

MAWLAWI RUMI'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY WITH AN EMPHASIS UPON THE PERFECT MAN

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Abstract

There are a variety of ways for linking the Orient with the Occident the most enduring and influential of them being anthropology. Mawlawi Rumi is among the most outstanding figures whose profound and brilliant thoughts can open new horizons to the contemporary Eastern and Western worlds. The present essay surveys and expounds on some of his anthropological views, especially on the perfect man.

Key Words: Rumi, the Perfect Man, annihilation into God, subsistence by God.

1. Man Being Composed of Soul and Body

Mawlawi, like most other thinkers, believes that man consists of material, spiritual parts or body-soul parts; body is shadow of soul and is used as an instrument for development of soul while life of the former is dependent upon the latter.

"The spirit cannot function without the body; your body is frozen (inanimate) and cold (inert) without the spirit."

"A bird is flying in the atmosphere for the Unseen; its shadow falls on a piece of earth". (Mathnawi 5 : 3423 & 6:3306)

Some Muslim philosophers and mystics hold that soul at the beginning of its generation is material possessing the material, bodily faculties, and gradually achieves a higher level of perfection

and abstraction. On the contrary, some others consider man's soul as being spiritually-generated, materially-subsisted, believing that soul has been in the truth's essence at the beginning having no connection and relation with body. But later, considering God's purpose of material creation of man -- which will be explained later -- soul separates from that world. Despite pains and sufferings of such separation, the soul attaches to a body while obtaining animal, material faculties being affected by impurities and dirtiness of nature. The more it remains in this world, the more this dependence becomes, until the opportunity of presence in this world comes to an end and, due to the principle of return of everything to its origin, soul leaves the body and returns to its original world, i.e, world of spirituality and abstraction (Homa'1 1995 : 103-104).

"Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it" (Mathnawi 1:4).

Mawlawi believes in the second viewpoint. Thus according to him, soul is a being which has neither temporal origination, nor temporal annihilation: it subsists for good (Kollyyate Shamse Tabrize : 258-259).

Mawlawi holds that man's soul has some levels:

1. Soul, which is a being beyond body and some of the latter's state. This level, which causes comprehension and action, exists in other animals as well. Fivefold senses of man and animal are active in this level and assist them in sensual understanding, motion, affecting external world, and satisfying their needs. This level is not the level of man's truth yet (*Mathnawi 2 : 49 & 4 : 410*).

2. Intellect, which distinguishes man from animal. Intellect is a sacred faculty used for comprehension and recognition of truths beyond matter, leading towards perfection, and protection from divagation.

"Again, the intellect is more concealed than the (vital), spirit: (your mental) perception makes its way to (apprehends) the (vital) spirit sooner (than it apprehends the intellect)" (Mathnawi 2 : 3254).

Mawlawi considers intellect as being from God's throne by which man can obtain special knowledge and insight in

order to enjoy comfort immunity, and justice (*Mathnawi* 2 3861) . This existential level however is something hard to obtain.

3. (*Essence of*) Revelation or inner inspiration, which is higher than the level of intellect.

"The spirit (That partakes) of Divine inspiration is more concealed than the intellect, because it is (of) the Unseen: it belongs to that side" (*Mathnawi* 2: 3258).

Having passed all previous levels, man ascends to level of angels in which his inner ear can hear messages from spiritual worlds.

"Then the spiritual ear becomes the place where wahy (inspiration) descends. What is wahy ? A speech hidden from sense – perception" (*Mathnawi* 1: 1461).

Now, man gains true dreams, inspirations, discoveries, foresight, and so on.

The highest level of revelation is due to prophets. Saints can achieve that level in some lower degrees. After this, man should pass some other levels and states in order to achieve the station of annihilation into God and subsistence by God whose description will be dealt with later. It should be noted that as soul enjoys fivefold senses in the level of animal, it enjoys inner, spiritual senses in higher levels (i.e. intellect and revelation), which assist him in attaining higher levels of existence.

