

A.

Seeing Things As They Are

●

1. FORM AND MEANING

Rūmī has nothing but pity and disdain for those who look at the world around and within themselves and do not understand that what they are seeing is a veil over reality. The world is a dream, a prison, a trap, foam thrown up from the ocean, dust kicked up by a passing horse. But it is not what it appears to be.

If everything that appears to us were just as it appears, the Prophet, who was endowed with such penetrating vision, both illuminated and illuminating, would never have cried out, "Oh Lord, show us things as they are!" (F 5/18)

Rūmī draws a fundamental distinction between "form" (*ṣūrat*) and "meaning" (*ma'nā*).¹ Form is a thing's outward appearance, meaning its inward and unseen reality. Ultimately, meaning is that thing as it is known to God Himself. And since God is beyond any sort of multiplicity, in the last analysis the meaning of all things is God. "Form is shadow, meaning the Sun." (M VI 4747)

In face of meaning, what is form? Very contemptible. The meaning of the heavens keeps them in place. . . .

The meaning of the wind makes it wander like a millwheel, captive to the water of the stream. (M I 3330, 33)

Know that the outward form passes away, but the World of Meaning remains forever.

How long will you make love with the shape of the jug? Leave aside the jug's shape: Go, seek water!

Having seen the form, you are unaware of the meaning. If you are wise, pick out the pearl from the shell. (M II 1020–22)

The world then is form, or a collection of a myriad forms. By its very nature each form displays its own meaning, which is its reality with God. It is man's task not to be deceived by the form. He must understand that form does not exist for its own sake, but manifests a meaning above and beyond itself.

Forms are the oil, meaning the light—otherwise, you would not keep asking why.

If form is for the sake of the form itself, then why ask "Why?" . . .

So wisdom cannot allow that the outward forms of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth should exist for this only. (M IV 2994–95, 98)

Pass beyond form, escape from names! Flee titles and names toward meaning! (M IV 1285)

The Prophet said, "Behold the form of the heavens and the earth, and through this form draw benefit from that Universal Meaning. For you see the changes wrought by the Wheel of Heaven, the rains of the clouds in season, summer and winter, and the changes of Time. You see that everything is in its place and in accordance with wisdom. After all, how does this inanimate cloud know that it must send down rain in season? You see the earth, how it nurtures plants and makes one into ten. Well, Someone does this. See Him by means of this world, and take replenishment from Him. Just as you take replenishment from the meaning of the human reality through the body, take replenishment from the meaning of the world through the world's form." (F 39/51)

The dichotomy between meaning and form is a mainstay of Rūmī's teachings and must be kept constantly in mind. He refers to it in many different contexts and through a great variety of images and symbols. In fact, there is no overriding reason to label the fundamental dichotomy within reality as that between "form and meaning," except that this pair of terms seems to be the widest in application of all the pairs Rūmī employs, and he probably refers to it more often than any other. In any case, we should not attempt to tie Rūmī down too closely

in the matter of terminology. "Meaning" by definition is beyond form and its constrictions. Therefore all attempts to express it in words must be equivocal to some extent. Rather than impose strict philosophical definitions on Rūmī's terminology, we will be much better off letting him speak for himself as he urges the reader to go beyond definitions and the limitations of human language.

Rūmī often discusses the meaning-form dichotomy in terms drawn from philosophical usage, and even more often in the images and symbols of poetry. A few of the terms he pairs together most commonly are secondary causes (*asbāb*) and First Cause (*musabbib*), outward (*zāhir*) and inward (*bāṭin*), dust and wind, foam and ocean, picture and painter, shadow and light.

People look at secondary causes and think that they are the origin of everything that happens. But it has been revealed to the saints that secondary causes are no more than a veil. (F 68/80)

These secondary causes are veils upon the eyes, for not every eye is worthy of seeing His craftsmanship.

One must have an eye which cuts through secondary causes and tears aside all veils,

To the end that it may see the First Cause in No-place and know that exertion, earnings, and shops are nonsense.

Every good and evil arrives from the First Cause. Oh father, secondary causes and means are naught

But a phantom materialized upon the highway, so that the period of heedlessness may endure sometime longer. (M V 1551-55)

Whoever looks upon secondary causes is for certain a form-worshiper. Whoever looks upon the First Cause has become a light which discerns Meaning. (D 25048)

The earth has the external shape of dust, but inside are the luminous Attributes of God.

Its outward has fallen into war with its inward; its inward is like a pearl and its outward a stone.

Its outward says, "I am this and no more." Its inward says, "Look well, before and behind!"

Its outward denies, saying, "The inward is nothing." The inward says, "We will show you. Wait!" (M IV 1007-10)

The unbeliever's argument is only this: "I see no home but this outward."

He never reflects that every outward gives news of a hidden wisdom.

