dialogues poets are overtly distrusted and even despised. Philosophers rely on reason, use dialectic, and reach or approximate the truth. Poets are subject to emotions, are inspired, and largely produce fairy tales. What is true in their poems is trivial and polluted by falsehood.

It is in Plato's *Ion*, a dialogue unavailable to Rumi, that one finds a passage most relevant to the speculation regarding the legitimacy of the contrast made by Rumi between his ideas and what he associates with Plato.⁶⁹ Here, Plato starts with an old accusation, that poets have no knowledge about what they state, and therefore their poems are at best a blend of falsehood and half-truths. To the extent that one may argue that there is some truth in poems, it is simply a matter of the undependable divine inspiration and not the reliable human reasoning (dialectic). A poet is at best a "mediator," a conduit for divine expression (*Ion*, 533–535). Plato uses an analogy to better establish the poet's position: he describes a god as a magnet. A poet is like a piece of iron in proximity to the magnet, thus moving at the magnet's will. This magnetized piece of iron influences other pieces of iron in its proximity, and "sometimes a long hanging chain made of iron rings is created" (*Ion*, 533 d–e).

As we saw in "Neynameh," Rumi unequivocally considers being a conduit of God as reaching the highest level of enlightenment. The Sufi sage is nothing but an instrument in God's hands, just as the reed flute is simply an instrument in the hands of the flute player. The Sufi asks for God's shackle, for reaching enlightenment requires liberation from illusions of human reason and willingly accepting God's shackle:

Put that chain on my ankle,
For I ripped the chain of human reason. (*Masnavi* 6:610)

The long and tedious journey that a Sufi sheikh's disciples go through has only one goal: to make them a conduit for God's performance. They are like the line of camels in a caravan, moving like a chain behind their guide.⁷⁰ Rumi seeks exactly what Plato denounces. The epicenter of the irreconcilable difference between Plato and Rumi is the nature and value of human reason. Plato celebrates reason as the most valuable human faculty, and the indispensable key to one's salvation. For Rumi, enlightenment and salvation

require rejecting the standards and dogmas of human reason by embracing 'madness'.

One might refute this conclusion by pointing to the *Phaedrus*, where Plato appears to celebrate both madness and the poets who are subject to it. However, a literal reading of the *Phaedrus* where madness and poets are celebrated suffers from significant inadequacies. To begin with, a literal reading sets the *Phaedrus* in incongruity with the rest of the Platonic dialogues. If the *Phaedrus* is one of the so-called middle dialogues, its literal reading contradicts the explicit positions regarding poets taken in an early dialogue (the *Ion*), a middle dialogue (the *Republic*), and a late dialogue (the *Laws*). It also contradicts Plato's unwavering commitment to the cardinal value of human reason, which is present to one extent or another in all Platonic dialogues.

As Daniel Werner has argued, a literal reading would also lead to substantial conceptual discrepancies within the *Phaedrus*.⁷¹ As an alternative, Werner suggests that in the *Phaedrus* Socrates specifically praises philosophical madness. Instead of abandoning the standards of human reason, this madness is a consequence of the passion to recollect the Forms through application of human reason. Therefore, it is more appealing to adopt Werner's interpretation or consider the praise for madness and poets as an instance of Socratic irony when reading the *Phaedrus*. Werner's interpretation is also supported in the *Symposium*, where we read, "I see Phaedrus, and Agathon . . . —to say nothing of Socrates himself—and everyone of you has had his taste of this philosophical frenzy, this sacred rage" (*Symposium*, 218b). The etymological connection between "the noun *erôs* ('love') and the verb *erôtan* ('to ask questions')" also supports Werner's suggestion that when Plato points to philosophical love and madness, he does not by any means abandon rational inquiry but rather pursues it frantically.⁷² This love for the Forms drives the philosopher to behave in ways that appear insane to non-philosophers.⁷³

In the *Theaetetus* Socrates confesses that he suffers from a disease, that of philosophical inquiry (169b). Once again, the "disease" and "madness" of the philosopher is a result of taking rationality to its 'rational conclusion'. Indeed, in various Platonic dialogues Socrates (or the anonymous Athenian) quarrels with various interlocutors, not over the value of rationality but over its standards. A typical Athenian businessperson, poet, or politician could have called Socrates mad, because his behavior did not meet such a person's standard of rationality. For Socrates, meanwhile, to be rational is to fully commit to the mastery of reason in the quest for approaching the Forms.