"The worldly sense is the ladder to this to this world; the religious sense is the ladder to Heaven."

"Beside these live (physical) senses, there are five (spiritual) senses: those (latter) are like red gold, while these (physical) senses are like copper" (*Mathnawi* 2 : 49 & 1 : 303).

Through obtaining knowledge, being embellished with divine morals, treading path of truth, and diligence in this struggle which is like an endless combat between this worldly dependences and attachments on the one hand and spiritual, pure tendencies on the other while seeking assistance from men of God, man will be able to obliterate levels of elevation and achieve the station of subsistence by God.

"Choose a Pir (mentor), for without a Pir this journey is

exceedingly full of woe and affright and danger."

"Give thy life for this cup, O son: how many victories be (won) without (spiritual) warfare and patience? (Mathnawi 3:21 & 1:2043)".

From another outlook, Mawlawi holds that man's soul is endowed with two speculative and practical faculties by whose actualization soul attains its desirable perfection, that is, connection to the Truth.

In Mawlawi's opinion, by living the spiritual life, even man's fivefold senses and his material faculties can be transformed into elevated levels and in his own words, become awakened. He likens material senses to some sheep that should be led from arid, barren pasture of this world to the thriving, green meadow of spirituality so that they enjoy spiritual benefits. When one sense achieves spirituality it will assist other senses attain that, and hence material senses will obey man's truth-seeker spirit while serving the latter as a vessel to reach higher worlds. In other words, a spiritual world and the truth will appear in the material senses or will manifest itself in the matter.

"Penetration (of sight) becomes the (means of) awakening (stimulating) every sense, (so that) perception (of the spiritual) becomes familiar to (all) the senses."

"When one sense in (the course of its) progress has loosened (its) bonds, all the rest of the senses become changed."

"Drive the sheep, thy sense, to pasture: let them browse on (the pasture indicated in (the text) - He who hath brought forth the herbage."

"That there they may browse on hyacinth and wild-rose; that they may make their way to the verdant meadows of the Realities."

"When (all) senses have become subject to thy sense, the heavenly spheres cannot avoid (obedience to) thee" (Mathnawi 2 : 3239-3240,3243-3244,3249)."

2. Conceptual and Intuitional Perceptions

Mawlawi, while he accepts and emphasizes man's intellectual perceptions, he and also points out that it is with this thing that man is distinct from animals and because of this elevation of man's

knowledge and perception the higher his soul will be: "*(Spiritual) life is naught but knowledge in (the time of) trial: the more knowledge one has, the more (spiritual) life one has.*" "*Our spirit is more than the spirit of animals, wherefore? In respect that it has more Knowledge*" (Mathnawi 2 : 3335) holds that remaining in the level of conceptual perceptions, which is an obstacle to achieving the level of intuition and existential connection to higher stations, is like a child who acts from a lack of mental maturity, and thus such remaining should be rejected and reproached.

The reason is that we cannot attain complex truths of higher worlds and their creator by a lot of terms and imperfect thoughts. This will result only in tiredness. Anxiety and thirst are obstacles hindering humans from arriving at the destination.

"This knowledge is playing game and waste of life compared to states of mystics: The life of This world is only a play" [Qur'an, Muhammad : 36]

When man is fully grown, intelligent, and perfect he will not play games and if he does he will do so secretly so that nobody see him because of his shame. This knowledge of they say and it is said "*and this - worldly lusts are like soil in man's hand; when winds blow and raise dust, wherever dust goes it will hurt eyes and will bear nothing but anxiety and objection.*" (Rumi 1348 SAH : 145)

In another position, he likens conceptual; intellectual perceptions to a drop compared to flowing rivers.

"Our senses and perceptions, such as they are, are (but) a single drop in those rivers" (Mathnawi 1 : 19, 27).