Indeed, the profit of every outward thing lies hidden in the inward, like the benefits within medicine. (M IV 2878-80)

Seize upon the outward, even if it flies crookedly! In the end, the outward leads to the inward. (M III 526)

He has stirred up a world like dust: hidden in the dust, He is like the wind. (D 28600)

The world is dust, and within the dust the sweeper and broom are hidden. (D 13164)

Existence is all dust, its luminosity coming from that Moon: Turn not your back toward the Moon, follow not the dust! (D 12236)

Day and night, the Sea keeps on churning the foam. You behold the foam but not the Sea—how strange! (M III 1271)

How should the foamlike shape move without waves? How can dust rise to the zenith without wind?

Since you have seen the dust of the shape, see the Wind! Since you have seen the foam, see the Ocean of Creative Power! (M VI 1459-60)

The world's forms are foam upon the Sea. If you are a man of purity, pass beyond the foam! (D 28722)

His Beauty is the sun, His veil the world: But what does the picture see other than pictures and designs? (D 706)

They play the flute, tambourine, and harp for an ear: This picture-world points toward a Painter. (D 9312)

Dear one, look at the Painter! Why do you stare at the pictures on the bathhouse wall? Look at the sun and the moon! Why do you gaze at the moon-faced girls? (D 24342)

Before the Painter and brush, the picture is helpless and shackled like a child in the womb. (M I 611)

The picture derives its movements only from the Painter's brush, the compass' foot revolves around its point. (D 10955)

Light is the First Cause, and every secondary cause is its shadow. (D 525)

Thou art the Sun, and all things follow Thee like shadows, sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right. (D 21966)

We are all darkness and God is light; this house receives its brightness from the Sun.

The light here is mixed with shadow—if you want light, come out of the house onto the roof. (D 30842–43)

2. EXISTENCE AND NONEXISTENCE

In referring to form and meaning or the outward and the inward, Rūmī employs another set of terms which emphasizes the “negative” face of meaning in relation to the “positive” side of form. From this point of view form is “place” and meaning is “No-place”; foam is “color” and the sea is “Colorlessness.” For meaning is opposite to form and can only be attained by form’s negation, by “formlessness.”

Everyone has turned his face toward some direction, but the saints have turned in the direction without directions. (M V 350)

In the direction without directions all is spring; any other direction holds nothing but the cold of December. (D 20089)

He appears to be still and in movement, but He is neither this nor that; He manifests Himself in place, but in truth He has no place. (D 6110)

You are from place, but your origin is No-place: Close down this shop and open up that shop! (M II 612)

How long will you give signs? Silence! For that Origin of signs has no sign. (D 7268)

Colorlessness is the root of all colors, peace the root of all wars. (M VI 59)

Colorlessness is the root of colors, picturelessness the root of pictures, wordlessness the root of words and the mine the root of coins—so behold! (D 13925)

Thousands of colors have come from the Vat, which transcends blue and white. (D 28249)

Form comes into existence from the Formless, just as smoke is born from fire. (M VI 3712)

Lord of lords! Formless Giver of forms! What form art Thou pulling over me? Thou knowest, I know not. (D 14964)

Rūmī often discerns between form and meaning in terms of “existence” (*ḥastī*, *wujūd*) and “nonexistence” (*nīstī*, ‘*adam*). This pairing of terms is more complicated than many others, since each of the two words may refer either to form or to meaning, depending upon the context. From one point of view, we see this world as an existent thing. Hence form is existence, while meaning is formless and non-existent. But if we look carefully, we see that this form or “existence”

is but dust upon the wind. Compared to the ocean, the foam may truly be called "nonexistent." So from a second point of view, God and meaning are existence, while form and the world are nonexistence. Rūmī often contrasts these two points of view in the same verses, and at other times he refers to one point of view or the other.

This world of nonexistence appears as existent things, and that world of Existence is exceedingly hidden.

Dust is upon the wind, playing—deceptive, it sets up a veil.

That which is doing the work has no work; it is only skin. But that which is hidden is the kernel and origin. (M II 1280-82)

We and our existences are nonexistences. Thou art Absolute Existence showing Thyself as perishable things.

We are all lions, but lions on a banner: We keep on leaping because of the wind. (M I 602-603)

The worldly man imagines that a nonexistent thing possesses splendor. Oh friend, why would a wise man devote his life to the work of nonexistence? . . .

Because of the darkness in your eyes, you imagine that a nothing is a something. Your eyes can be made healthy and illumined with the dust of the King's doorstep! (D 11470, 75)

3. THE ILLUSION OF DICHOTOMY

Form and meaning are inextricably connected: form derives from meaning, and meaning manifests itself as form. Since the two are the outward and inward aspects of a single reality, each is important in its own way. But for most people, the danger lies in giving too much importance to form and not understanding that it derives its existence and significance from meaning.