In assessing the *Phaedrus*, one should also keep in mind other problems that Plato has with poets. Some poems are inspired by Muses and contain elements of truth. However, just as there have been 'false prophets', it is plausible to expect false poets. There must be an effort to separate the

veracious poems from the untruthful ones. The 'true' poet cannot himself be the judge here, for he does not possess the standards of truth and falsehood, as his poems are simply products of divine inspiration. As David Levy has noted, for Socrates "the cost of poetic inspiration appears to be self-ignorance."⁷⁴ It is only the philosopher who, precisely because of his mastery of rational inquiry, can separate truth from untruth in poems. But if the philosophers already know the truth (and untruth), poets become redundant. Further, the pedagogical capacity of poets is very limited. They may be able to instruct a general audience by rehearsing some truths, but they cannot educate anyone, including future poets, since, again, poetry is a matter of inspiration and not education. Finally, reliance on poetic truth is imprudent. Poets have no control over what they rehearse, since a true poet is entirely at the mercy of the Muses' whim to inspire him. This also supports an ironic reading or Werner's interpretation of the *Phaedrus* that it is more plausible compared to a literal reading. In the end, brief passages in Platonic dialogues or Rumi's poetry are insufficient in downplaying the contrast between Plato's consistent and overt commitment to and Rumi's relentless and frequent devaluation of human reason.

Conclusion

From the beginning of his highly celebrated work, the *Masnavi*, Rumi criticizes reliance on human wisdom. This point of departure is fundamental to Rumi's pedagogy. In this criticism, Plato stands as the symbol of the 'wisest' human being. While the evidence strongly suggests that Rumi's access to Plato's writings was negligible, his portrayal of Plato as the symbol of human wisdom is not far-fetched. Rumi suggests an alternative to Platonic metaphysics that relies on rapture instead of reason. Criticism of Plato among Muslims started long before Rumi, but he appears to be the first Muslim to present an elaborate and comprehensive alternative to Platonic epistemology, with sweeping consequences that have influenced the Persian-speaking world for centuries, and are now increasingly celebrated in the West.

Notes

I am thankful to the editors and the anonymous referees of *Philosophy East and West* and to Professor John C. Laursen for their invaluable comments.

- 1 – While widely known as Rumi in the West, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi is usually referred to as Mowlavi, or Mowlana in the Persian-speaking world. The *Masnavi* is at times referred to as the *Masnavi-i Ma'navi*. For the title of the book I have used the Persian pronunciation instead of the Arabic (*Mathnawi*), since the book is in Persian. All

references here are to Mowlana Jalal al-Din Muhamad Blakhi, the *Masnavi-i Ma'navi* (Tehran: Dustan, 2005).

- 2 – E.g., see *Masnavi* 2:1461–1560.
- 3 – Seyed Ghahreman Safavi, *Rumi's Mystical Design: Reading the Mathnavi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).
- 4 – Hasan Zarif Chalabi, *Kashif al-Asrar va Matla' al-Anvar* (Revealer of secrets and commencement of lights) (Tehran: Nashr va Chap Bein al-Milal, 2009), pp. 75–76.
- 5 – Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar, *Sharh-i Masnavi-i Sharif* (Interpretation of the Noble *Masnavi*) (Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi, 2003), vol. 1, p. 32.
- 6 – Reynold A. Nicholson, *the Mathnavi of Jalaludidin Rumi* (Norfolk: Gibb, 1985), vol. 7, p. 13.
- 7 – 'Abd al-Husain Zarrinkub, *Nardiban-i shekasteh* (The broken ladder) (Tehran: Sokhan, 2005), p. 36. Both Nicholson and Zarrinkub point out that some Muslims considered Plato to be the author of a purported text on medicine, written for the *Timaeus* (Nicholson, *Mathnavi*, p. 13; Zarrinkub, *Nardban*, p. 36).
- 8 – Muhammad Ist'lamī, *Matn va Sharh-i Masnavi-i Mowlana* (The text and interpretation of Mowlana's *Masnavi*) (Tehran: Meharat, 2003), vol. 1, p. 284.
- 9 – Karim Zamani, *Sharḥ Jāmi'-i Masnavī-i Ma'navī* (Comprehensive interpretation of the Divine *Masnavi*) (Tehran: Ettela'at, 2006), p. 64. The theoretical diversity among the commentaries on the *Masnavi* listed here is substantial. While appreciating this diversity may be important on some occasions, it is of little relevance to my argument here.
- 10 – All references here are to Mowlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Mowlavi, *Kulliyat-i Shams-i Tabrizi* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1983).
- 11 – Interestingly, in this passage Plato and Loqman are presented as similar to each other.
- 12 – See also Ghazals 2204:6 and 1665.
- 13 – Rumi refers to this reputation on several occasions. E.g., see the *Divan*, Ghazals 321, 591, 1422. Among others, Ibn Khaldun refers to Galen in his *al-Moqadameh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 387; also see Josef W. Meri, ed., *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2006), vol. 2, p. 827.
- 14 – *Masnavi* 3:3960–3961.
- 15 – See, e.g., the *Divan*, Ghazals 1439:20–21, 2521:5; and *Masnavi* 1:528.