3. Purpose of Creation of the World

Mawlawi expounds the purpose of creation of the world according to a divine tradition narrated by prophet David who asks "God, 'O Lord! Why did you create creatures?" and God answers; I was a hidden treasure; I wished myself to be known , then I created creatures so that I be known."

Mawlawi, therefore, holds that the purpose of creation is love of God and God's manifesting Himself in the world. He believes that God overflowed due to his extreme, intense perfection

and thus He originated levels of creation while embellishing them all, even levels of world of matter and soil, with existence and perfection.

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

“Twas a hidden treasure: because of its fullness it surged up and made the earth (like) a sultan robed in satin”
(*Mathnawi* 2:364 & 1: 2863-2864).

“I was a treasure, a hidden mercy, so I sent forth a rightly guided Imam. (Mathnawi)

4. Man as Vicegerent of God

It was not possible for God's essence and reality to appear in the world of matter and creation essentially, for his essence and attributes are exalted from matter and creation. This manifestation, a vicegerency, therefore belonged to creatures according to their existential, perfectional state and thus any creature could reflect God in the world based on its existential, degree and capacity what had more ability of reflection and more capacity, however, was man and it was him who undertook God's vicegerency on the earth in more perfect manner:

“Inasmuch as God comes not into sight, these prophets are the vicars of God” (*Mathnawi* 1 : 673).

5. Man's Return or Travel to the Almighty and His Attaining the Station of Perfect Man

Mawlana believes that return to the origin is of two kinds: voluntarily, or compulsorily. The compulsor return is the death and annihilation of body which will necessarily encompass all creatures of the world. In voluntarily returning, man takes the way of truths, path treading while following a path of soul purification and speculation, practical development of the soul in the light of guidance of a Divine guide, who is the perfect man, in order to release himself from this- worldly mortal attributes as we embody an elementary, vegetable, animal soul.

This second kind of death is the very path of man's perfection and happiness will present man with getting released from himself,

annihilation into God, and connection to Him. Mawlawi explains this perspective by narrating a tradition from the holy Prophet, who asserts

'Die ye before ye die,' "To die before death is to be safe, O youth: even so hath Mustafa (Mohammed) commanded us."

"He said, "Die, all of you, ere death come; else ye will die with (the certainty of suffering) sore affliction (hereafter)" (Mathnawi 4 : 2272-2273).

Although he does not consider solitude and running away from this worldly affairs a proper action in the way of the truth, he treats fighting against lusts and mundane desires as something necessary in this way and holds that virtues can be obtained by such efforts (*Mathnawi 5 : 560 ff*).

In other words, this voluntarily return is not that easy. Rather, as all mountains, sky, earth, stars, and everything else would be rooted out and ransacked in the resurrection, there is a spiritual resurrection in this world for the wayfarer which through mortifications and by God's grace, will root out mountains of his I-ness this-worldly dependences, and selfishness while annihilating his imaginary, mortal existence into the Almighty's real being.

This resurrection is not lower than that one. Rather it is higher. For the spiritual resurrection since man has attained the truth, pains and sorrow have come to an end for him and sun of the truth has commenced shining for him. Of course, the resurrection in the world to come is bitter and like a wound for sinners who will be sentenced because of their own deeds (*Mathnawi 2 : 1338-1339*).

Role of love in man's treading God's path is so important and fundamental in Mawlawi's opinion. He believes that a mystic will not only be afraid of his elimination, annihilation, and existential amortization, but he is burnt in the eagerness of attaining that. For those who love God, annihilation of their own existences, lusts, determinations and be encompassed by and connected to their beloved happens any moment.

This dying, of course, is of different kinds. Since material connections are different, i.e. eating, sleeping, lusts, etc, being out of from and dying then would vary too.

"Do not thou threaten me with being killed, for I thirst lamentably for mine own blood."

"For lovers, there is a dying at every moment: verily, the dying

of lovers is not of one sort (Mathnawi 3 : 3833-3834) .