Each and every part of the world is a snare for the fool and a means of deliverance for the wise. (M VI 4287)

I said to the white-haired world, "You are both snare and admonition." It replied, "Although I am an ancient master, yet I am still His young disciple." (D 14988)

Form also has tremendous importance. No, much more than importance, for it participates in the kernel. Just as nothing can be done without the kernel, so also nothing can be done without the shell . . . But the root is meaning. (F 19/31)

When you say that “form is the branch of meaning,” or “form is the vassal, while the heart is the king”—after all, form and meaning are relative terms. You say, “This is the branch of that”: If there were no branch, how could you call the other the “root”? So it became the root because of the branch. If there were no branch, it would have no name. (F 144/153)

4. “THE SCIENCE OF RELIGIONS”

Just as Rūmī constantly distinguishes between form and meaning, he also refers over and over again to two kinds of knowledge and vision: one that discerns only form, and another that passes beyond form and discerns the meaning. The first he sometimes calls the “science of bodies” (*ilm-i abdān*) to distinguish it from the “science of religions” (*ilm-i adyān*); the former embraces all that we customarily understand by the term “science” and “knowledge,” even such disciplines as theology and metaphysics, for these are learned by rote and study. Until they boil up from the heart as the result of a direct vision of the inward meanings and realities, or of God Himself, they are but shadows, not light. Without a direct and vibrantly living vision of meaning, knowledge is only form. Certainly it may have the potentiality of being transmuted into true knowledge, but only after long spiritual travail.

The man more perfect in erudition is behind in meaning and ahead in form

A knowledge is needed whose root is upon the other side, since every branch leads to its root.

Every wing cannot fly across the breadth of the ocean: Only a knowledge that comes directly from Him can take one to Him. (M III 1117, 24–25)

Every science acquired by study and effort in this world is the “science of bodies.” But the science acquired after death is the “science of religions.” Knowing the science of “I am God” is the science of bodies, but becoming “I am God” is the science of religions.² To see the light of a lamp or a fire is the science of bodies, but to be consumed by the fire of the light or the lamp is the science of religions. Whatever is vision is the science of religions, whatever is knowledge is the science of bodies. (F 228/235)

These people who have studied or are now studying imagine that if they attend faithfully here they will forget and abandon all their knowledge. On the contrary, when they come here their sciences all acquire a spirit. The sciences

are all paintings. When they gain spirits, it is as if a lifeless body receives a spirit. The root of all these sciences is from Yonder, but they have been transported from the world without sounds and letters into the world of sounds and letters. (F 156/163-164)

B.

Spirit, Heart, and Intellect

●

1. THE SPIRIT

The outward form of the world and of everything within it manifests a hidden meaning. The human form is no exception.

First they make or buy a tent, then they bring the Turcoman as a guest.

Know that your form is the tent and your meaning is the Turcoman: Your meaning is the captain and your form is the ship. (M III 529–530)

If man were human through his form, Muḥammad and Abū Jahl³ would be the same.

The painting on the wall is the likeness of a man. Look at that form. What does it lack?

That splendid painting lacks a spirit. Go, seek that precious pearl! (M I 1019–21)

In an oft-quoted verse the Koran says, “They will ask you (Oh Muḥammad!) about the spirit. Say: ‘The spirit is from the command of my Lord; and of knowledge you have been given but a little.’” (XVII 85)

It is understood from Say: “*The spirit is from the command of my Lord*”⁴ that the spirit’s explanation cannot be uttered by the tongue. (D 21284)

God possesses nothing in the lofty heavens and in the earth more hidden than man’s spirit.

God has disclosed all things, fresh and withered (cf. Koran VI 59), but He has sealed the spirit's mysteries with *from the command of my Lord*. (M VI 2877-78)

Since the spirit is *from the command of my Lord*, it is concealed. Whatever analogy I utter is contradicted. (M VI 3310)

In spite of such protestations, Rūmī has a great deal to say about this ineffable meaning hidden within man's form. For certainly he does not deny the possibility of knowing the spirit. God Himself, after all, is not beyond the spiritual perception of the saints. But he does want to point out that until man has himself passed beyond form and entered into meaning, he will not be able to grasp the spirit's true nature. Whatever one expresses in words has a tentative and ambiguous character. It should not be taken as a strict definition of something that in fact cannot be defined. It is only a pointer toward a reality beyond all forms and outward expressions.

Rūmī usually discusses the spirit from the point of view of its relation to other realities. His innumerable references to the spirit's connection to the body throw a good deal of light on the nature of both. As Rūmī is fond of pointing out, "Things become clear through their opposites." Just as the nature of meaning becomes clear when it is contrasted with form, so the nature of the spirit is clarified when it is contrasted with the body.