- 16 – Muslih al-Din Hafez Shirazi, *Divan-i Hafiz Shirazi* (Poems of Hafiz of Shiraz) (Tehran: Ganjineh, 2009).
- 17 – Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of Philosophers*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), p. 4. Al-Ghazali's discussions on divine love are extended and have their own complications. Al-Ghazali was initially a renowned theologian and later developed strong Sufi inclinations, and one may argue that his initial commitments to rationality continued to influence his later inclinations. For a valuable discussion of al-Ghazali's approach to divine love see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teachings of Al-Ghazali and Al-Dabbagh* (London: Routledge, 2003), Introduction and chap. 2.
- 18 – Shams al-Din Ahmad Aflaki, *Manaqib al-Arifin* (Virtues of the mystics) (Tehran: Donyayi Kitab, 1996), vol. 1, p. 12. Also see Fereydun ibn Ahmad Sipahsalar, *Zendeguinameh Mowlana Jalal al-Din Mowlavi* (The life of Mowlana Jalal al-Din) (Tehran: Iqbal, 1999), p. 12.
- 19 – Sultan al-'Ulama Hussein Khatibi Balkhi, *Ma'arif* (Wisdoms) (Tehran: Tahuri, 2003), vol. 1, p. 222.
- 20 – Abu'lmakārim Rokn al-Dīn 'Alā' al-Dowleh Semnānī, *Chihil Majlis* (Forty assemblies) (Tehran: Asatir, 2000), pp. 174–175.
- 21 – Ali Humayun Akhtar argues that "In the case of philosophy-oriented Sufis like Shahab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi, who increasingly emerged from the circles of the scholars, they often identified their Sufi metaphysics neither as the scholarly discipline of 'speculative theology' nor the contemporary study of Graeco-Arabic 'philosophy' (*falsafa*), but rather 'wisdom' (*hikma*)" (*Philosophers, Sufis, and Caliphs: Politics and Authority from Cordoba to Cairo and Baghdad* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017], pp. 17–18). Unfortunately, Akhtar neither elaborates on what "philosophy-oriented" means nor gives textual references to "*hikma*" in the writings of those who, according to him, considered themselves scholars of "*hikma*." Examining such textual evidence is essential, since—to follow Wittgenstein's notion—to understand what *hikma* means we need to understand the language game it is a part of. Sana'i might be referred to as an exception, but he was not a member of the circle mentioned by Akhtar.
- 22 – Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi, *Fihi Ma Fih* (It is what it is) (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2001), p. 45.
- 23 – There are occasions when Plato also has been referred to as a medical doctor. E.g., see Qutb al-Din Eshkevari [Qotb al-Dīn Eškevarī], *Mahbub al-qolub* [*Mahbûb al-qolûb*] (The hearts' beloved), trans. Ahmad Ardakani (Tehran: Irshad Islami, 2001), p. 108.