6. Annihilation into God and Subsistence by God

Mawlana holds that Reality and ultimate goal of love lies in coming out from one's shell and matrix, leaving one's personal, individual characteristics, and dying before one's beloved while being annihilated into the latter. Should love not attain such an ultimate goal; it means reality of love is not manifested (*Mathnawi 5 : 1252-1257*).

One who achieves the station of annihilation into the truth and connection to God, who obliterates all veils and obstacles, who sinks his own existence in the ocean of His being; he will attain union with Him. It means that he will for instance, lose his identity of poverty and will obtain His identity of richness; as an iron will take characteristics of fire becoming molten when it is put in fire due to its closeness to the latter. From this time onwards, even if the wayfarer likes himself it is only because of that union - in fact, he likes Him.

"He replied," I have become so netted in thee that I am full of thee from head to foot."

"As the stone that is entirely turned into pure ruby: it is filled with the qualities of the sun."

"Whether the pure ruby loves itself or whether it loves the sun"

"There is really no difference in these two loves: both sides (aspects) are naught but the radiance of the sunrise (Mathnawi 5: 2022,2025,2029-2030)."

It is this transformation of attributes and essence that causes the said spiritual resurrection.

Now, Mawlana explains the secret of this saying of Mansoor Hallaj that; "I am the truth" : this saying is because of that annihilation into God and of his illumined union with God which will leave no sign of selfishness in the wayfarer. This saying is in fact a reflection that God is the truth and thus essentially different than the saying of Pharaoh, I am your highest Lord. The Pharaoh's erroneous saying which was based on selfishness and denying God (*Mathnawi 5 : 2035-2036*).

Mawlana believes that the real annihilation into God will happen only when man has annihilation not only of himself into

God but also his very annihilation into God-i.e., he has forgotten his annihilation. Otherwise should his soul be conscious of his annihilation and of soul-escaping, it would be clear that he still cares about others and has not lost himself totally (*Mathnawi* 1: 1753-1754) It is by this annihilation into love and beloved and by dying from self and selfishness that man achieves everything, for real life exists in this annihilation (Rumi 1358 SAH : 636).

On the one hand, Mawlawi establishes connection between man's annihilation into God and his becoming a mirror and manifestation of God's Mighty essence. While considering these two as indispensable affairs; because of man's becoming void of himself which makes such an essence deserve God's manifestation in it which in turn results in finding nobody in it but the Almighty Truth.

"His form has passed away and he has become a mirror: naught is there but the form (image) of the face of another (Mathnawi 4: 2 &140)."

On the other hand, according to a mystical tradition which asserts that "Whoever is for God, God is for him", he holds that whenever someone annihilates himself into God he will subsist by God's existence (*Mathnawi* 1 :1939 Nicholson Commentary) . When such being, whose essence and existential attributes are so poor, annihilates himself into the Almighty Truth and His attributes, he will become subsistent by God, whose existence and attributes are limitless, and thus will be secure from any destruction and expiring, (*Mathnawi* 4: 2613-2615 Nickolson Commentary) for, despite all creatures are subject to death and destruction, he has become God's face in which annihilation and expiry can come upon (*Mathnawi* 1 : 3052-3054)."

7. Characteristics of the Perfect Man

There are seven characteristics of the Perfect Man.

7.1. Perfect Man as the Purpose and Ultimate Cause of Creation

According to a verse of the *Holy Qur'an* which asserts: "*and surely we have honored the children of Adam, and we carry them in the land and the sea and we have given them of the good things,*

and we have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom we have created." (*The Israelies 10*). Mawlawi holds that the perfect man is superior to all existents; he is origin and essence of the universe, and all others are as his accidents or parasites who are to serve him.

"If he did not exist, Heaven would not have gained circling motion and light and (the dignity of) being the abode of the angels"

"If he did not exist, the earth would not have gained treasure within and jasmine (flowers and verdure) without (Mathnawi 6 : 2014 & 2106)."