The body moves by means of the spirit, but you do not see the spirit: Know the spirit through the body's movement! (M IV 155)

The poor body will not move until the spirit moves: Until the horse goes forward, the saddlebag stands still. (D 14355)

Know that spirits are the ocean, bodies the foam. (D 33178)

The spirit is like a falcon, the body its fetter—the poor foot-bound, broken-winged creature! (M V 2280)

Have not the earthen clods—the bodies—come to life through the radiance of the spirit? Marvellous shining light! Wonderful life-increasing sun! (D 35280)

This world is the ocean, the body a whale, and the spirit Jonah, veiled from the light of dawn. (M II 3140)

The body keeps on boasting of loveliness and beauty, while the spirit has hidden its splendor and wings and plumes.

The spirit says to it, "Oh dunghill! Who are you? You have lived for a day or two from my radiance." (M I 3267-68)

Look not at the body's face, which rots and decays. Look at the spirit's face—may it ever stay fair and lovely! (D 1893)

In its knowledge the spirit is a mountain, in its attributes the body a straw. Who has ever seen a mountain dangling from a straw? (D 24161)

Within the egg of the body you are a marvellous bird—since you are inside the egg; you cannot fly. If the body's shell should break, you will flap your wings and win the spirit. (D 33567-68)

Oh man! This body keeps you in torment. The bird of your spirit is imprisoned with a bird of another kind.

The spirit is a falcon, but bodily dispositions are crows. The falcon has received many wounds from crows and owls. (M V 842-843)

When will the bird of my spirit fly from the cage toward the garden? (D 33887)

The only thing that will keep a caged bird from trying to escape is ignorance. (M I 1541)

So man's meaning or reality is his spirit, while his body or form is a prison from which he must escape. But again, one must not fall into the error of seeing a fundamental duality or dichotomy, since both body and spirit are necessary and good. The body in fact is only the outward manifestation of the spirit within the world. This is why Rūmī can refer to the body's "becoming spirit": The body of the saints becomes reintegrated into its spiritual source.

Oh you who have drawn nourishment from the heavens and the earth until your body has grown fat, . . .

Cleave to the spirit! These other things are vain. I call them "vain" in relation to the spirit, not in relation to the masterly work of their Creator. (M VI 3592, 94-95)

The spirit cannot function without the body, and the body without the spirit is withered and cold.

Your body is manifest and your spirit hidden: These two put all the business of the world in order. (M V 3423-24)

God made the body the locus of manifestation for the spirit. (M VI 2208)

So the saints have not said this lightly: The bodies of the purified ones become untainted, exactly like the spirit.

Their words, their psyche, their outward form—all become absolute spirit without trace. (M I 2000-01)

Thou wilt find nothing deader than my body.
Give it life with the Light of Thy Essence! Let it become all spirit—this body of mine that sacrifices its life for Thee! (D 19229)

2. THE LEVELS OF THE SPIRIT

The opposition between body and spirit is hardly as simple and straightforward as it first might appear. We have seen that meaning has more than one level, and that only in the final analysis can it be identified with God Himself. Thus the intermediate levels of meaning are elevated and “subtle” (*latīf*) in relation to forms and bodies, but “gross” (*kathīf*) in relation to God.

Just as these bodies are gross in relation to the meanings of people, so in relation to God’s subtlety these ineffable and subtle meanings are gross bodies and forms. (F 99/110-111)

In a similar way, spirit can be divided into a number of levels, the lower of which appear as form and body in relation to the higher. Rūmī delineates four fundamental levels: the animal spirit, the human spirit, the angelic spirit or spirit of Gabriel, and the Muhammadan spirit or spirit of the saints. Above the last of these levels stands God, who transcends the spirit, but who is often referred to as “Spirit” metaphorically.⁵

The animal, natural, or fiery spirit is common to both men and animals and is precisely what makes them “animate.” Hence the Persian word for “spirit”, *jān*, is often used to mean life, in Rūmī’s works as elsewhere; in fact the two concepts are practically inseparable in traditional Islamic thought. In many verses translated in the present work “life” would render the word *jān* as well as or better than spirit, but the latter term has been kept for the sake of consistency. If the close connection between the concepts of life and spirit is kept in mind, the sense of these verses will be clearer.

The animal spirit comes into existence with the body and like the body comes to an end. It is characterized by multiplicity and dispersion, in contrast to the higher levels of spirit, which all partake of unity. Its food is “water and clay,” since it is so attached to the body as to be almost indistinguishable from it. The animal spirit is

related to the next level of spirit as form to meaning, or husk to kernel.

The qualities of the body, like the body itself, are borrowed—set not your heart upon them, for they last but an hour!