- 24 – Although Plato would have protested calling philosophy a technê.
- 25 – “The soul has two aspects: first, its attention to the realm of unity and holiness, on this basis they call the soul, love The second aspect is when the soul’s attention is directed toward multiplicity for the purpose of understanding various things When the goal is to understand various things for the sake of survival and material welfare, it is called the revenue wisdom, or the petty wisdom. This kind of wisdom conflicts with love” (Anonymous, *Mirat al-Ushaq* [Mirror of lovers] [Tehran: Ilmi va Farhangui, 2009], p. 268).
- 26 – One must keep in mind that Rumi “is not saying that rational thought is useless. He is not objecting to the organized and even organismic vision of reality that was expressed in Islamic philosophy, the home of logic and systematic rational discourse. Rather, he is criticizing those who think that analysis, investigation, rational argumentation, and scientific proofs provide a leg strong enough to reach the goal of human life” (pointed out by William C. Chittick in *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012], pp. 201–202).
- 27 – Abu al-mu‘ali Muhammad ibn Ni‘mat ‘Alavi Faqih Balkhi, *Bayan al-Adyan* (Enumeration of the religions) (Tehran: Bonyad Afshar, 1997), p. 25.
- 28 – Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi (d. 1037) states that Sabians, an umbrella term used by medieval Muslims to cover several groups including the Mandaeans, considered Plato as one of their prophets. See Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Mazahib-i Islam* (History of Muslim schisms and sects) (Tabriz: Haqiqat, 1954), p. 310. (This is a translation of *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*.)
- 29 – Abd al-Rahman Badavi, ed., *Aflatun fi al-Islam* (Plato in Islam) (Tehran: Mu‘assaseh Mutali‘at-i Islami Danishgah McGill, Shu‘beh Tehran, 1974), pp. 246–292. In this volume there is also a one-page text purported to be by Plato titled “Vasiyat Aflatun al-Hakim” (The will of Plato, the *Hakim*). In this text the word Allah is repeated five times and ends with: “Allah is the most knowledgeable judge” (Badavi, *Aflatun*, p. 244). In light of the fact that Plato could not have known about Allah, the implication is that he nevertheless was a monotheist in the Abrahamic tradition.
- 30 – Qutb al-Din Muhammad Eshkevari refers to him as the divine *hakim* Plato, known for his “monotheism and wisdom” (Qutb al-Din Muhammad Eshkevari, *Mahbub al-Qulub* [The beloved of hurts] [Tehran: Miras Maktub, 1999], p. 257).

- 31 – Muhammad Al-Shahristani, *Kitab Al-milal wal-nihal* (The book of religious groups and sects) (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rafa, 1993), vol. 1, p. 407. The blending of Platonism with Neoplatonism (with its concept of the One) appears to be responsible for calling Plato a monotheist. Interestingly, some five hundred years later Qutb al-Din Muhammad Eshkevari (ca. 1600) repeats the same claim. See Eshkevari, *Mahbub*, p. 257.
- 32 – The Qur'an (18:65) refers to one of [Allah's] servants who was taught by Allah, without naming him. Muslims frequently have referred to him as Khizr and considered him to be immortal. For more on Khizr, see John Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment, and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 84–86; and 'Abd al-Husain Zarrinkub, *Arzesh-i Miras-i Sufiyeh* (The value of Sufism's inheritance) (Tehran: Arya, 1965), pp. 113–114. For a relevant discussion, see W. C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 222.
- 33 – 'Abd al-Husain Zarrinkub, "Aflatun dar Iran," *Ayandeh* 6, nos. 7–8 (Fall 1980): 654.
- 34 – Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Omar Suhrawardi, *Rashf al-Nasayih al-Imaniyeh va Kashf al-Fazayeh al-Yunaniyeh* (Tehran: Bonyad, 1986), p. 411.
- 35 – The title given to the first eighteen verses of the *Masnavi*.
- 36 – Reynold A. Nicholson's translation remains the best; see *Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2017). There is also a translation by E. H. Whinfield. For the latest edition, see the *Masnavi I Ma'navi of Rumi Complete 6 Books* (n.p.: CreateSpace, 2017).
- 37 – "The Tale of the Reed" begins with "listen to *this* reed flute" (my italics), which has led to the suggestion that the flute represents Rumi himself.
- 38 – The use of "holy medical doctor" was not uncommon among Sufis of the time. Rumi's contemporary, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani defines holy medical doctor (*al-tabib al-rouhani*) as an enlightened (Sufi) sheikh, capable of guiding others toward perfection (*Istilahat al-Sufiyya* [Sufism's language] [Cairo: Dar Almenar, 1992], p. 85). It is in this context that Sayf al-Din Bakharzi calls the Prophet Muhammad "the perfect medical doctor." See Iraj Afshar, ed., *Du risaleh 'Erfani dar Eshq* (Two mystical treatises on love) (Tehran: Manuchehri, 2006), p. 98.