He believe that although man is materially later than so many existents of the world while a good number of them have played roles in his generation, they are all existentially indebted to man because God's purpose of creation has been man's generation. He draws an analogy between this and a fruitful tree. Although the tree is the cause for generation of fruit, being its precedent temporarily, the gardener's purpose for planting the tree is its fruit and should the fruit not be, gardener would have not planted the tree (*Mathnawi 4 : 522-524*).

Since Mawlawi considers the holy prophet of Islam, Muhammad, as the most perfect evidence of the perfect man, he expounds the said subject by using two traditions about him.

(1) His own words that

" though I am an Adam's offspring, I am his ancestor, in fact; so he and other prophets are under my banner."

"Hence Mustafa (Mohammed) said. "Adam and the (Other) prophets are (following) behind me under (my) banner."

For this reason that master of (all) sorts of knowledge has uttered the allegorical saying, "We are the last and the foremost."

(That is to say), " If in appearance, I am born of Adam, in reality I am the forefather of (every) forefather" (Mathnawi 4: 525-527) ."

(2) The divine tradition which asserts, ' Were ye not be, I have not created the universe (*Mathnawi 2 : 974*).

7.2. The Perfect Man, the Intermediary of Material, Spiritual Grace

Since the perfect man is God's vicegerent and the highest being in the universe next to God while being endowed with existential greatness, God delivers His grace to the universe through him. Creatures receive their sustenance and livelihood because of the perfect man. He receives material spiritual realities from the truth and delivers them to the creatures therefore has the ability of affecting others existentially.

"The Qutb is (like) the lion, and it is his business, to hunt: (all) the rest (namely), these people (of the world), eat his leavings."

"The heavens are a slave to his moon: the whole East and West is begging him for bread;

"(Our) means of sustenance are eating the means of sustenance bestowed by him: the fruits are dry-lipped (thirsty) for his rain (Mathnawi 5 : 2339 & 6 : 2102,2017) ."

7.3. The Perfect Man and the Macrocosm

As mentioned before, Mawlawi, holds that man is endowed with characteristics, which distinguish him from other beings. Among them, one is that his existence is of special type in which any existential level of the world is found, for instance in the world exist different kinds of material and abstract beings, and the case is the same with man. Of course, some levels of human perfection are not actualized in all people, but the fact is that the ground for this level exists in all of them – a characteristic not to be found in other existents.

Although man is bodily made of mud and compared to other creatures is so poor that sometimes even a small insect hurts him, the perfect man has some spiritual states which make the said relation vice-versa (*Mathnawi 4: 3767*) ; that is, all existing perfections in all states of the universe, exist objectively and actually in him. Angels, God's throne, the whole soul, and all higher and lower creatures exist in him. Rather, he is higher than all of them and his existential predominance is so intense that all universe is considered as a level of his numerous levels.

"Therefore, in form thou art the microcosm, therefore, in reality thou art the macrocosm (Mathnawi 4 :521; Nickolson 2 : 16)."

Each perfect man, who is unique in his time, holds within himself a lot of worlds.

'Every prophet came alone into this world: he was alone, and (yet) he had a hundred unseen worlds within him (Mathnawi 1 : 2005).

He is like an ocean who has hidden his fact by showing himself as a drop.

7.4. No Time is Void of a Perfect Man

The universe would not be void of a perfect man any time. In any time he, as God's vicegerent, and His greatest sign, delivers perfections and grace from God to the creatures while guiding man to the truth. Thus, Mawlawi holds that although prophethood is ended by the seal of prophets, i.e Muhammad, *wilayah* is not ended and perfect man will be present in the world as *waliy* (saint) until the day of Resurrection.

"Therefore, in every epoch (after Mohammed) a saint arises (to act as his vicegerent): the probation (of the people) lasts until the resurrection (Mathnawi 2 : 815)."