The qualities of the natural spirit also undergo annihilation, so seek the qualities of that spirit which is above the heavens. (M IV 1840–41)

Wonderful! Are you not ashamed, oh brother, of a spirit in need of bread? (D 28664)

Multiplicity lies in the animal spirit. The “Single Soul”⁶ is the human spirit. (M II 188)

The next three levels of the spirit are more difficult to separate, for they all partake of unity and from a certain point of view are one and the same. Nevertheless, it can be said that the human spirit is that dimension of man’s reality that distinguishes him from the animals, i.e., his faculty of articulated thought and self-awareness. An outstanding attribute of this spirit is discernment; and in respect of the fact that the spirit is able to discern truth from error, good from evil, the absolute from the relative, beauty from ugliness and so on, it is called the “intellect” (*‘aql*). But the human spirit in its fullness can only be actualized through traversing the spiritual path. Hence only the saints have a true awareness of it, while the consciousness of other people is dominated by the animal spirit. This point will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

Once it is actualized in its fullness, the human spirit may be said to be nothing but the spirit of sanctity. So when Rūmī distinguishes among the three higher levels of the spirit, his purpose is usually to point out that there are different levels of self-realized beings, of saints and prophets; and that the highest levels man may attain are even beyond the spiritual degrees of the angels.

When Rūmī says, “Seek the spirit!”, he means, “Transcend your animal nature and become united with the spiritual world!” He rarely specifies which of the three higher levels of spirit he has in mind.

Experience shows that the spirit is nothing but awareness. Whoever has greater awareness has a greater spirit.

Our spirit is greater than the animal spirit.
Why? Because it has more awareness.

Then the angel’s spirit is greater than ours, for he transcends the rational senses.

Then the spirit of the saints, the Possessors of Hearts, is even greater. Leave aside your astonishment!

That is why the angels prostrated themselves before Adam (Koran II 34): his spirit was greater than their existence.

After all, it would not have been proper to command a superior being to prostrate himself to an inferior one.

How could God's Justice and Kindness allow a rose to prostrate itself before a thorn?

When the spirit becomes greater and passes beyond all bounds, the spirits of all things become obedient to it. (M II 3326-33)

Oh worthless peoples, grasp bread, bread! Oh fortunate peoples, seize spirit, spirit!

The animal draws fodder to itself, it knows nothing else. Man seeks agates and coral.

Those gardens have slept, but these have blossomed and gained as their portion the Sultan's court.

There are immature spirits slithering into snares, and spirits that have flown up and found the way to the Beloved.

There is a spirit beyond description, above the turning heavens: nimble, subtle and well-proportioned, like the moon in Libra,

And another spirit like fire, harsh, headstrong and obstinate, short-lived and unhappy, like Satan's imagination.

Oh friend! Which are you? Are you ripe or raw? Are you dizzy from sweetmeats and wine, or a knight on the field of battle? (D 21377-83)

Beyond all the levels of spirit stands God Himself. But just as God might be called the "Meaning of meanings," so also He may be referred to as the "Spirit of spirits." Although He is beyond all the limitations of the spirit, since He created it, nevertheless His relationship to the spirit is similar to the relationship of the spirit to the body.

Since He is the Spirit of the spirit, there is no escape from Him: I have not seen a single spirit be an enemy to the Friend. (D 4655)

Thou art the Spirit of our spirit, the Meaning of the Names, the Existence of all things, the Source of love's tumult. (D 34134)

Oh painting, you have gone toward the Painter!
Oh spirit, you have passed on to the Spirit of the spirit! (D 29160)

If that Spirit of the spirit of the spirit should
show Himself to the bodies, my body would become a spirit
through His Gentleness, my spirit would laugh in delight. (D 26772)

Thou art insight's Insight and reality's Reality!
Thou art the Light of the light of the mysteries, the Spirit of
the spirit of the spirit! (D 27041)

Inwardly Thou art the Spirit of the spirit of the
spirit of the spirit, outwardly the Sun of the sun! (D 28789)

3. THE EGO AND THE INTELLECT

Rūmī often refers to the animal spirit by the terms *nafs*, which is most commonly rendered into English as "soul" or "self." In Arabic and Persian the term *nafs* is sometimes synonymous with the terms *rūḥ* or *jān*, i.e., "spirit." Rūmī himself occasionally uses the term to refer to the higher levels of the spirit. But most often he employs the term *nafs* to refer to the animal spirit. In this usage he is inspired at least partly by the Koranic verse, "Yet I claim not that my soul (*nafs*) was innocent: Verily the soul of man incites to evil" (XII 53). Sufis and others often refer to this "soul" as *nafs-i ammārah*, "the soul which incites (to evil)." Because of the negative connotations of this "soul" and the positive and spiritual connotations of the word "soul" in English, I have chosen to translate the word as "ego."