- 39 – Sufis referred to the Abrahamic Prophets and Sufi Sheikhs as *tabibs* or medical doctors. E.g., see Rumi, *Fihī*, 49, and Sayf al-Din Bakharzi, who calls the Prophet Muhammad “the perfect medical doctor” (Afshar, *Du risaleh* [Two treatises], p. 98). Some Non-Sufi authors also referred to the Prophet Muhammad as *tabib*. E.g., see Sultan Muhammad Fakhri Hiravi, *Rawzat al-Salatin* (Garden of princes) (Tabriz: Tarikh va Farhang Iran, 1966), p. 1.
- 40 – E.g., see Hamid Farzam; “Iradat Mowlavi be Sana’i Ghaznavi,” *Faslnameh Nameh-i Anjuman* 27 (2006): 45–48.
- 41 – Abu al-Majd Majdud ibn Adam Sana’i Ghaznavi, *Hadiqat al-Haqiqah wa shari’at al-Tariqa* (The walled garden of truth and the manner of mysticism) (Tehran: Nigah, 1998), p. 233.
- 42 – Isma’il ibn Muhammad Mustmali Bukhari, *Sharh al-Ta’arrof li-Mazhab al-Tasawuf* (Tihran: Asatir, 1984), vol. 4, p. 1392.
- 43 – Khwajeh Abdullah Ansari, *Risail-i jami’-i Khwajeh Abdullah Ansari* (Complete treatises of Khwajeh Abdullah Ansari) (Tehran: Forughi 1969), p. 125.
- 44 – Ansari, *Risail*, p. 45.
- 45 – ‘Ain al-Quzat Hamedani, *Tamhidat* (Preliminaries) (Tehran: Golshan, 1993), p. 98.
- 46 – Rumi, *Divan*, 132:3.
- 47 – Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism: The Teachings of al-Ghazali and al-Dabbagh* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.
- 48 – Evidence of the presence of the Neoplatonic influence is more extensive. See, e.g., Qasim Ghani, *Tarikh Tasavvof dar Islam* (Tehran: Zavvar, 2009); Parviz Morewedge, *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought: Beyond Transnational Globalization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Mark Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). It is important to avoid excessive speculation even here, since one can point to some equally sensible evidence supporting Buddhist influence on Sufi thought. If we are simply to speculate, then suggesting that Rumi’s ideas were influenced by Buddhism and Manichaeism is more plausible than the speculation about Platonic influence. For such suggestions, see Sa’id Nafisi, *Sarchishmeh Tasavof dar Iran* (Tehran: Foruqi, 1964), pp. 100–102, and ‘Abd al-Husain Zarrinkub, *Justuju dar Tasavof-i Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1990), chap. 1.

- 49 – Majid Fakhri, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 13; Yegane Shayegan, "The Transmission of Greek Philosophy to the Islamic World," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Tehran: Adineh, n.d.), vol 1, p. 99.
- 50 – Abubakr Muhammad Al-Isfahani, *Kitab al-Zahra* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 15.
- 51 – Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhamad Al-Daylami, *The Treatise on Mystical Love*, trans. Joseph Norment Bell and Hasan Mahmood Abdul Latif Al Shafie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 65.
- 52 – See Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love: Courtly and Romantic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), p. 44.
- 53 – Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Ali Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Asriyah, 2005), vol. 3, p. 308.
- 54 – Muhammad ibn al-Ishaq Ibn al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 592–594. Ibn-Nadim mentions the *Phaedrus* as one of Plato's dialogues, which had not been translated to Arabic.
- 55 – In the *Symposium* (189d–191a), Aristophanes argues that original human beings were round and had four legs, four hands, and two heads, and that they were either male, female, or androgynous. These original human beings caused too much trouble for the gods. Thus, Zeus divided them into perfect halves. Human beings have since then been longing and looking for their other halves. Once two halves find each other, they wrap their arms around each other and seek growth together.
- 56 – The most plausible evidence that Rumi knew of Daylami's '*Atf al-Alif*' is the similarity between Galen's treatment of a patient who had fallen in love (Daylami, '*Atf al-Alif*', p. 48) and the treatment of a similar patient by a divine doctor in the first story of the *Masnawi*, as described later in this article. However, similar stories have been reported by Ali Ibn Sahl al-Tabari, *Firdous al-Hekma fi al-Tib* (Paradise of wisdom in medicine) (Berlin: Aftab, 1928), p. 538, and Ahmad ibn Omar ibn Ali Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi, *Chahar Maqalih va Ta'liqat* (Four treatises and commentaries) (Tehran: Mo'in, 2009), pp. 194–195.
- 57 – There is no mention of this account in such influential texts as Ahmad Ghazali's *Savanih* (Accidents), Fakhr al-Din Iraqi's *Lam'at* (Sparks), Avicenna's *Treatise on Love*, al-Simnani's *Treatise on Love*, or Ikhvan