7.5. The Perfect Man and Difficulties

The perfect man accepts whatever comes upon him- mercy or wrath, etc happily because of his real love of the truth as well as his annihilation in God. He treats whatever happens in the world as being from God, therefore not only he bears them but also enjoys them as joyful songs. All difficulties and disasters such as death of close relatives, losing wealth, facing slanders and so on would be treated by him as gifts from their beloved (Mathnawi 2 : 1304 & 1308) . Should a sorrow come upon him from his Lord, he will even avoid groaning because of his fear of losing that gift. In such case, he is in fact saying:

"Oh, thy cruelty is better than felicity and thy vengeance dearer than life."

"This is thy fire: how (what) must be thy light! This is (thy) mourning, so how (what) indeed must be thy festival!"

'I complain, and (yet) I fear lest he believe me and from kindness make that cruelty less."

"I am exceedingly enamored of his violence and his gentleness: it's marvelous (that) I (am) in love with both these contraries

(Mathnawi 1 : 1566-1567,1569-1570)."

7.6. The Perfect Man: the Manifestation of God

Divine light is shining in mystic's heart. To see him is to see God, (A tradition from the holy prophet asserts that, whoever sees me, he has seen the truth) and to serve and to praise him is to serve and to praise God. In other words, he is a mirror, which reflects God and His names and attributes in the most perfect way

"When thou hast seen me, thou hast seen God: thou hast circled round the Ka'ba of Sincerity."

To serve me is to obey and glorify God: beware thou think not that God is separate from me.

Open thine eyes well and look on me, that thou mayst behold the Light of God in man (Mathnawi 2 : 2247-2249)."

The perfect man's vicegerency of God, annihilation into God, his subsistence by God, his love of God, permanence and non-alternation, and actualization of his resurrection being in this world have already been discussed, so they will not be dealt with here again .

7.7.The Perfect Man and the Society : Spiritual Effect of the Perfect Man on Individuals and Society

Perfect men such as prophets and saints because of being sunk in divine ecstasies are endowed with an ability to fall over dirty souls like rain and thus clean dirt off common people's souls by their own cleanliness and ability of playing their role as intermediary between God and creatures in the best way.

Of course, whenever they feel a spiritual darkness due to their relation with people, they tend to have isolation so that multiplicity cannot overcome the unity. By this, they turn to God's court in order to strengthen their abilities and powers and then go back to people with some fresh attractions to deliver God's grace to them.

"When the water had done battle (in its task of ablution) and had been made dirty and had become such that the senses rejected it."

"Verily, what is meant by this water is the spirit of the saints, which washes away your dark stains."

"When it is stained dark by (washing) the treason of the inhabitants of the earth, it returns to Him who endows Heaven with purity."

"From yonder, trailing the skirt (of glory), it brings back to them lessons concerning the purity of the All- encompassing (God (Mathnawi 5 : 221-223 & 199)."

7. 8. The Perfect Man as the Guide for People

The role of the perfect man in guiding and developing wayfarers is so fundamental that Mawlawi holds the only way for man's soul to escape from his carnal soul as an obstacle to attain the truth is obligation to the perfect man without whose assistance passing this state is impossible.

He believes that God's ecstasy and grace by which the too long way of treading God's path is passed, is nothing but grace of the perfect man.

"Nothing will slay the fleshly soul except the shadow' (protection) of the Pir: grasp tightly the skirt of that slayer of the flesh."

"When you grasp (it) tightly, that is (done by) the aid of Him (God):

Waterloo strength comes into you and is (the effect of) His drawing (you towards Him) (Mathnawi 2528-2529) ."

As the spirit or intellect is in charge of governing body, while showing the latter its spiritual material goodness and badness and in fact body and material faculties would attain their happiness through obedience to the former's commands, the perfect man exactly plays the same role among people (*Mathnawi 5 : 2343*).

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