When Solomon leaves the palace, the jinni takes
over as king: When patience and intellect go, your ego incites
to evil.⁸ (D 5798)

The sensual ego is blind and deaf to God. (M
IV 235)

The whole Koran describes the wickedness of
egos: Study the Holy Book! Where is your insight? (M VI
4862)

Concern yourself not with the thieflike ego and
its business. Whatever is not God's work is nothing,
nothing! (M II 1063)

The bird that escapes from the trap of its ego
has no fear, wherever it may fly. (D 7327)

The ego's likeness is an autumn within which a
garden is concealed. When the spring-spirit arrives, the garden
smiles from within. (D 29958)

You have abandoned Jesus and nurtured his ass. That is why, like an ass, you must remain outside the curtain.

Science and knowledge are the good fortune of Jesus, not of the ass, oh asinine man! . . .

Have mercy on Jesus, not the ass! Let not your animal nature rule your intellect. . . .

When the Prophet said, "Put the females last!", he meant your ego.⁹ For it must be put last, and your intellect first.

Your base intellect has acquired the disposition of asses. Its thought is this: "How shall I find the fodder?" (M II 1850-51, 53, 56-57)

What a shame, my ass has gone! My ass suddenly died! Thanks be to God: Ass's dung has gone far from my doorstep!

The death of asses is difficult, but in my case, it was good luck. For now that my ass has gone, Jesus is beside me.

How I have become exhausted and spent looking for pails of fodder! I became emaciated and bent for the sake of my emaciated ass!

What that ass did to me, no vicious wolf could ever do. Most of me has been lost, by God, through the pain and heartache it inflicted. (D 19072-75)

God is Omniscient, and since the spirit is "from the command of my Lord," one of its essential characteristics is knowledge and awareness. But the ego is so far removed from the luminosity and pure consciousness of the spirit that, like the body, it cannot perceive the light that shines in its darkness.

By its very nature the spirit possesses the faculty of discernment, which is known as the "intellect." The differences in spiritual levels among human beings derive to a large extent from the different degrees to which the light of the intellect penetrates the veil of the ego. In practically any human being, the intellect and the ego are at war. In most people, the ego is winning the battle, which is why they cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, the real and the unreal, meaning and form. In the prophets and the saints, the intellect has won. In those who follow them, the "believers," the intellect has the upper hand.

A falcon and a crow were put into one cage:
Wounds distress them both. . .

Within our breast an intellect and an ego are in strife and tribulation, drunken with separation from their Source. (D 33508, 10)

If the braying of your ass-ego were to diminish, the call of your intellect would be your Messiah. (D 34042)

By its nature the intellect sees the outcome of affairs; the ego looks not at outcomes.

The intellect vanquished by the ego becomes the ego—Jupiter checkmated by Saturn is inauspicious. (M II 1548-49)

The intellect is luminous and seeks the good. How then can the dark ego vanquish it?

The ego is in its own bodily home, and your intellect is a stranger: At its doorstep, a dog is an awesome lion. (M III 2557-58)

4. THE UNIVERSAL INTELLECT AND THE PARTIAL INTELLECT

Only the intellects of the prophets and saints have truly vanquished the ego. Once the clouds have been dispersed, the sun shines down unhindered. In its full radiance the intellect is referred to as the "Universal Intellect" (*'aql-i kullī*) or the "Intellect of the intellect." At this stage the intellect can discern the meaning of every form and "see things as they are." In the majority of human beings, no matter what sort of great minds they may have or how "intellectual" they may be, the intellect is veiled by the dross of the ego. Such veiled intellects are referred to as "partial intellects" (*'aql-i juzwī*). Naturally there are many different levels of partial intellect. And although the Universal Intellect is essentially one reality, it does not reveal itself to every saint and prophet to the same degree.

The partial intellect needs nourishment from outside; through it one can acquire by learning and study the "science of bodies." But the Universal Intellect is sufficient unto itself. It is the source of the "science of religions" and has no need for any sort of outside aid.

The intellect is of two kinds: The first is acquired. You learn it like a boy at school,

From books, teachers, reflection and rote, from concepts and from excellent and new sciences.

Your intellect becomes greater than that of others, but you are heavily burdened because of your acquisition. . . .

The other intellect is a gift of God. Its fountainhead lies in the midst of the spirit.

When the water of knowledge bubbles up from the breast, it will never become stagnant, old, or discolored.

If the way to its outside source should become blocked, there is no reason to worry since the water keeps on bubbling up from within the house.

The acquired intellect is like a stream led into a house from outside.

If its way should be blocked, it is helpless. Seek the fountain from within yourself! (M IV 1960–63, 65–68)

Be well aware of the discrepancies among intellects, which extend in degrees from earth to heaven!

There is an intellect like the disc of the sun, and another less than Venus or a shooting star.

There is an intellect happily flickering like a lamp, and another like a spark of fire. . . .