al-Safa's *Essay on Love*. It is particularly relevant that while the *Essay on Love* points to "philosophers accounts on love," it is entirely silent on the account presumably adopted from the *Symposium*.

- 58 – Averroes (Abu al-Walid Muḥammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd) (1126–1198) commented that, for Plato, poetry could not produce knowledge (Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, trans. with introd. and notes by Ralph Lerner [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974], p. 248). However, it could be used as a pedagogical tool in teaching the masses, who, unlike the elite, were not capable of learning via "demonstrative arguments" (pp. 46–47, 56, 141). Meanwhile, because poems are imitations, and as such could imitate what is undesirable, they must be highly regulated (p. 67). It is also important to remember that poets and poetry are portrayed negatively in the Qur'an. For relevant references in the Qur'an, see 21:5, 37:36, 52:29–31, 26:224–227, 36:69, and 69:40–41.
- 59 – For instance, see *Masnavi* 4:1311.
- 60 – *Masnavi* 1:1982.
- 61 – Abubakr Abdullah ibn Muhammad Razi, *'Ishq va 'Aql* (Love and reason) (Tehran: Bomgah Tarjume va Nashr Kitab, 1966), p. 71. The book has been generally known as *Me'yar al-sedq fi mesdaq al-'Ishq* (The measure of sincerity in love).
- 62 – al-'Abadi, Qutb al-Din Abu al-Mozaffar Ardishir, *al-Tasfiyeh fi ahval al-Motesawefeh* (Clarifying Sufi's circumstances) (Tehran: Elmi, 1968), p. 210.
- 63 – Ahmad Ghazali, "Savanih," in Ahmad Mujahid, ed., *Majmu'eh Asar Farsi Ahmad Ghazali* (Persian works of Ahmad Ghazali) (Tehran: Danishgah Tehran, 2009), p. 112.
- 64 – In the words of the author of *Mirat Oshaq*, "madness is the revolt of the hero of love and his victory over reason who governs the lover's heart" (Anonymous, *Mirat*, p. 126).
- 65 – 'Ayn-al Quzat Hamadani writes, "The madness of love is superior to all kinds of rational thinking" ('Ayn-al Quzat, *Tamhidat*, p. 98).
- 66 – Aflaki, *Manaqib*, vol. 2, p. 709.
- 67 – Baha al-Din Muhammad Sultan Valad, *Valad Nameh* (The book of Valad) (Tehran: Homa, 1997), p. 44. Sultan Valad explains that Rumi was drunk by divine light.
- 68 – Fakhry, *History*, p. 13.
- 69 – There is no evidence that the *Ion* was available to Rumi in Arabic or Persian.

- 70 – *Masnavi* 1:2533–2534. Also see the *Divan*, Ghazal 253.
- 71 – Daniel Werner, “Plato on Madness and Philosophy,” *Ancient Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (2011): 47–71.
- 72 – C.D.C. Reeve, ed., *Plato on Love* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), pp. xix–xx; Elizabeth S. Belfiore, *Socrates’ Daimonic Art: Love for Wisdom in Four Platonic Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 35.
- 73 – For a relevant discussion, see Luis E. Navia, *Socrates: A Life Examined* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2007), pp. 130–132.
- 74 – David Levy, *Eros and Socratic Political Philosophy* (New York: Palgrave: 2013), p. 91.