Partial intellect has disgraced the Intellect; desire for the world has deprived man of the Object of his desire. (M V 459–461 and 463)

Muḥammad was not said to be “unlettered” (*ummī*) because he was incapable of writing or ignorant of the sciences. He is called “unlettered” because his writing, science and wisdom were innate, not acquired. Should a person who can inscribe characters on the moon be unable to write? What was there in the world that he did not know? For indeed, everyone learns from him. What sort of thing could the partial intellect possess not possessed by the Universal Intellect? The partial intellect is unable to produce anything from itself that it has not first seen.

These compositions, engineering feats and structures that people erect are not new compositions. Having seen something like them, human beings merely make additions. Those who truly produce something new from themselves are the Universal Intellect. The partial intellect can be taught; it is in need of teaching. But the Universal Intellect is the teacher; it has no needs. (F 142/151)

The philosopher is in bondage to intellectual concepts; the pure saint is mounted upon the Intellect of intellect.

The Intellect of intellect is the kernel, your intellect the husk. The stomachs of animals are always seeking husks.

The seeker of the kernel has a hundred loathings for the husk; in the eyes of the goodly saints, the kernel alone is truly lawful.

Since the skin of the intellect gives a hundred proofs, how should the Universal Intellect ever take a step without certainty? (M III 2527–30)

5. THE HEART

The ultimate center of man's consciousness, his inmost reality, his "meaning" as known by God, is called the "heart" (*dil, qalb*).¹⁰ As for the lump of flesh within the breast, that is the shadow or outermost skin of the heart. Between this heart and that heart are infinite levels of consciousness and self-realization.

As man's inmost reality, the heart is always with God. But only the prophets and saints—who are called the "Possessors of the Heart"—have achieved God-consciousness, whereby they are truly and actually aware of God at the center of their being. Most men are veiled by innumerable levels of dross and darkness, so that in practice the center of their consciousness or "heart" is their animal spirit or ego.

Why is the heart a stranger in the two worlds?
Because the attributes of Placelessness shy away from
place. (D 28934)

When you look carefully, you see that all good
qualities dwell in the heart. All these disgraceful qualities
derive from water and clay. (D 4220)

You are luminous water, do not throw clay into
the water! Conceal not the heart, call not the heart's veil the
heart! (D 21567)

Most people are man-eaters—expect no security
when they say, "Peace be upon you!"

Their hearts are all houses of Satan. Accept not
the drivel of devilish men! (M II 251–252)

In relation to the Possessor of the Heart these
partial hearts are like bodies, for he is the mine. (M II 839)

The house of the heart that remains without
illumination from the rays of the Magnificent Sun

Is narrow and dark like a miser's soul, empty of
the Loving King's sweet taste.

The Sun's light does not shine in that heart,
space does not expand, doors do not open:

The grave would be more pleasant for you—so
come, arise from the tomb of your heart! (M II 3129–32)

Return to yourself, oh heart! For from the heart
a hidden road can be found to the Beloved.

If the world of the six directions has no door,
then come to the heart—you can make a door.

Come into the heart, the place of contemplating God! Though it is not so now, it can be made so. (D 6885-87)

Within you is a Moon, such a Moon that the sun keeps calling from heaven, "Oh, I am Thy slave, Thy slave!"

Seek the Moon from your own breast, like Moses.¹¹ Gaze into your own window and say, "Hello! Hello!" (D 18190-91)

Close down speech's door and open up the heart's window! The Moon will only kiss you through the window. (D 19863)

In the lane of Love a shout rose up: "A window has opened up in the house, the heart!"

What is this talk of windows? For a new Sun has arisen: not even a needle's breadth of shadow remains! (D 20085-86)

Once the mirror of your heart becomes pure and clear, you will see pictures from beyond the domain of water and clay,

Not only pictures but also the Painter, not only the carpet of good fortune, but also the Carpet-spreader. (M II 72-73)

The saints have polished their breasts until cleansed of greed, cupidity, avarice, and hatred.

Without doubt the pure mirror is the heart acting as a receptacle for infinite pictures.

The Moses-like saint possesses within his breast, in his heart's mirror, the infinite, formless Form of the Unseen.

What does it matter if that Form is not contained by the heavens, the divine Throne, the Footstool, or the Fish supporting the earth?

These things are all delimited and defined, but the heart's mirror has no limits—Know that!

Here the intellect must remain silent, or else lead us astray. For the heart is with Him—indeed, the heart is He. (M I 3484-89)

How should the orients of the lights of Almighty God be contained in the heart? Yet when you seek His Light, you find it there. But this does not mean that His Light is truly contained within it. Rather, you find it in the heart, just as you find your own picture in a mirror, though your picture is not truly contained by it. But when you look into the mirror, you see yourself. (F 165-166/174)

These last two passages allude to a famous saying of the Prophet concerning the heart: "God says, 'My heavens and My earth encompass Me not, but the heart of My gentle, believing, and meek servant does encompass Me.'" Rūmī often refers to this hadith directly or indirectly.

Through God's perfect power the bodies of spiritual men have gained the strength to bear the ineffable Light. . . .

Hence the Seal of the Prophets related a saying from the eternal and everlasting King:

"I am not contained in the heavens and the void, in the supernal intellects and souls,

Yet I stay like a guest in the believer's heart, without qualification, definition, or description." (VI 3066, 71-73)

Outside of the seven heavens, greater than the two worlds! And this is wonderful: That Ineffable One is hidden within the heart! (D 24544)

The seven heavens are too narrow for Him. How does He enter my shirt? (D 18348)

If the two worlds were to enter my heart, they would be contemptible. What a wonderful expansion Thou hast given my wounded heart through Thy love! (D 30224)

The heart of the saint "contains" God, while the heart of the ordinary man is mired in water and clay. What determines the worth of a man is the state of his heart. Man's task in this world is to cleanse his heart, to polish it, and ultimately to make of it a perfect mirror reflecting God. This he can only accomplish with the guidance of the Possessor of the Heart.

Oh heart! God will look upon you when, like a part, you return to your whole.

God keeps on saying, "We look upon the heart, not upon the form, for that is water and clay."

You keep on saying, "I also have a heart." The heart is above God's Throne, not below it!

Certainly dark clay also contains water, but not water with which to make an ablution.

Though it is water, it has been vanquished by clay. So do not say concerning your heart, "This too is a heart."

The heart that is beyond the heavens is the heart of the saints or the Prophet.

Purified, cleansed of clay, it has entered into increase and become all-sufficient.

It has abandoned clay and come to the Sea. Freed from clay's prison, now it belongs to the Sea. . . .

You are obstinate and say, "I am a Possessor of the Heart. I have no need for anyone else, I am in union with God"—

As if water in the midst of clay were obstinate: "I am water, why should I seek help?"

Imagining this polluted thing to be a heart, you turn your heart away from the Possessor of the Heart.

Do you really allow that this object fascinated by milk and honey can be a heart?

The taste of milk and honey reflects the heart; the sweetness of every sweet thing derives from the heart.

So the heart is the substance and the world the accident. How should the heart's shadow be the heart's goal?

Does a heart fall in love with property and position and submit itself to this black water and clay,

Or to fantasies, worshiping them in darkness for the sake of empty talk?

The heart is nothing but that Ocean of Light. Is the heart to be the locus for God's vision, and then blind?

Among hundreds of thousands of the elect and the vulgar, no heart is to be found: The heart is in one person. Which one is he? Which one?¹² (M III 2243-50, 61-70)

6. INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Rūmī does not distinguish clearly and absolutely among the heart, the spirit, and the intellect. Each of these pertains to man's meaning as opposed to his form. Perhaps we can say that the spirit is the broadest in scope, embracing the whole of man's inward reality; the term "intellect" lays stress upon the spirit's power of discernment; and the word "heart" emphasizes consciousness and especially God-consciousness. But each of these terms is sometimes employed synonymously with one or both of the others, and each denotes a multileveled reality. Hence, when Rūmī refers to "intellect," he may be referring to any of a broad spectrum of realities ranging from the lowest level of the partial intellect to the highest degree of the Universal Intellect. When he mentions "spirit," he may be alluding to any of the three higher levels of spirit, to the ego, or to God. And by "heart" he may mean someone's center of consciousness in a general sense, or the heart of the "Possessor of the Heart," or any of the myriad

levels between. In any case, the context of the discussion usually makes clear which meaning he has in mind.

Sense perception is in bondage to the intellect, oh friend! And know too that the intellect is in bondage to the spirit. (M III 1824)

The body is outward, the spirit hidden; the body is like the sleeve, the spirit the hand.

Then intellect is more hidden than spirit: The senses perceive the spirit more quickly.

You see a movement, you know there is life. But you do not know it is filled with the intellect. . . .

The spirit of prophetic revelation is beyond the intellect; coming from the Unseen, it belongs to that side. (M II 3253-55, 58)

Open your eyes! See the spirits that have fled from the body! The spirit has smashed the cage, the heart has fled from the body! (D 25039)

The spirit has become disengaged from the body's uproar! It flies upon the wing of the heart without the body's foot. (M V 1721)

What is the spirit? One-half of a leaf from the garden of Thy Beauty. What is the heart? A single blossom from Thy provisions and plenty. (D 23706)

Without doubt the intellects and hearts derive from the divine Throne, but they live veiled from the Throne's light. (M V 619)

From the passion of man and woman, blood boiled and became sperm. Those two drops erected a tent in midair.

Then the army of the human individual came from the world of the spirit: the intellect the vizier, the heart the king.

After a time, the heart remembered the city of the spirit. The whole army returned and entered the world of Everlastingness. (D 8797-99)